

HUNTERS AND SYMBOLIC SPACE:  
NEGOTIATING STATUS AND LEGITIMACY IN  
THE FIELD OF POWER

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## **ABSTRACT**

Hunting in the West has historically been a valorous and honorable form of exploit, and yet in the present day the activity is not as commonly practiced as it once was. For people who do hunt, however, the activity is still a popular means of facilitating social interaction and enhancing the experience of the outdoors, particularly for men. This research examines the men and women involved in the subculture of hunting as they negotiate discourses around the activity and develop responses and justification narratives accordingly. Hunters respond to social structures both outside and inside the hunting subculture, combining the objective and subjective to formulate legitimization and validation tactics within a Bourdieuan field of social space and symbolic power.

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## INTRODUCTION

Hunting is inescapably complex. It has flourished in nearly every Western nation, and yet its utility and symbolic meaning varies throughout history (Franklin 2001). In the late Middle Ages, wealthy European aristocrats co-opted hunting from the modest farmers who had been its former enthusiasts (Cartmill 1995). The activity immediately took on different meanings in “both the high and low traditions,” but its primary purpose was to provide a venue for elite exploit (777). Hunting was associated with leisure and social status, and those who pursued it hoped to claim a level of social power and symbolic capital (Veblen 1899; Bourdieu 1986). Although it became more open to the middle classes in the 1900s, valor and honor were still embedded in its history.

The face of hunting is now changing, however, as the number of hunters in the United States gradually decreases and the demographics of remaining hunters shift. Between 1991 and 2006, there was an 11 percent drop in the total number of hunters nationwide (USFWS 2006). As of 2006, the national hunting participation rate stood at five percent<sup>1</sup> with 12.5 million hunters compared to 14 million reported hunters in 1996 (U.S. Department of the Interior 1996, 2006). Along with the overall decrease in hunting participation, there is evidence to indicate that the activity is becoming more expensive and exclusive. Hunting expenditures increased 24 percent from 1991 to 2006 (USFWS 2006). Between 1996 and 2006, there was also a seven percent increase (from 51 to 58 percent) in hunters who reported hunting only on private land, which can be extremely costly.

After having grown up on the outskirts of southern hunting culture, I became interested in these patterns and in the shifting symbolic meanings of hunting. I wanted to learn how hunters justified and promoted themselves against other hunters and against outsiders in a Bourdieuan (1985) social field of symbolic power. I wanted to know the extent to which critical arguments

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<sup>1</sup> Ten percent of American men hunt, making up 91 percent of U.S. hunters. One percent of American women hunt, making up nine percent of U.S. hunters. Ninety-six percent of hunters are white, and most have education and income levels just above national averages (U.S. Department of the Interior 2006).

against hunting had trickled down narrative chains to permeate hunters' own discourses. In pursuit of these potential descriptions, validations, and discourses, I conducted qualitative research to examine the constructed and perceived meanings of different forms of hunting.

I studied men and women who hunted everything from “varmints” to deer and birds to enormous African beasts. In several cases, knowledge of outside critiques had sharpened a defensive edge. In one of my first interviews, I walked in the door and was met with, “This isn’t some anti-hunting shit, is it?” But when participants realized that I was willing to listen—to understand and help legitimize their stories—they clung to the valor in their activity and glossed smoothly over certain gray areas and moral quandaries. I looked closely at their attempts to create symbolic legitimacy, and ultimately found that although hunting subculture may be slightly smaller than it once was, participants were still eager to prove their merit both within and without their social space (Bourdieu 1985). They did this by claiming symbolic status within a Bourdieuan field of power.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Leisure Class and Conspicuous Consumption**

The “leisure class”—the apex of the social hierarchy—emerged as an institution in “the higher stages of the barbarian culture; as, for instance, in feudal Europe or feudal Japan” (Veblen 1899:1). In such areas, strict distinctions between employment opportunities kept social classes stratified and separate: Whereas inferior classes were burdened with industrial, productive work, upper classes were “excluded from industrial occupations, and [were] reserved for certain employments to which a degree of honour attaches” (1). Whereas slaves, dependents, and most women were confined to the “drudgery” of industrial production, members of the leisure class were allowed the thrill and honor of exploit (8).

Hunting was valorized as a form of exploit exclusive to the ruling classes, who steeped themselves in the “traditions of war and rapine” (Veblen 1899:150). Gamekeepers kept lower class workers off hunting grounds, threatening prosecution for the poachers who tried to hunt

(Loo 2001; Cartmill 1995). Hunting was also reserved for those with the essentially “manly qualities of massiveness, agility, and ferocity” (Veblen 1899:9). In fact, “any effort that [did] not involve an assertion of prowess [came] to be unworthy of the man” (9). To be a representative member of the male gender, one had to be commanding, forceful, and aggressive. The “trophies of the chase or of the raid [provided] prima facie evidence of successful aggression” (11).

Hunting offered a playground for recreational violence, where man’s savage and aggressive tendencies were not just condoned, but honored. As Veblen (1899:11-12) states:

[T]he taking of life—the killing of formidable competitors, whether brute or human—is honourable in the highest degree. And this high office of slaughter, as an expression of the slayer’s prepotence, casts a glamour of worth over every act of slaughter and over all the tools and accessories of the act.

While European aristocrats could eat the meat they hunted and still maintain an air of class privilege, the American leisure class was pressured to “engage with game animals on a more aesthetic level” (Loo 2001:308). In other words, they could not eat game meat or concern themselves with the use-value of an animal without losing social footing. Refraining from eating game meat was an essential, albeit paradoxical part of the parade of socioeconomic comfort and non-necessity. Loo (2001:308) writes:

In a modern society like America, where late-nineteenth century developments in refrigeration and transportation had made the meat of domestic animals widely available, there was absolutely no need for anyone, including aboriginal peoples, to consume the flesh of wild animals. In this context, abstaining from the flesh of one’s kills rather than consuming it symbolized high status.

To create further distinction between themselves and the less wealthy, the leisure class framed Natives’ and aboriginals’ use of animals for sustenance as “‘unsporting,’ and ultimately unmanly” (309). Low-class savages ate game meat; leisure class sportsmen “consumed” the animals “conspicuously, by amassing collections of horns or pelts, objects whose very *inutility* signaled their symbolic value” (308).

Leisure class hunting represents what Veblen (1899) refers to as conspicuous leisure, or leisure made visible solely for others to observe—solely to give the displayer a social leg up. The leisure classes hunted not out of the need for meat, but for the pride they felt upon displaying and

collecting their spoils. Suddenly, “‘unproductive’ and conspicuous consumption, like trophy hunting, was considered provident, while productive consumption was deemed decadent” (Loo 2001:309). Conspicuous waste was imperative to building reputation and signifying class (Loo 2001; Veblen 1899).

The enterprise of conspicuous consumption has flourished through history and into recent times. In addition to conspicuous practices like taxidermy and trophy mounts in the home, trophy photography has been in practice since the mid-nineteenth century (Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003:115). The “images of white men with dead animals or animal body parts (tusks, skins or antlers) told stories of dominance and power of wealthy white colonials over nature and other peoples” (Ryan 2000, cited in Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003:115). Even as hunting has become more of a middle-class narrative (albeit still majority white and male), trophy displays in hunting magazines continue to “stand as records of hunting prowess, strength and virility and as evidence for the audience (readers of the magazines) of the hunters’ killing experiences” (Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003:115). Trophy display is a discursive practice; as such, it tells important stories about our “social organization and cultural conditions” (Haraway 1989, cited in Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003:113-114). Without such conspicuous consumption, how would hunters stage their “dominance and possession” for all to see (Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003:118)?

Veblen (1899) helps provide a framework for understanding how activities of exploit, daring, danger, masculinity, and domination came to be valorized, especially through conspicuous display. When the Industrial Revolution began, however, “accumulated property [...] replace[d] trophies of predatory exploit as the conventional exponent of prepotence and success” (19). While “exploit may still remain the basis of award of the highest popular esteem, [...] possession of wealth has become the basis of common place reputability”—the new medium for conspicuous consumption (20). As a byproduct of this shift, hunting became more of a middle-class phenomenon (Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003).

Veblen's (1899) concept of pecuniary emulation, which holds that all human activities are part of a pecuniary struggle for relative success, offers further explanation for the democratization of hunting. Leisure and consumption exist in a graduated scheme where the ideal is always the next social rung. Lower classes vicariously identify with the higher classes that they aspire to join by imitating the activities, fashions, and habits of those higher classes. But as they begin their mimicry, the habits fall out of fashion and are de-valORIZED for the upper echelons, whose ideals must metamorphose once again. Therefore, we can imagine that as hunting became democratized, it also became less exclusively fashionable for upper classes.

### **Social Space as a Field of Symbolic Power**

Bourdieu (1985:723) extends on Veblen's more deliberate and economics-based theory of status and power by theorizing that social power goes beyond conscious, objective economic power to include "symbolic struggles" within a social space, or field. Bourdieu argues that it would be reductive to think of social life solely in terms of economics, because the reality of social life is constructed through both subjective "schemes of perception, thought, and action"—which form what he calls the "habitus"—and objective social structures such as fields, groups, and economic classes (1985; 1986:14). The subjective and objective are in a dialectic relationship: "the 'social reality' [that] objectivists speak about is also an object of perception," of "internalization of the structures" (1986:18). People are defined, and define themselves, relative to others, in "an ensemble of invisible relations" within a "field of power" (1986:16). This field of power hosts a competition for validation through "symbolic capital, commonly called prestige, reputation, renown, etc., which is the form in which the different forms of capital [economic, cultural, social, and symbolic] are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (1985:724).

Similar to a geographic space with multiple regions, this field of social space contains multiple classes. Bourdieu (1986:16) explains that people who cluster together in the field are more likely to have analogous interests and ideologies: "the closer the agents, groups or institutions [...], the more common properties they have; and the more distant, the fewer." Their

differences “function as [...] signs of distinction, positive or negative” (20). Individuals look to others in the field to gain a sense of their place, and—as in pecuniary emulation—they use that sense of place to sculpt their dispositions, interests, and practices to be similar to those around them (17). A person’s understanding of the field of power, however, “depends on his or her position in that space” (18). For example, a high-class businessman at the top of the field may think that he understands more about the bottom of the field than he actually does. Bourdieu (1986:19) notes that “nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies.”

All agents in the field “struggle to impose the legitimate view of the social world” and hold “a power proportionate to their symbolic capital” (Bourdieu 1985:731). They also vie for “the monopoly of legitimate *naming*,” and “struggle over classifications” (731, 734). “As with constellations, the performative power of designation, of naming,” brings structure to otherwise random groups of people (1986:23). Hunters, like any other social agents, are inclined to organize themselves nominally—to discern the sportsmen from the barbarians in a battle for claims of legitimacy and power. They “endlessly,” actively negotiate their identities against others, leaving the meaning of hunting indeterminate—impossible to pin down in social space or history (1986:21).

Hunting certainly moves between spaces in the field of power, but, as mentioned earlier, it tended to move towards democratization in the decades following the Industrial Revolution (Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003). After World War II, when financial prosperity gave more people the leisure time necessary to pursue the activity, hunting publications and outdoor journals “claim[ed] that almost any man who had a shotgun was a sportsman” and “depicted hunters as part of the ‘rough side’ of American society” (Smalley 2005:192). Hunting’s historical exclusivity and aggrandizement began to diminish. While it can still be considered a valorous and honorable activity, it is no longer limited to society’s upper crust. Accordingly, contemporary hunters have begun to seek valor through means beyond economic status, shifting their focus to other sorts of symbolic capital and legitimacy. The challenge now is for them to keep the activity valorized and

legitimate, even when certain classes of people have abandoned it, when it has been attacked for its ethical implications, and when the value system surrounding it has become much more ambiguous.

### **Oppositional Discourses: Killer Ape, Rebel, Nature-Lover**

There are multiple ways to conceptualize hunting and multiple groups struggling to espouse their viewpoint as the most legitimate. It is a leisure activity fraught with moral controversy (Fine 1998, cited in Cornwell 2005). On the one hand, hunting can be framed as “an armed confrontation between the human world and the untamed wilderness;” on the other, it is “a biocentric union with nature and animals” (Cartmill 1995:774; Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003:121). It is a “historically constructed cultural act,” with the particular construction often depending on the moment in time (Smalley 2005:204).

#### *The Killer Ape*

The criticism of hunters as savage and animalistic has been around for centuries, but with very specific targets. While white hunters were seen as sportsmen, Native Americans and aboriginals were seen as savage, less developed versions of their white counterparts (Loo 2001:309; Cartmill 1995). Cartmill (1995:781) explains:

It was commonplace of eighteenth-century thought that the natives of North America represented the natural state of man, and that they lived chiefly by hunting. If hunting is both morally wrong and the primordial human enterprise, then the hunt naturally begins to be seen as a sign of man’s innate depravity.

Two hundred years later, in the 1950s, anatomist Raymond Dart discovered a fossilized hominid human ancestor, “the so-called man-ape *Australopithecus*” (Cartmill 1995:782). Dart suggested that the genus might have included violent, predatory hunters, a suggestion that was quickly sensationalized as evidence of humankind’s “‘killer ape’ hominid ancestry” (Franklin 2001:63).

The killer-ape theory, fueled by the earlier work of Darwin as well as Dart’s later discoveries, “dominated the anthropological textbooks of the 1960s and ‘70s [and] portrayed hunting as a sort of original sin” (Cartmill 1995:782). Neo-Darwinism—the idea that the modern

human body, especially the male body, recalls a “hunting and killing species-being”—was popular among hunting critics and others eager to harp on humankind’s “murderous legacy” (Franklin 2001:63; Cartmill 1995:783). These neo-Darwinians helped create “our own familiar image of *Homo sapiens* as a crazed killer ape cutting a bloody swath across the face of sweet green Nature” (Cartmill 1995:781).

### *The Romantic Rebel*

Others have seen hunting in rosier light, as a means of appreciating nature rather than tearing it apart. While neo-Darwinism denigrated the sport, Romantic, idealistic literature “idolized [hunting] as that noble relationship with nature that was disappearing with modernity” (Franklin 2001:60). At the turn of the twentieth century, hunting was “a tonic for what ailed society” and “an antidote to two basic demasculinizing concerns of the era: domesticity and the new factory system” (Loo 2001:300; Fine 2000:812). The “cure” for modernity “lay in finding new balance between reason and passion; a recalibration achieved by seeking out authentic experiences in the primitive” (Loo 2001:300). Hunters lusted for an escape to “an unsullied, pure nature defined in opposition to humanity/modernity;” they “rejected the modern world in some way and belonged to a fraternity, a leisure cult” (Franklin 2001:65, 62).

Yet not everyone believes the narrative of a soothing “connection between body and nature” (Franklin 2001:64). Critics of the Romantic construction of hunting have characterized it as “simulation and imitation,” since “the real thing (an authentic relation with nature) [has] long since passed” (60). Cartmill (1995:784-785) maintains that the symbolic opposition that Romantics set up between the “the wild kingdom of nature and the polluted domain of human culture and history” is delusory—an arbitrary social construction. He claims that because there is nothing essential about the human-animal boundary or the culture-nature boundary, there is no justification for hunting as a type of recreation:

Our scientific knowledge of the nature of life and the history of this planet impel us to the certain conviction—whether we like it or not—that people are animals and the descendants and cousins of animals, and that the human condition is simply one aspect of the animal condition. We cannot

participate in one condition, or enjoy a vacation from the other, by the act of seeking out and killing unfriendly animals of other species (785).

For Cartmill, the notion of hunting as a Romantic escape from modernity is nothing more than a modern-day origin myth, where hunters' love of nature is a script constructed to rationalize killing.

### *The Integrated Nature-Lover*

Many modern hunters have moved away from the Romantic, rebellious ideal to embrace “a nature in which humanity is included” (Franklin 2001:66). For these people, hunting is not a complete escape, but rather a “serious leisure”—a “deeply fulfilling activity distinct from more casual ways of spending free time” (Presser and Taylor 2011:488). Part of the symbolic appeal of hunting is the idea demands a higher level of involvement than something like hiking, which requires little more than touristic observation (Bourdieu 1985; Franklin 2001). Bruckner (2007:317-318) argues: “One clear element of the value of hunting is a heightened experience and knowledge of nature [...] Hunting provides a unique access point for this experience and knowledge.” The well-rounded modern hunter “embod[ies] a quiet, modest, spatially anchored and sensitive approach to nature” (Franklin 2001:74). The integrated nature-lover craves neither blood nor Romantic rebellion, but something between the two: “an absorbing and exciting sensual engagement with the natural world” (75).

### **The Rules of the Kill**

Hunters understand, however, that many people still conceptualize them as unjustifiably violent. It is fitting, then, that they have a number of codes, rules, and rituals surrounding the death of the hunted animal. They “impose [their] own guidelines beyond the legal ones” (Cornwell 2005:15). These practices add an element of justification to what might otherwise be a thoughtless leisure act:

Hunters make much of their responsibility in killing and preparing animal foods, arguing that the consumption of meat in the city has become something of a confused, abstracted and hypocritical affair. By contrast, the hunter makes the decision to kill, decides which animal to kill and takes responsibility for its death and the redistribution and consumption of its body. Far from cloaking

themselves in the sort of guilt and shame that surrounds the killing of domesticated animals, hunters typically assume the higher moral ground. Stress is strictly given to taking only that which can be eaten or afforded by the animal population; the only articles on the act of killing tend to be instructional, on how to do it properly, which means instantly and painlessly (Franklin 2001:72).

There is an emphasis on the ethics of the clean shot or “clean kill”—of limiting suffering in any and every way possible (Cornwell 2005; Loo 2001:307; Presser and Taylor 2011). To wound the animal without killing it is usually considered failure, and it is the hunter’s responsibility to track a wounded animal down and put it out of misery (Cornwell 2005; Loo 2001; Presser and Taylor 2011). It is also common for hunters to make an effort to cover the spoils of their hunt:

“[N]onhunters rarely see a deer tied to the hood of a car” anymore, since “most hunters are careful to avoid exposing the public to such a sight” (Cornwell 2005:17). Veblenian conspicuous consumption may still occur through trophy displays, but this is usually only after animals are cleaned up and made to look alive (Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003).

#### *Justification Narratives*

Cornwell (2005:13) writes that “the question of whether hunting is right or wrong is bound up with ideas about pleasure. [...] [since] [s]uspicion of pleasure has long been said to be an essential part of the American culture.” Nonhunters are often uncomfortable with the sport precisely because it seems to be fun:

For nonhunters, killing is the most salient feature of hunting, and it is an act of which they are wary. They do not want anyone to enjoy killing, so when hunters talk about the pleasure of hunting apart from getting food, nonhunters can interpret this as pleasure in killing—a scary thought. But for hunters, killing is only occasionally, and optionally, the end to a hunt, not the whole thing (Cornwell 2005:14).

Hunters usually turn their focus away from the actual killing of animals, but they also popularly claim that they are not as distanced from the realities of where meat comes from as their nonhunter peers are. One hunter describes the first time she killed a turkey as “emotional and intense”—something that “awakened a dormant part of [her]” and forced her to “pay the full karmic price of the meal” (Pellegrini 2011). After killing game himself, another hunter is more realistic about food: “I can look my food in the eye and not hide behind the Styrofoam and plastic wrap of the grocery store” (Field & Stream 2002:2). Bruckner (2007:325) echoes:

I would argue that the non-hunting meat-eater who is content with blissful ignorance about the production of meat is actually in a worse position morally. For she likely causes more animal pain than the hunter—indeed she causes cruelty in some cases—yet has someone else do the dirty work for her. Her hands are cleaner only literally.

Bruckner's (2007) argument that hunters are in a position of moral superiority over other meat eaters claims symbolic power for the activity and thereby elevates hunters' position relative to other groups within social space (Bourdieu 1985).

Yet before they can eat hunted animals, hunters must cope with doing harm to those animals by killing them. This can require certain preconditions, like “positioning the target as lesser; the will not to think about the harm; [and] the institutional supports for not thinking about the harm” (Presser and Taylor 2011:484). The way a hunter deals with harm and death also depends on the animal; clear “demarcations are drawn between groups of targets” (485). Deer, for example, are often treated with a sort of mystical reverence (Cartmill 1993). In contrast to the view of the animal as “other,” hunting can also “[invoke] an ‘inverse anthropomorphism’ [...] in which the hunter worships and identifies with his prey and sees the world from the eyes of the hunted animal” (Scruton 1997:481, quoted in Kalof and Fitzgerald 2003:121). It's not surprising, then, that “the language used by hunters is often sanitized” so that hunters do not have to deal with the humanlike qualities of the animals they kill (Littlefield and Ozanne 2011:355) “Deer are not killed but ‘harvested’” (Littlefield and Ozanne 2011:355; Cornwell 2005). Littlefield and Ozanne (2011:356) argue that:

[T]hese hunters use language to distance themselves (and the listener) from the reality of the taking of a life and the bloody task of butchering the warm body of an animal that was breathing only minutes before. [...] [M]ost hunters [in their study] were keenly aware of the reality of killing and couched their practices within political discourses on the responsible management of land in which deer no longer have natural predators and if left unchecked would destroy local environs. Moreover, hunting deer was seen as a sustainable and more healthy way to eat.

Distancing language is a useful tactic for hunters in the field of power (Bourdieu 1985). By focusing on responsibility and sustainability (and thereby turning attention away from the potentially gruesome aspects of hunting), hunters take up a higher position in social space and

deny that violence or cruelty could be included of the “common properties” associated with “groups or institutions which are situated within [their] space” (Bourdieu 1986:16).

Another potential strategy in the field is the discussion of hunting as a kind of public service. Since many natural predators have died out and left forests overrun with animals like deer, hunting can be important tool in managing species overpopulation. Bruckner (2007) explains that if a species becomes overpopulated, animals are more likely to devour other species’ food sources, to spread disease, or to starve to death. One hunter explained, “I have seen starving deer in the wintertime and it’s enough to bring tears to your eyes, how cruel a death that is” (Cornwell 2005:5). Hunters also point out that they can be conservation- and sustainability-minded. In fact, organizations like the National Rifle Association (NRA) and National Wildlife Federation (NWF) are be surprisingly politically valuable in alliances with environmental organizations like the Sierra Club and The Roosevelt Conservation Alliance (Bass 2001). State governments often encourage hunting because of economic and political considerations as well as heritage preservation (Van de Pitte 2003). The money generated from hunting licenses and from taxes on equipment helps pay for a number of conservation initiatives (USFWS 2006).

Even though there are a number of discourses to champion the virtues of hunting, the activity is still a tensely complex moral issue. It requires “an accounting of the trade-offs we are willing to make between pragmatically based desires and our insights into the kind of people we want to be” (Van de Pitte 2003:265). Curtin (1991:70) argues for a contextualist ethic, where she says “one need not treat all interests equally as if one had no relationship to any of the parties.” Her argument corresponds with Bourdieu’s (1985:18) idea that “points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since the vision that every agent has of the [social] space depends on his or her position in that space.” Ideas about which ethics are appropriate or good can never remain uniform across social contexts because points of view depend on our individuals’ particular positions in social space.

## Class, Race, and Gender

Historically, hunting has been “part of a broad culture of colonialism,” imperialism, and racial hierarchy (Loo 2001:299). Cartmill (1995:134) explains:

In the late nineteenth century, the literature of Social Darwinism assured the people at the top of the heap that natural selection among competing individuals had given them rightful power over the poor. The power that Europeans exercised over the rest of the human race was also justified in Darwinian terms, by analogy with man’s domination over the lower animals.

Men responded to the “enervating and emasculating effects of modernity” at the turn of the century by escaping to the outdoors and big game hunting (Loo 2001:300; Littlefield and Ozanne 2011). The emphasis on a return to aggression and primitiveness echoed Neo-Darwinian ideals of the 1800s, which framed hunting as a symbolic extension of the white man’s domination “over the ‘savage races’” (Loo 2001; Cartmill 1995:135). Hunting allowed white men to reproduce these power relationships in the outdoors while they simultaneously socialized with their peers in the field of power (Loo 2001:319; Littlefield and Ozanne 2011; Bourdieu 1986). Hunting was a way for white men to maintain their position of comfort at the height of the “social topology” (Bourdieu 1985:723).

Hunting was also a means of holding onto a masculinity that modern civilization threatened to scrub away. “At worst,” Loo (2001:300) writes, “an over-civilized man was no man at all: He was a woman.” This ideology suggested that to be feminine was to be socially disempowered. When “cultural spokesmen” like Teddy Roosevelt and Boy Scout founder Robert Baden-Powell encouraged men to pursue a wild and strenuous lifestyle, lest they become feminized, men turned to the woods to avoid symbolic disempowerment (301). Smalley (2005:184) argues that hunting became even more male-centric post-World War II, at which time “male-authored discourse in hunting periodicals connected sport hunting to a new, post-war formulation of masculinity that revolved around militarism and close, emotional bonds between men,” middle- and working-class men in particular. The formerly “heterosocial” activity was

recoded as masculine, and became exclusively “homosocial” (184). It gave men “a ritualised way of ushering their sons into manhood” (204).

Whereas men who hunted fit into a natural order, women who hunted went against convention and often faced social exclusion or misunderstanding. In the popular male view, women couldn’t comprehend the meaning of hunting, were probably uneducated in the fields of weaponry and the outdoors, were obsessed with trying to “supercivilize” men, and would “undermine authentic hunting” if they came along for the trip (Smalley 2005: 195, 196). In the 1950s, domestic violence was a popular trope of hunting jokes (197). In the 1970s, hunting opposition was framed as a feminized “don’t-kill sorority,” part of the “Bambi school” (201). All of these views and frameworks seemed focused on pushing women away from hunting by portraying them as incompetent and oppositional. Men may have been anxious to keep women from entering the competition for claims of symbolic power and legitimacy (at least in the context of hunting), since female hunters threatened to chip away at symbolic male power that had traditionally remained unquestioned.

If women *did* come along on hunting trips, they were given feminine responsibilities, like setting up camp instead of seeking out game (Smalley 2005:196). Men were encouraged to treat the “hunting field as a surrogate for the battlefield,” thus reinvesting the blood sport with new social value (191). Camaraderie was crucial (193). Whereas “class and race, rather than gender, defined authentic hunting in early sportsmen’s magazines” in the late 1800s and early 1900s, postwar hunting was a place to perform masculinity among other men, and to gather trophies symbolic of male power, sexual virility, and accomplishment (Smalley 2005:188; Loo 2001; Strychacz 1993). It was an activity in which men could appraise one another, defining themselves in relation to a group (Loo 2001:310). As Bourdieu (1986:16) explains, social reality is “an ensemble of invisible relations” between positions in a field of power. A major part of the hunter’s social reality, then, was focused on proving oneself against peers by claiming a higher relative position in the field of power (Littlefield and Ozanne 2011; Bourdieu 1986).

Socially delegitimized female hunters denied that men had any “special claim on [hunting’s] practice or meanings” (Smalley 2005:187). They argued that hunting was “a respectable sport [...], not a ritualized cultural activity laden with gendered meanings” (198). Female-authored contributions to hunting magazines offered an alternate conception of hunting (201). While women perhaps knew that objective social structures afforded more status to men, they claimed symbolic legitimacy by highlighting their knowledge of the activity—even if this meant that they defined the meaning of hunting differently than their male counterparts (Smalley 2005; Bourdieu 1986).

Hunting has been and still is an overwhelmingly white male narrative (U.S. Department of the Interior 2006). Authors have suggested, however, that “assumptions about the supposed machismo and bloodlust of hunters” are unfair and reductive (Cornwell 2005:13). Littlefield and Ozanne (2011:334) argue that the stereotype of hunting as “a male flight from women into a competitive space organized around killing” is oversimplified. In reality, “analysis suggests that men build upon their childhood socialization to enact different constructions of masculinity that contain contradictory tensions between such dualisms as competition and solidarity or technology and nature” (334). As hunters mature, Littlefield and Ozanne (2011) argue, they carve out their own definitions of masculinity. Identity in postmodernity is “increasingly fragmented and diverse,” and hunting identities are “highly personal and local” (347, 355). Hunting identity and meaning, then, depend heavily on a hunter’s specific position within the field of power. What is locally true (at that hunter’s position in social space) is not always objectively true, and vice versa (Bourdieu 1986).

### **Objectives of This Study**

This thesis will be concerned with how hunters negotiate status within a Bourdieuan field of social power. It will attempt to understand how and why certain types of hunting have been denigrated or pushed to the bottom of the field of power while others have been able to sustain more symbolic legitimacy at the top of the field. I am interested in whether there is a

moral high ground among hunters—a hierarchy within an already struggling, commonly criticized subculture—depending on type of hunting and relationship to the hunted animal. If there is such a high ground, how is it connected to existing, objective social hierarchies? This research will explore the various scripts around hunting as they help construct a sense of morality and of social standing, and as they contribute to different notions of the purpose, worth, and valor of hunting.

## METHODS

In February 2012, I collected qualitative data through a series of 16 formal interviews that took place over two weeks in a medium-sized city in Alabama. My final sample of participants included 1) both lower and higher socioeconomic status hunters, 2) both female and male hunters, 3) both rural- and urban-dwelling hunters, 4) both “wing shooters” (who hunted birds but not mammals) and deer and/or “big game” hunters, 5) those who hunted in the United States (mainly in the Southeast and in Texas) and those who had hunted abroad (e.g. Argentina, England, New Zealand, and Tanzania), and finally, 6) bow hunters as well as rifle and/or shotgun hunters. I chose to conduct my research in Alabama, where I had grown up, because I already had contacts with hunters in the region.

I began by contacting Glenn<sup>2</sup>, whom I knew already as a family friend. Glenn became the central component in what would eventually be a snowball sample of 16 participants. Glenn connected me to six more participants, and through those six, I was put in contact with four female interviewees. Participants beyond Glenn’s network included other family friends and several of their suggested contacts. I set up interviews over the phone and met all participants in person—usually in their homes or workplaces, except in the case of one participant who came to my house. Interviews ranged from 10 to 80 minutes, but most lasted approximately 40 minutes. Aside from one interview conducted with John and Bill together, interviews were individual. In the final interview schedule, there were 11 major questions with 16 possible sub-questions to

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<sup>2</sup> All participant names have been changed to pseudonyms.

cover a broad range of topics related to hunting, including but not limited to activity initiation, tradition, experience, gender, exclusivity, ideals, and ethics.<sup>3</sup>

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### The Incentive

#### *What Comes Naturally*

When they were asked what drew them to hunt, several participants mentioned that they felt an innate or evolutionary pull towards the activity. Glenn told me, “I feel like I’ve got some gene that makes me want to get out and be in the woods.” No one in Glenn’s family had encouraged him to hunt or taught him how to do it; he just picked up the activity on his own as an extension of a deep interest in the outdoors. Hank, another outdoor enthusiast, explained that people have a “kind of built-in, innate desire to hunt, because we were hunter-gatherers from the beginning of time.” He also argued that “hunting fill[ed] a need in [the] psyche.” Bill made note of this innate longing as well, calling it “the hunter-gatherer mystique.”

The sensational killer ape legacy that Cartmill (1995) described in the literature is problematic as an explanation of the desire to hunt (Franklin 2001). But while it would be inaccurate to portray hunting as uniformly or necessarily savage, participants were not remiss to acknowledge some level of barbarism in their actions. A handful of deer hunters described the popular tradition of smearing blood on a new hunter’s face to celebrate his or her first kill. As he showed me a photograph of his two daughters with blood painted onto their cheeks, Phil described the ritual as “a little barbaric,” but was hardly concerned. And Louis, who only hunted birds, admitted with resignation that hunting “is barbaric; it is tribal; it is male; it is ego.” Nonetheless, he could decidedly say, “I’m still going to do it!” Several participants echoed Hank’s assertion that hunting was “natural—nothing cruel or unusual about it” (Hank). As Phil put it, we “live within the animal world,” and “from time and memorial, man has been ordained

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for full interview schedule.

to dominate the rest of the animal world.” Denise added that hunting was “not something to be sorry or sad about.”

### *Escaping the Rat Race*

The other narratives found in the literature—those of the Romantic Rebel and the Integrated Nature-Lover—found more support in interview data than that of the Killer Ape. In support of the Integrated Nature-Lover discourse, Louis told me that during a hunt, his senses are “absolutely at their premium,” to the point where he has become “instinctive, out of control, defensive.” Participants who backed the Romantic Rebel narrative were quick to mention that hunting was a valuable departure from the demands of their everyday lives. “Because everybody’s moved off of the land and into the city,” Louis told me, “now there’s this move to enjoy the outdoors, and hunting is part of that.” Phil concurred, “just being able to sit back and relax and be distracted from the regular stress of your surroundings is, to me, a very enjoyable thing.”

The Romantic need to escape to hunting was not just the concern of men who had historically feared demasculinization at the onset of modernity, as Loo (2001) suggests, but also of women overwhelmed by the stresses of contemporary domestic life. “Now [that] I have a child,” Melissa said, “it’s a getaway. You get to sit, quietly, in a tree all by yourself.” Denise put it this way: “You know, it’s just, I run a rat race all the time, every day, working and having [my] three children and all, and so sometimes I just like to go and be still.” Vicki, too, felt relaxed by being alone on a hunt. “I don’t interfere with [my husband’s] downtime and he doesn’t interfere with mine,” she said emphatically. Of course, male hunters also mentioned their need to withdraw, at times, from a domestic life that they may see as being more suited for women. Phil said, “I think maybe it’s an exposure issue, where husbands want to have a break and get away from the doldrums of home, and wives enjoy being at home.”

### *Family and Fellowship*

But the most popular reason to hunt was not related to innate desire or relief from mundane stress; rather, it was concerned with the benefits of hunting as a family or social group activity. “The social value of hunting cannot be disputed” (Bruckner 2007:318). Denise thought hunting was imperative to a healthy family life: “It’s been so good for my family,” she said with an air of gratefulness. “[My kids] stayed out of trouble, you know, and it’s because we as a family took the time to hunt together and spend time together, and [we] still do” (Denise). For William, the actual hunting was not nearly as important as the opportunity it provided for him to spend time with his father, who worked away from home most of the week but hunted with William on weekends. Hunting, William said, “was one of the ways we spent constructive time together. Hunting and the environment of hunting provides the opportunity to learn a lot of life lessons, and my dad used that.” Hunting had helped William “learn how to fit in with adults.” Similarly, Louis told me that hunting had provided him a rare chance to connect with his stepdad. Now, as a father, Louis used hunting to bond with his own teenage son. It was “an inviting opportunity to have conversation that’s not as guarded, that’s more natural” (Louis).

Participants often took on a kind of vicarious enjoyment in hunting, finding great excitement in watching their children triumph in the activity. Brian, a father of four girls, told me, “Probably all my daughters’ first deer [that they killed] mean more to me than anything I could ever do in the hunt. [...] Every one of theirs will be more of a memory than anything I ever hunt or kill.” Phil also recalled, “[My son] and I were in the stand together when he killed his first deer, and I’ll never forget it; it was wonderful.” Louis’ self-proclaimed favorite hunting experience was “calling up a turkey for [his son] and having him kill it.” Louis described this as “world class.” Major emphasis was placed on a person’s initiation into hunting via the first kill. As Brian put it, “I don’t care who you are; anybody’s first animal is always...you will remember it ‘til the day you die, how everything went down.” While more seasoned hunters could certainly still find thrill in hunting, they professed deep enjoyment in facilitating a positive initial

experience for their children. Zach was particularly rejuvenated by the teaching experience, and told me that when he watched his children “become involved, all of a sudden it’s new again. Everything is new again, because you see it through their eyes.”

Beyond the benefits it can provide for a family, hunting can also be an important tool for fellowship, camaraderie, and networking. “It has some similarities to golf or tennis” in that way, Louis said. According to William, “hunting is as much a social thing as it was a thing to go out and just kill something. It was to be with the people you wanted to be with.” It makes sense, then, that the first time Phil ever went hunting was during a fraternity brothers’ reunion, and that Richard’s first hunt happened after a coworker invited him on a dove hunt. Hunting can also be an important career tool. Louis explained, “in my position as a salesperson, [hunting is] a wonderful way to entertain someone and to find out what floats their boat and therefore make my job of selling to them easier.”

### **The Justification**

#### *The Nonessential Kill*

Because we live in an economically secure and technologically advanced country, there is no necessity behind the killing of animals (Curtin 1991). This can make the practice seem much less justified, fueling arguments that hunting feeds into “trivial human interests” without any deeper purpose (Van de Pitte 2003:259). While hunting may have been a useful way for participants to entertain friends or clients, most of them had never come close to having to hunt for subsistence or out of necessity.

Tyler, a construction worker, came the closest to such necessity when he told me that, growing up, “all [his family] ate really was cereal and game. So I was brought up eating raccoons, possums, armadillos. [...] You know, we were low-end-of-the-totem-pole people, so we didn’t go to the stores much.” At the time of our interview, he told me that hunting is no longer a prerequisite to sustenance, but that it was necessary in the sense that “somebody’s got to take care of the numbers.” Brian suggested that the meat he acquires from hunting is not essential, but has

certainly helped his family get by: “I tell folks all the time, I got four daughters and a wife at home—all the meat I can get, the better off it is, especially as high [priced] as food is these days.” Glenn, a white collar deer hunter who presumably does not have to worry about subsistence, told me assuredly that “the old days where you had to, you know, feed your family...I mean, those things don’t exist. I mean, not anybody that I know does that.”

It is likely the case that there are still pockets of people who hunt out of dire need; however, all participants in this study had reached a basic level of comfort at which subsistence hunting was not essential. And since hunting was not, in fact, essential to their survival, it became necessary for them to find other means of justifying their controversial brand of leisure—of framing it in ways that made it appear essential once again. As Cornwell (2005:1) explains, “criticisms of hunting influence hunters’ accounts and language when they speak of what they do and feel while hunting,” perhaps catalyzing them to delineate specific, rationalized reasons for hunting beyond their own thrill or enjoyment.

### *Food for Thought*

Contrary to Loo’s (2001) suggestion that hunters would try to signify status by avoiding productive use of a hunted animal, the primary justification narrative for participants came in eating the animals that they hunted or giving the meat to people in need. “I am an animal lover...I only harvest what I can eat, what my family eats” (Tyler). Others supported this idea. “To kill and not eat it,” Richard said, “I think is certainly not appropriate.” Hank echoed, “I hate to let anything lose life for no purpose.” Literature suggests that hunters often place great emphasis on eating what they kill, schematizing themselves as morally superior to non-hunter meat-eaters because they are less distanced from the animals they consume (Pellegrini 2011; Bruckner 2007; Cornwell 2005; Franklin 2001; Bass 2001). Vicki said, “[People who don’t hunt] don’t rationalize the thought [that], well, you’re going to eat [animals] anyway; it’s just like eating a cow or something.” She added that being able to provide food made the potential dullness of hunting worthwhile: “Knowing that you’re putting food on the table makes it worthwhile to sit there and

sometimes never see anything” (Vicki). Similarly, Melissa said, “We don’t buy hamburger meat at the store; we eat deer meat all year long. So it’s a means of feeding my family. [...] It’s just the same as going and buying chicken at the store to me.”

Other participants, especially those who often ended up giving meat away to others rather than eating it at home, used the food narrative more explicitly as a justification—a way to make them feel more ethically secure in their actions. Michael admitted that “when you harvest an animal like that and you eat it and that kind of thing, you feel a bit...I think you feel better about the situation, because that’s what you would do anyway, whether it’s a cow and [you’re] eating a steak or whatnot.” John told me, “I make sure my kids understand [that] you don’t just shoot animals; they have to be game animals that we’re going to harvest for a reason, that the food will be eaten.” Finally, Glenn and William seemed to open up to me the most when they admitted, either directly or through suggestion, to having to validate their actions to themselves:

*I have before—and some people do, after you shoot it—I have before gotten a little guilt complex about doing it. [...] You know...Why did I really need to do this? And then you sort of get beyond that and say, well, we’re going to give the meat to somebody, or I’m going to eat this or do that or whatever. (William)*

*I feel bad...sometimes. When you kill one. But you know, no different than that is if somebody kills a cow or a chicken or something like that. It’s just part of the food chain. (Glenn)*

Glenn’s case was interesting because he is married to a vegetarian, and he and his wife have what Glenn jokingly termed a “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy when it comes to his hunting. Yet he, along with most other participants, skirted the issue of vegetarianism and avoided the notion that humans do not fundamentally have to have meat, perhaps because they knew that their argument would be immensely weakened if they encountered a vegetarian critique. Participants spoke under the assumption that meat-eating would happen anyway, regardless of whether the meat came from the woods or from a grocery store. In this way, they positioned themselves as mere players in a much more complex game of meat-eating in general, and implicated all other meat-eaters in this larger moral struggle. “You say that you hate me because I kill animals,” Louis said, “and yet, you do the same damn thing.” His use of the hypothetical, generalized “you”

played on the idea that most people eat meat, and will therefore “at least [tolerate]” a hunter’s killing of animals if they are used for food (Jasper and Nelkin 1992, cited in Cornwell 2005:11).

### *Managing the Resource*

Another popular justification narrative was that of resource management—of the need to strike a careful balance between nature and civilization. As sociological literature demonstrates, hunting is frequently conceptualized as a kind of public service (Cornwell 2005). Hank described how deer overpopulation has made his hunting a necessary service:

If they didn’t need to be hunted and they weren’t overpopulated or anything, I’d be perfectly happy going to the woods and leaving the gun at the house, and just taking a set of binoculars and just sitting up there and watching them. Wouldn’t kill a one. But that ain’t how it works. Most people got this Walt Disney Studios thing in their mind, you know. That’s not nature. Nature’s a pretty cruel mistress.

From Hank’s perspective, hunters were protecting animals from a greater cruelty than they might face without proper population control. He told me without irony, “I have no need to kill. It’s just a necessity.” Hunters, to him and many others, were guardians to animals. “As a hunter, I’m probably more protective of animals,” John told me.

Many participants felt that people who couldn’t realize the importance of hunting simply didn’t have an accurate understanding of the situation. Brian explained, “If we don’t do our part, they’re gonna inbreed and get diseases. We have to control the herd so they’re healthy. And that—you can’t get everybody to understand that if you don’t do nothing, they’re just going to die on their own in a more inhumane way.” Bill added that “the animals benefit tremendously. Not the one that you kill, but the herd, the species, obviously. Sportsmen are the ones that have funded that, more than anything else.”

Participants like Brian and Bill used this argument—that hunters understand and protect the nuances of nature better than anti-hunters—to promote themselves in the field of power and to tout their symbolic legitimacy (Bourdieu 1986). Hank claimed value for hunting in social space when he said, “one proper, managing hunter that knows what he’s doing is worth a hundred anti-hunters, because he will do more for game in his lifetime than all those mouthpieces against it.”

In support of literature that suggests that conservationist organizations like The Sierra Club would do well to align with hunters, William explained that “some of the people that you know are the best hunters are the best conservationists, too, because they see both sides of it.” Zach, who had hunted big game animals in Africa, described what he did as “the opposite [of harmful],” and “one of the few things [in Africa] that is slowing, restraining the harm” by giving paid concession owners an incentive to police animal poaching.

*“It’s Really Not About That”*

Perhaps the most obvious way for hunters to justify the nonessential kill is to turn the focus squarely away from the idea of killing as the logical end point of a hunt. As could be expected from the literature, almost every participant stated that hunting was *not* actually about the kill (Cornwell 2005). Both Glenn and Michael told me that the point of hunting was not killing, but being outside in the woods. Glenn added:

What does not appeal to me is people who pay thousands of dollars to fly to Texas and then they turn on the feeder and the deer comes out and they shoot him. That just has zero appeal to me; that’s just, to me, is killing. Hunting to me is [when] you go out and you match your wits against whatever animal you’re hunting.

For Zach, too, killing by itself was not the central desire: “You *shouldn’t* win every time. It wouldn’t be hunting at that point; it would be killing.” Brian agreed that “if you went out every time and killed one, that’s all it’d be called, is killing. That’s why it’s called hunting.” William and Hank both pointed out that actually killing an animal creates the need for a lot more work, like cleaning, dressing, and transporting the animal. “As a matter of fact,” Hank said, “it’s probably the more detestable part of the whole endeavor.” Finally, Richard described the hunt as an appreciation of the process instead of a race to some end point: “The killing is not, in my opinion, the enjoyable part of hunting. It’s really the process of being out there—the dog work, the actual shot. But killing an animal, to me, is not a thrill. It’s just the end result.”

Only Louis laid bare his own struggle to conceptualize the kill as a part of hunting. He told me that he had once heard a church sermon about “the sinful people that actually derive

pleasure from killing creatures,” and when I asked if he thought it was true that there was pleasure in killing, he was honest about his own moral confusion:

Um...I get pleasure out of beating the turkey on his terrain. I get pleasure out of being a marksman—a successful marksman that I can get a dove, a duck or a quail. [...] Unlike fishing, you can't catch and release. Unlike tennis or golf, it's an activity that, you know, it's final. When you shoot them, they're dead. So, yeah, it might be better if it was an activity—Well, let me say it this way: I love to go shoot sporting clays, but I like to shoot birds more.

### **The Field of Power**

As mentioned throughout the literature review, hunting holds a great deal of meaning as it relates to social status and symbolic legitimacy. Through my interviews, I found not only that hunting has grown more economically exclusive, defying Smalley's (2005:192) claim that it is a sport reserved for the “rough side” of society, but also that hunters of all socioeconomic backgrounds had developed discourses to valorize their personal practices. Whether explicit or implicit, these legitimizing statements served to position participants in a Bourdieuan field of symbolic power.

#### *Exclusivity*

An objective form of power, economic capital is a base component in the conversation between objective and subjective power. Nearly all participants agreed that economic power had begun to define the hunting experience more and more, which often had the effect of marginalizing hunters with fewer monetary resources:

The doctors and the lawyers...the more bigger money folks, [are] leasing up better land, you know. They figure out...People figure out where you kill a big deer, and it's a real cutthroat industry. [...] They'll go to the owner of the land that you're leasing from and outbid you a couple thousand dollars just to get the land, cause they know big deer's on there. And it's hard. Had that happen this year. (Brian)

It's crowded out the average person that doesn't have the money to afford all the expenses. (Glenn)

With the exception of Hank and Tyler—both rural-dwelling participants who claimed that it was possible to find land to hunt on as long as a hunter was willing to look hard enough—participants assured me that hunting had become a “supply and demand situation”—a big business (Louis).

Hunters who did not own or have access to private land needed to either find public hunting

land—a resource that Zach told me is very hard to come by in the Southeast, where there are fewer national forests and acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land—or pay a hefty fee to lease land for a hunting season. Leasing could be a hassle, Brian explained, because paying for the lease often necessitated sharing the cost (and by extension, the land) with a number of other people. This could quickly detract from the optimal experience, Brian explained, since “[you’re] gonna have way too many people and not see near as many deer because there’s more people hunting; there’s more pressure.”

Whether purposeful or not, the most ostentatious displays of economic status usually came from the bird hunters (Susan, Richard, and Louis) and those who had hunted extensively in foreign countries (Richard, Zach, and Phil). Susan, a quail hunter, explained that “the wild birds are so hard to find now because of habitat,” so “now, all your hunting preserves [have] tame birds that are released.” Richard added that “hawks, snakes, armadillos, pesticides, and also the method of farming” had “decimated” the bird population. The tame, pinned birds that most bird hunters pursued in the aftermath of this decimation were very expensive. Even when the birds being hunted were wild (as was the norm in the case of ducks or turkeys), hunting them was still what Louis called a “wealthy person’s activity:”

To go on a half day quail hunt is 300 bucks. To go on a one day duck hunt is four to 500 bucks. To turkey hunt, I have to spend 2000 dollars for *my* share of a lease that’s split up with three people. [...] So, yeah, to do what I do, wing hunting, yeah, it’s become very difficult for people to afford.  
(Louis)

Richard, who arguably represented the pinnacle of economic power among participants, told me, “I’ve hunted with people that have 60, 70, 80 thousand dollar guns [...] so there’s a real interest in fine shotguns.” Richard could afford, quite literally, to focus on fine weaponry and well-trained bird dogs because he had never been in the position of struggling to pay for a lease or needing to hunt for food. For him, hunting often took on concerns of form over function, exemplifying Veblenian (1899) conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. In England, he dressed in a coat and tie before embarking on his “more sporting type of hunting” (Richard).

### *Constructing Oneself as a “Sportsman”*

Interviewees had very specific ideas about what type of hunting was respectable enough to be called “sport” and what was not as tasteful. Their ideas had sometimes changed in response to outside opinions. For example, both John and Bill described how deer hunters had gradually become more and more careful not to offend certain people: “As far as transporting the animals, we’re very discreet about that,” Bill told me. “Used to be people would put them on the hood of their cars as a trophy, you know, and that’s very distasteful; that humors the anti-hunting group” (Bill). Even deer hunters’ language had changed to become more “sanitized,” as evidenced by John’s frequent use of the term “harvesting” in place of “killing” (Littlefield and Ozanne 2011:355; John). Hunters’ notions of what was tasteful had shifted over time, largely contingent on their perceptions of other people’s perceptions. These shifts offer support for Bourdieu’s (1986) argument that social life is an ever-changing interaction between objective social structures and the subjective perceptions and internalizations of those structures.

Bruckner (2007:322) states that “not every meat eater can be defended morally,” and points to the example of “so-called ‘slob’ hunters [who] hunt drunk, trespass, litter, cut fence, act belligerently, and violate game laws by hunting out of season or exceeding harvest limits.” Louis, a bird hunter, was adamant in his resistance to being categorized with ill-reputed hunters like these. He delineated his personal qualms around deer hunters, which were also heavily influenced by his perception and fear of negative outside judgments:

Between us boys, I hate deer hunters. Always have. Because...not all of them, but dear God, there are hunters who would kill a deer, strap it on the front of their car and ride all over the neighborhood. And it’s disrespectful to the animal; it’s disrespectful to the event; and it gives a bad name to every other hunter. I mean, people group deer hunters in with turkey hunters or wing shooters, and they’re all the same [to them]—all they are is just out there to scratch ass, get drunk, kill something and drive all over the neighborhood honking their horn; I hate that. You know, it’s disrespectful; it’s not appreciative of...of, you know, of hunting. I just hate it. (Louis)

From Louis’ standpoint, deer hunters actively dragged down the reputation of hunting in general, making it all the more important that Louis verbally separate himself from them in a field of power. Because both he and Richard only hunted birds, they felt that they could claim status over

people who hunted larger animals. Louis admitted, “The truth is, I consider myself a little bit hierarchical than a deer hunter.” Richard, correspondingly, said, “I think the bird hunter is—I don’t want to be snobbish, but it’s more of a gentlemanly sport.” He even went so far as to tell me: “I don’t hunt animals. [...] I just don’t personally like killing the animals. I think birds are different...and fish [are different], and you know, deer or elk...I don’t have any interest in it” (Richard). Through his argument that birds were “different,” Richard rejected nominal categorization as an animal hunter and insinuated that an interest in killing mammals was beneath him in the field of power—that what he did was should be classified as a gentleman’s sporting, not a redneck’s killing (Bourdieu 1986).

Bird hunters and deer hunters were often in agreement, however, on the point that “safari” style hunting was not as admirable as other, more challenging styles of hunting. In Veblenian (1899) terms, safari hunting did not hold the valor and worth associated with noble exploit. The kind of hunting that Phil, a deer and safari hunter, had done—“where [concession owners] breed the animals and then they stick them in this high-fence area and then you shoot them”—may have indicated some measure of economic power, but it also decreased his symbolic power in the eyes of many other participants who found less “sport” in hunting pinned or fenced animals (Phil). Susan, a quail hunter, told me, “Once you’ve hunted the wild [birds] it’s real hard to hunt the tame, because there’s not a great deal of sport in it, to me. Most of the times you have to kick the birds up for them to fly.” William said he would not hunt pinned or fenced animals because “it breaks the rule of sportsmanship to me. [...] It’s not, sort of, the natural order of things, the way I look at it.” Five more participants told me a “safari” hunt had no appeal for them, and often cited that it didn’t seem to have much “purpose” (Denise). “It just seems like such a waste to kill a big animal like that,” Louis said. “I mean, that’s just goofy. Why? What’s the purpose?”

Comments like these indicated that a large part of the discourse around defining respectable “sport” had to do with the way hunters handled and made use of the hunted animals.

John told me, “There’s sport in [hunting] if you do it the right way, not just to get an animal or shoot an animal, but to show it respect and enjoy doing it.” Participants were less accepting of safari-style hunting because they usually perceived it as less respectful or purposeful and more focused on bringing home a trophy. Glenn said, “I think that for those people who go out and pay a bunch of money and they fly somewhere and shoot some animal sitting in a field and put it on the wall...that to me is just a kill; I mean, that’s not really hunting to me.” Zach, who had hunted big game animals abroad, seemed to understand that other hunters would doubt the legitimacy of his actions. Accordingly, he claimed symbolic status over other kinds of safari hunters through a discourse of challenge and fairness:

How you hunt [in Africa] is a big difference, because they have people—you can either do the paid hunt, where you drive over, see the animal, jump out or don’t jump out of the truck, shoot it, and that’s your animal. Or you can do the fair game chase in an open area—no fences. That’s what we do—open game chase.

For Zach, hunting without fences in a “fair game chase” meant that his brand of hunting was more challenging than a fenced-in safari, and thus more valid within the field of power. Yet Phil, as a fenced-in safari hunter, found ways to emphasize the challenge in the type of hunting he did. He explained that even though he hunted in a fenced-in area, “we weren’t riding in cars; we were climbing up rocks, going down valleys, going in creeks, slipping, falling, checking the path” (Phil). Regardless of the type of hunting done, each hunter found a way to frame his or her actions in such a way as to claim at least a base level of symbolic power.

### *Appropriate Challenge*

Participants used aforementioned discourses of challenge to legitimize themselves within the field of power. The most common discourse of challenge happened when bow hunters, either consciously or subconsciously, ranked themselves above rifle hunters.<sup>4</sup> Denise told me that she switched from a rifle to a bow because “[deer hunting] just became...It’s too easy [with a rifle]. You know, not much of a challenge if you’re in a good place, if you’ve got a lot of deer.”

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<sup>4</sup> A modern rifle has a range of 200-300 yards, compared to a bow, which has a range of about 40 yards (Bruckner 2007).

Similarly, Glenn told me that “[bow hunting] makes it more challenging, kind of puts you on an even plane with the animal, versus a gun where you can kill them from hundreds of yards away.”

To bow hunters, the fine line between hunting and killing was defined by the amount of time, skill, strategy, and effort required of a rifle hunter versus a bow hunter:<sup>5</sup>

I’ve killed so many deer in *my* life that if I shoot something with a rifle, I don’t get nervous. It comes out, I kill it. I mean, it’s just...it’s killing. And I don’t like that part of it, you know. So I bow hunt, and it’s the *challenge* of getting them close and it’s the thrill of having one that close where I can draw a bow. And that’s what separates the bow hunters from the rifle hunters right there... (Brian)

If I wanted to kill something, I’d just pick up a rifle or even a compound [bow]. But long bows and recurves are a whole different ball game, you know, much more difficult. (Bill)

Outsiders to hunting also reinforced Bill’s perception that what he did was more valorous and justifiable than rifle hunting. Bill, a doctor, told me that when he tells his patients that he hunts using traditional archery (which is more difficult and less common than hunting with a rifle or a compound bow), they usually respond with, “Well, that’s different; that gives the animal more of a chance.”

When hunting seemed more fair and challenging—as it usually did when a rifle was *not* involved—it was also generally perceived as more justified. William, who hunted deer, seemed acutely aware of this when he told me, “I’ve never bow hunted. [...] Most people say [they hunt with] rifles and shotguns and bows, right?” He knew that rifle hunting was perceived as less challenging than bow hunting, and in anticipation of this perception he offered a counter-argument: “The probability of [making a clean kill] with a rifle is much higher [than with a bow]. You shoot a deer with a bow, hardly ever you really knock it down, because they usually run and they usually bleed to death. [...] I’m not particularly fond of that” (William).

William’s narrative did not fit in so well with the discourse of challenge, but he made up for this in his appeal to the common ideal that there should be as little animal pain as possible.

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<sup>5</sup> This skill- and effort-based ideology aligns with John Rawls’ Aristotelian principle, which explains that “after mastering an activity, people seek variation or refinement on the activity that [...] presents new and greater challenges that require more strenuous exertion of refined action” (Bruckner 2007:318).

This kind of appeal to an alternate perception of values is described in Bourdieu's (1986:20) argument that social agents are involved in constant "symbolic struggles over the perception of the social world." These individuals would like to present the most appealing "image of [their] position in social space," and they often do this by "trying to transform categories of perception and appreciation of the social world" like William did (20). The most efficient way for William to negotiate his symbolic power among bow hunters was to offer an alternate representation of bow hunting as something more likely to cause harm and pain for an innocent animal.

Some participants also framed rifle hunting as appropriately challenging, and therefore excusable, for younger hunters but not older ones. Even Bill, who hunted using traditional archery (perhaps the most challenging option available), and who told me he had "frankly become more and more anti-gun," conceded, "I let the young folks shoot compounds if they've never killed any deer." John added, "Kids, we let them do whatever to try to keep them interested in what's happening." Children were automatically assigned to a lesser position in the field of power because they were assumed to be less skilled. There was a tacit assumption, however, that these children would eventually take on the skills and practices of higher-status hunters in an example of Veblenian (1899) pecuniary emulation.

Since bird hunting usually required a shotgun and thus excluded the option of using a bow entirely, the wing shooters found other ways to champion the challenge in their sport and valorize themselves within the field of power. Richard explained that whereas in wing shooting, where "birds are flying 50, 60 miles an hour," in deer hunting, "the shot is less difficult because the animal is typically standing still." He excluded bow hunting from this judgment, however, because the bow "[creates] a greater disadvantage because [bow hunters] have to be relatively close," (Richard). Louis told me that turkey hunting, which usually requires a hunter to "call" the turkey up using a special device that mimics mating sounds, requires massive amounts of strategy and patience. The turkey hunter was met with the challenge of "beating the turkey on his terrain" (Louis).

### *Real Hunters*

Beyond the various discourses of challenge, different participants had different definitions of the “proper” way to hunt (Hank). I noticed straightaway that the blue collar, rural-dwelling participants (Hank, Brian, Tyler) had developed much more specific ideas about what constituted authentic hunting. Although they could not claim economic or cultural capital over some of the other sorts of hunters, they gripped tightly to their extensive hunting experience and detailed knowledge of the land and the wildlife to prove their symbolic power. From Tyler’s point of view, other, less experienced hunters simply could not understand what he understood:

Say you’ve got somebody who goes out once or twice a [deer] season and sits on something they planted for the deer, which, you know, a lot of people do that here. They’re really missing most of it. They are. And I feel sad for them. [Laughs] Me, I’d never sit on a green field. I’m hunting something at least four times a week. Sometimes seven days a week. If I can get out there for 30 minutes, I’ll get out there for 30 minutes. I live out there; the animals are in my front yard. (Tyler)

Tyler, who also took extreme care to hide his scent before stalk-hunting deer with a bow, found a near-perfect foil in Phil, a white collar lawyer who unabashedly explained how he set up decoy green fields and waited, in a deer stand, for the animals to come out and graze so that he could shoot them with a rifle from afar. Phil had not mastered the ethic of the clean shot—of making sure an animal does not run away, wounded: “If we shoot one, we track it as much as we can,” he told me. “Sometimes they get away, sometimes they don’t” (Phil). This statement found Phil another foil in Hank, who explained that he would never be so nonchalant about letting a wounded deer get away:

I love every one of them deer just like it was a child, and when I shoot that deer I want it to drop right where it’s at. I don’t want it to run off and lay up somewhere for a day and a half, bleeding to death, or get caught wounded by a pack of coyotes and tore up. That’s a terrible thing. A real hunter, that’s one of the biggest ethics he’s got, is the appreciation of the game that he hunts. So you owe it to that animal to be able to hit exactly where you aim, and know exactly where to aim, and not take unethical running shots and stupid stuff like that. Those kind of people I don’t want around me.

Unbeknownst to Phil, a number of hunters were using his hypothetical example to outline what inauthenticity and lack of skill looked like.

Another important part of the authenticity narrative was the idea that a real hunter did not hunt for image purposes, but instead hunted out of profound passion for the activity. Susan described this “passion” as “something that just captures you, and you think about it all day long.” She told me, “I have loved [hunting] for 40 years and I think about it all the time.” Tyler, who also put extensive thought into hunting, said, “It is a rush. It’s a passion. Just something I love the most...besides my family.” These hunters cared about wildlife beyond the desire to bring home a pair of antlers, and consequently found an unsettling inauthenticity in those hunters who were seemingly just out for a trophy. Brian told me, “People’s gotten away from what hunting really is. You know, when we was young we went out and whatever we saw that was legal [to kill, within regulations], we killed it. [...] Now, people want the biggest buck out there or it’s no good.”

#### *Acknowledging the Field*

Within the field of power, participants vacillated between the objective truth and the local truth—the reality from a factual standpoint and the reality from their unique position in the field. William elucidated this dialectic struggle between truths when he explored the possibility that his claim of status over people who hunted fenced or pinned animals might only be true from a local standpoint: “You know, when you look at it objectively, [hunting captive animals] might not be any different than going out in the woods and killing. But to me it is” (William). In admitting this, William acknowledged that his views might be distorted by his position in the field of power.

After describing several mistakes and accidents he had been involved in while hunting, he also asked, “Did anybody else ever tell you about kinds of events like this, or were all of them heroes; were all of them real smart?” In posing this question with sarcasm, William illuminated the fact that, regardless of their position in the field of power, participants would endeavor to create the best image of themselves possible, to fashion themselves as valorous heroes, and to therefore lean towards excluding any discussion of self-doubt or shortcoming. Participants who broke this code

seemed cognizant of the fact that they had pulled back some proverbial curtain to expose a dusted over, confused backstage.

### **Gender in the Field**

The social pressure to be heroic and self-assured also seemed to fall much more heavily on the shoulders of male hunters than females. For example, Phil told me that the first time he went hunting, as a grown man at a fraternity reunion, “I did not own a gun; I borrowed a gun, didn’t know how to shoot it. I was embarrassed to say I didn’t know how to load it.” Phil’s embarrassment seemed to stem from his internalization of gendered expectations of the kind of knowledge and skills that a “southern gentleman” should have (Louis). At face value, this social pressure might be attributed to the fact that there are many more male hunters in general (i.e. a larger group of people to create a greater social pressure), but gender no doubt also had a huge effect on how participants defined themselves within the field of power.

#### *Not Brought Up That Way*

Some participants took the overwhelming maleness of hunting to be a self-evident truth. Upon further analysis, their assumptions offered support for Bourdieu’s (1986:18) idea that an individual’s notion of “social reality” is also an “object of perception” influenced by that individual’s “determinate position within social space.” From their position of symbolic dominance (as men in a sport that has historically been reserved for men), it was sometimes difficult for male participants to see that there were social realities beyond their own. Glenn told me that when he killed something for the first time, “I was a little boy and that’s what little boys do, I guess. I didn’t think much about it.” John recalled, “My first hunting experience, obviously, is going with my dad.” The idea that a father or older man would initiate a boy into hunting was so strongly supported in John’s local culture that it became, in his mind, “obvious;” it ceased to even be a question. The “familiar world tends to be ‘taken for granted,’ perceived as natural” (Bourdieu 1986:18).

Other interviewees were more aware that truth was variable, and could be constructed through socio-cultural traditions, norms, and expectations:

When I was growing up, there weren't many women hunters. The women played the old southern roles, staying at home. That's changed over the years. (William)

I think more women would be hunting now if they had the exposure as children. I don't think they got that exposure as children, because when they were coming up, in particular, my generation, you know, early 70s, girls still did girl things, boys did boy things, and the two did not meet. They did not cross paths. And so it's just an evolution of society. (Zach)

A number of participants corroborated the fact that women were less likely to have anyone introduce them to hunting during their upbringing. "I think that if a man takes his child out [hunting], more likely it's a son," Tyler said. Louis called hunting "a male passage, so to speak." Brian argued that this was why women were less likely to develop a passion for the activity than men who were raised doing it: "It seems to me, most women, their daddies or whatever didn't take them hunting; it was either a boyfriend or a husband. They get started later in life [...] and I think that's the difference." Richard agreed that women "typically started hunting because of their husband or boyfriend." Hunting was not as important to their social, cultural, or personal identity development as it was for men, and they were therefore more likely to leave it behind or never start.

#### *Who's Impressed?*

The women I interviewed had never been expected to have the interests or skills of a hunter. In fact, they told me that other people were often surprised or even puzzled when they learned about the hobby. Denise explained:

I just enjoy it, and I know a lot of people find that hard to understand. How do you enjoy going and sitting in the freezing cold, you know? But it's relaxation. [...] Because I'm a woman [people will say], "Why would you—Wouldn't you rather be going shopping?" You know, I'm like, "No..." I don't like to shop.

Denise was not the only one to specifically mention something so seemingly arbitrary as the cold in relation to the dearth of female hunters. In response to my asking why so few women hunt, Brian told me without hesitation, "the cold. That's the number one thing I hear, is cold, and they get bored a little quicker." Melissa agreed, "Not many women want to get up and sit in the

freezing cold,” and said, “I don’t think that they give it a shot. [...] And then if they do go and they don’t see anything, then that’s not exciting either, and that’ll burn them out.” Glenn explained that, for his daughter, “being cold and wet and getting up at four or five in the morning would be tough.” Tyler said, “It can get a little gory, sometimes. And that may be some of the reason.” Michael agreed that “a lot of women are kind of grossed out by the blood.”

On the surface, the repetitive mention of women’s aversions to certain factors and conditions seemed trivial, even superfluous. But as I realized that these same factors (which I would imagine are uniformly unpleasant, regardless of one’s gender) were never described as challenging or off-putting to men, it became clear that the claims actually served to imply that women were not tough enough for the mental and physical trials of hunting. The cold, the boredom, the blood—it was all too much for them. Sexism was a strategy in the struggle for power and legitimacy in the field of power. The fact that women were also among the participants who mentioned factors like the cold only shows how tightly they had woven outside social constructions into the fabrics of their own realities, internalizing the narratives of their own weakness. Bourdieu (1986:18) offers explanation for the internalization of discrimination in his assertion that “agents, even the most disadvantaged ones, tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it much more readily than one might imagine.” For women as well as men, sexism in the field of power was not conceptualized as sexism; it was just reality.

When women *did* kill animals, it was more impressive to outsiders, to male hunters, and even to the women themselves, who seemed to hold themselves at an either consciously or subconsciously lower standard:

Everybody that comes [into my house and sees the deer I killed] is like, “Wow.” With being a woman, and with there being so few of us [female hunters] out there, a lot of people are just really surprised when they see a woman actually *can* track a deer or call a deer in and outwit it, and be able to kill something. (Vicki)

[People] are just like, ‘Wow!’ Especially men, you know. My husband loves to tell everybody that I’m a bow hunter, cause that’s a hard thing to do. And not a lot of women can do it. A lot of women can shoot rifles. (Denise)

Melissa even told me that as a woman, “I think I have more bragging rights when I kill something.” In saying this, she seemed oblivious to the underlying notion that she and other women could claim more power and more “bragging rights” for a kill because not as much knowledge, skill, valor, or heroism was expected of them in the first place.

### *The Joke of Emotions*

There was also an expectation that women would be more emotional, maybe too emotional to hunt. Louis explained, “[My wife] pulls for the animal. She’d never kill something. It’d just be awful. She couldn’t do it.” It would be “painful for her to see the animal suffer” (Louis). Michael agreed, “the actual killing of an animal—It’s tough for most women. Just because they’re a little more emotional, I’d say.” In response to Louis’ and Michael’s statements, I asked, “Well, was it ever difficult for *you* to shoot an animal?”

Yeah, it really wasn’t. It was a little tough at first, but after you have done it a few times it’s not something that bothers you as much, I think. (Michael)

No, it really wasn’t. It really wasn’t. I can remember accidentally killing a frog when I was playing golf one time, and it really bothered the hell out of me. I can remember shooting a bird with a pellet gun and my cousin totally freaking out, and I felt really bad about it. But, shooting squirrels in the trees around the house with a pellet gun ...No. Just didn’t bother me. Because they were seen as almost a nuisance. (Louis)

For Louis, *context* was more of a concern than actually killing. When he was among other hunters or when an animal was a nuisance, killing was just what happened.

Emotions were glossed over in hunting, and were usually not taken seriously if and when they did emerge. Participants avoided the potential complexity of emotions around animals and killing by turning those emotions into a joke. Melissa told me that, growing up, “I would never want to eat the deer that [my brother] shot because it was *poor Bambi!*” In making this statement, Melissa satirized her own emotions, lumping her former self in with Smalley’s (2005:201) “Bambi school” of emotional, anti-hunting women. Susan told me, “I guess if you’re a female, [the first kill] was a little tender moment for me. (Laughs) But I was over it after that.” Both she

and Brian laughed and were lighthearted as they told me stories about being emotionally overwhelmed by their first kills:

I remember shooting and missing, but then I eventually got my first bird and I cried when I shot it...cause I felt sorry for it. (Laughs) But then I didn't cry any more, so...But that was fun. [...] My dad asked, "Why are you crying?!" I said, "I don't know! (Laughs)" (Susan)

I shot, the deer went down, and I just started hollering...and hollering and hollering 'til I saw [my dad] coming. He was like, "What is wrong?!" I said, "Nothing; you said if something goes wrong...the deer's out there dead." And he said, "Well, there ain't nothing wrong with that!" (Brian)

Only a few participants admitted to feeling remorse at killing animals, but these participants usually dealt with the remorse by using a justification narrative (e.g. using the animal for food; resource management) or by reclaiming their emotion as a sort of symbolic power. Hank told me "There's always that passing moment as you walk up to that animal, and you look at, you know, how pretty it is, and how you bloodied it. I think if I lost the humanity that gives me that moment's feeling, I would quit hunting. But you realize, also, that it has to be done." In this statement, Hank claimed status above less emotional hunters and justified his actions as resource management. Emotion, then, seemed to be more of a matter of context and comfort with oneself than it was matter of gender.

## CONCLUSION

Regardless of whether their arguments were implied or explicit, all participants had constructed narratives to justify and legitimize their actions. Often, these narratives framed hunting as a means to enhance the experiences of nature and the outdoors, and of familial and social life. Participants turned emphasis away from killing animals and towards the ideas that they were eating meat that they might otherwise be buying in a grocery store, and that they were helping to manage and even conserve wildlife. Participants also measured the worth and valor of their actions against other types of hunters or hunting. Gender played a large role in this struggle for worth, and expectations for females were downsized compared to those for males. Participants

enacted a Bourdieuan field of symbolic power and social space in which they constantly jockeyed for personal power and for claims of status at higher positions in the field.

Hunting as a leisure activity has very serious implications that are rarely discussed outside of the subculture itself, and this study offers a critical analysis of practices and traditions that are often taken as self-evident and left unexamined. This research adds to academic discourse on the human-animal relationship, updates literature on hunting, and introduces a new level of detail regarding the competition for symbolic status. It investigates hunting from the inside out, looking into the constant interplay between subjective perceptions, objective structures, and the common need to claim status among peers.

These findings are important because they offer new insights into the nuanced organization of social groups. It would be unfairly reductive to try to define how hunters as a group are positioned in social space. Rather, as Bourdieu (1986) argues and as I have posited in this research, individual social actors define themselves relative to their perceptions of other individuals and groups in the social field. These relative relationships and perceptions are not objective or stagnant, but fluid. Additionally, all of the hunters in my study struggled to claim symbolic legitimacy and status, but they used different currencies to do this. For some of them, challenge was the most crucial currency; for others, that currency was resource management. My research, then, offers a detailed investigation of the different ways that social actors define and claim legitimacy within the field of power.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

This study is by no means all-inclusive, and it is important to note its limitations. First, the area of study was geographically confined to one medium-sized city in the Southeast. I chose this area because I had contacts with hunters there, but I understand that it only represents a small section of the world of hunting. Secondly, and presumably because I was a female from a liberal arts school, I was often met with questions like Glenn's "This isn't some PETA thing, is it?" which assumed that I was planning to write an attack on hunting. Future studies should take into

account the ways in which the gender and background of the interviewer might affect participant comfort and honesty. For example, a male researcher may have been able to “pass” more quickly and easily than a female as someone who legitimately wanted to understand hunting.

Additionally, although race is mentioned in my literature review, all of my participants were white, which limited my capacity to understand how race might impact hunting narratives.

Finally, I was limited by the fact that my research time fell outside of designated hunting seasons.

I felt that participant observation would have given me a chance to more thoroughly examine whether participants’ descriptions of their actions matched the realities.

Future research could broaden understandings of hunting by surveying and investigating other regions in the United States or elsewhere and creating cross-cultural comparisons. Research might also pursue hunters of different races to investigate whether and how their responses might change. Additionally, there are a number of subjects that I broached in interviews that further research could pursue in more detail. For example, I would be interested in better understanding gun shows and animal display. Future research should also include participant observation as much as possible.

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**APPENDIX A:  
Interview Schedule**

1. Can you tell me about your first experience hunting?
  - a. Who did you go with? How old were you? What type of hunting was it?
  - b. Were there any special traditions?
  - c. What did you think about it? (How did you feel? Did the activity feel natural?)
2. Why did you keep hunting? What's the point of waking up at 4 or 5 in the morning to go hunt?
3. What kind of hunting do you do now?
  - a. *Where* do you hunt?
    - i. People have told me that it's hard to hunt unless you have access to private land or can afford to lease it. Do you think that's true?
  - b. So do you tend to hunt alone or in a group? Do you prefer one or the other?
    - i. What makes an ideal hunting partner?
  - c. How do different kinds of hunters compare to one another? (in terms of skill, strategy, etc.)
4. Do you know any women who hunt?
  - a. Why do you think there are so few women who hunt?
5. Has hunting affected the way you think about animals at all?
  - a. Has hunting changed the way you think about using animal products or eating meat?
  - b. Are there any animals you wouldn't hunt? Why?
6. What do you do with the animals you hunt?
  - a. Do you display any of the animals you hunt? Why?
  - b. Why do you think mounting animals is so popular?
  - c. Do you clean the animals yourself?
7. Is there a protocol for killing an animal? Things you're supposed to do or not do while you're hunting?
  - a. What is going through your head when you kill an animal, or how does it feel?
8. Have you ever encountered someone who was really anti-hunting, or really didn't understand it? Like someone who thought it was unnecessarily violent?
  - a. How would you explain to them why you do it, or why it's important? Would you even try to explain?
9. Is there a particular hunting experience that you recall as your favorite?
10. What tends to be your favorite thing about hunting?
11. Is there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to talk about, or anything else you think is important?

**APPENDIX B:  
Face Sheet**

Gender M\_\_\_ F\_\_\_

Your date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Current marital status \_\_\_\_\_

Number and ages of any children \_\_\_\_\_

Education: highest level attained \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

When did you first hunt? \_\_\_\_\_

How often do you currently hunt? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of hunting do you do (i.e. animals hunted, weapons used) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_