

PERCEPTIONS OF HUNTING AMONG RECREATION, PARKS, AND TOURISM
ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS AT CAL POLY, SAN LUIS OBISPO

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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF HUNTING AMONG RECREATION, PARKS, AND TOURISM

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Hunting is a form of recreation that is also used as a wildlife management strategy. In recent years the sport of hunting has come under fire resulting in heated debate over how it should be regulated. This debate is driven by the way people perceive hunting and these perceptions are influenced by many factors. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of hunting and the factors that influence these perceptions amongst Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration (RPTA) students at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. A questionnaire was distributed in three RPTA courses. RPTA students perceive hunting in a relatively neutral to positive light and the influencing factors were categorized into four major themes. Gender differences were discovered in hunting topics included in this study. Further research should be conducted to discover more specific influential factors in hunting perceptions.

Keywords: hunting, perception, sport hunting, wildlife management, general influences

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of Study

Hunting has been a very important part of evolution and has enabled humans to thrive in many diverse environments. Dating back at least 500,000 years, hunting was a form of survival skills training and has played a key role in human development. Over time, hunting evolved into many different categories including target shooting, sport hunting, wildlife management, and even Olympic contests (Swan, 2003). The invention of new weapons and the introduction of hunting laws and regulations have furthered this evolutionary process. The established regulating agencies at the federal and state government levels have also had an impact on hunting and how wildlife is managed throughout the United States. This history has had an impact on the views and perceptions of the sport and continues to have an impact as it evolves.

Over the past century, hunting has become an increasingly controversial topic, and the two opposing sides seem to keep growing further and further apart in their respective extremes: pro hunting and pro preservation. However, both sides are driven by unique factors that surprisingly meet the same goal. “Hunters have traditionally been motivated by enjoyment of outdoor recreation, being close to nature, camaraderie with friends and family, exercise, harvesting game, and developing skills” (Ryan & Shaw, 2011, p. 313). On the other hand, animal rights activists are also motivated by the enjoyment of the outdoors and the preservation of animals and their delicate habitats.

Hunters and environmentalists are the two main groups of people that lobby for or against hunting and both have an influence on perceptions of hunting.

Perceptions of hunting are widespread, and these varying views make for a complicated argument on either side. With wildlife habitats shrinking, an important part of wildlife management is population control because it helps promote a well-balanced habitat that isn't depleted of its resources. In recent years hunting has increasingly become an important factor that wildlife agencies count on for population control. This is why a recent decline in overall active hunters has caused some concern about the future of the sport and the future of wildlife management (Ryan & Shaw, 2011). The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of hunting and the factors that influence these perceptions amongst Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration (RPTA) students at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Premier, SPORTDiscus, psycINFO, and Google Scholar. This review of literature is organized into two topic areas: Perceptions of hunting as sport, and hunting as wildlife management.

Hunting as sport. There are many ways to perceive hunting in society. This can be seen by the formation and following of strong groups that either advocate for or against the sport of hunting all over the world. These perceptions can be formed and influenced

by one's upbringing within a family and the outside environment. Hunting has been a prominent part of history as an essential skill for survival, and has evolved greatly over the years. Recently, the demand for hunting as a recreational sport has been steadily decreasing, while opposition has remained relatively low. This trend is the result of many social changes that have come to light in recent years (Ryan & Shaw, 2011). This section will examine completed research that focuses on hunting as a sport and emerging trends in hunting.

Hunting is a skill and a means of survival that has been passed down from generation to generation (Ryan & Shaw, 2011). Throughout the past century it has become a challenging and enjoyable form of recreation that has been the subject of heated debate between animal rights groups and pro hunting groups. Revenue from hunting provides a boost to local economies and supports many jobs in the field of wildlife management. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (2011) found that hunters spent over \$33.7 billion in 2011 on supplies related to hunting, which in turn supports tens of thousands of jobs across the United States. Whether they know it or not, hunters support habitat conservation and preservation. A portion of the revenue that is generated through license fees and organization memberships goes directly to supporting projects that work to restore wildlife habitat, replenish wildlife populations, and fund wildlife management agencies (Van de Pitte, 2003). According to Poole (2007), active duck hunters in the U.S. contributed over \$700 million in duck stamp fees, which has helped to establish an additional 5.2 million acres in the National Wildlife Refuge System since 1934. "They contribute more than 250 million dollars annually in excise taxes on guns, ammunition, and other equipment, which largely pays for new public game lands"

(Poole, para. 6). The agencies that are supported through this revenue are responsible for the regulation of hunting and the management of wildlife. “Hunting itself, whether commercial, subsistence, or recreational, has been regulated by rules, limitations on animals harvested, and regulations concerning allowable guns and ammunition” (Knezevic, 2009, p. 13). These regulations require that every hunter take a course and pass an exam on safe and ethical hunting practices, which has proven to be effective in minimizing hunting incidents.

Hunting as sport also provides many benefits to the people who actively participate in the sport. For many, it is a cost effective way to provide food for a family and for others it serves as an educational experience while passing down survival techniques. Campbell and Mackay (2009) found that “Getting fresh air and exercise, learning about nature, camaraderie, and stress relief were seen as recreation-based benefits to those who hunted” (p. 26). Hunting has played a key role in the survival of mankind throughout history and offers a challenging and enjoyable form of recreation to those who have a love for the outdoors.

On the other hand, animal rights activists have continually fought against the sport of hunting, and support for their cause has been growing in recent years. “In general, animal protectionists believe these activities inflict needless pain, suffering, and death on wildlife, and therefore are to be condemned” (Rutberg, 2001, p. 34). This view is backed by several animal rights groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which was founded in 1980. These groups, with large numbers of supporters, defend the rights of animals and educate the public on issues relating to animal abuse and promote the fair treatment of animals (PETA, 2013). Organizations

such as PETA have an impact on the perceptions of hunting through their publications and awareness programs.

Reis and Higham (2009) found that advancements in food processing and production in recent years has created distance between people and the origin of the food they consume. Because the general public is out of touch with where their food comes from, they tend to view the hunting and killing of animals as a major issue among society. This is partly responsible for a surge of animal rights groups and anti-hunting opinions across the United States. In recent years this has also caused animal rights groups and pro hunting organizations to be in a constant heated debate. Hunters have been increasingly criticized and have had to defend their position in the face of the general public and animal protectionists (Knezevic, 2009).

Hunting as wildlife management. As defined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (1999), wildlife management is “the ‘manipulation’ of wildlife populations and habitat to achieve a goal. The goal is usually to increase populations but can also be to decrease or sustain them” (para. 10). Wildlife management became a major public topic in the early 1900s after a noticeable decline in many wildlife populations. As discussed by Knezevic (2009), “The early conservation efforts in North America, dating back to the early 1900s, were largely driven by hunters. This overlap is still evident and the perceived conflict between hunters and environmental groups is little more than miscommunication” (p. 16). However, it wasn’t until the 1960s that most states began adopting wildlife programs with a non-game emphasis. As stated by Campbell and Mackay (2003), “In the 1970s, fish and wildlife agencies and associated professional organizations became concerned about public attitudes toward hunting and declining

hunter numbers. The future of hunting as an individual activity and a wildlife management tool was in doubt” (p. 183). This section examines wildlife management and notable perceptions and practices.

Hunting has historically been a major factor in wildlife population control. Wildlife habitats are only able to support a certain amount of any given species without causing habitat deterioration, which is known as carrying capacity (Rees, 1996). Hunting can be used in wildlife management to maintain this optimal balance of species in any given habitat. This is why many wildlife agencies and organizations encourage hunting and provide support for educational programs. As stated by Alberta Environment,

Hunters are typically very knowledgeable about wildlife and contribute directly to wildlife conservation by being able to understand and correctly identify species, by collecting and providing data to wildlife management authorities and, in some cases by maintaining a balance in overabundant populations. (as cited in Van de Pitte, 2003, p. 257)

Hunters provide a free population control service for federal, state, and local wildlife agencies, which is an important part of wildlife and habitat management.

Although it’s easy to assume that most people are against hunting because they dislike the idea of harming animals, upon closer inspection, perceptions of hunting differ based on the various characterizations. As found by Campbell and Mackay (2003), “The increase in opposition appears to be related to the manner in which hunting is characterized. Hunting, characterized as ‘for sport’ or ‘trophy’ increases opposition, whereas hunting characterized as ‘for food’ decreases opposition and increases support” (pp. 183-184). Campbell and Mackay also found that hunting as a means for wildlife

management was the second most positive context following hunting for food. With characteristics such as these, it creates a very thin line that determines perceptions of hunting. Although hunting as wildlife management does hold a good amount of support, there are still concerns among animal rights activists over the necessity of hunting as a form of population control.

Knezevic (2009) discussed how the rapidly growing modern environmental movement has come as a response to the sudden expansion of industrialization in North America. This has resulted in mass pollution that has been destructive to wildlife habitat. Loss of habitat is the main killer of wildlife and that is why wildlife management plays an important role in society. This is where population control in the form of hunting comes into play. Knezevic also stated that, “Carefully managed hunting practices are not damaging to wildlife as a whole; they are considered beneficial in instances of overpopulation of one species at the expense of others” (p. 16). For example, “In North America, we actually have to hunt deer because their habitat has shrunk and any deer overpopulation equals significant vegetation loss” (p. 15). Mitigation techniques vary depending on each situation, such as hunting for population control, trapping and relocating animals, and the restoration or expansion of protected habitat in endangered areas. Each mitigation technique has the specific goal of keeping wildlife in a thriving state despite the destruction of habitat through development.

As situations vary, both the animal rights and pro hunting sides have valid arguments on the issues at hand, and in the end they both want the same thing. Their main goals include: “protection of wildlife and its habitat, conscious management of natural resources, and a more complete reconnection with our natural surroundings.

Because of this strange harmony, many hunters and environmentalists are not pursuing different agendas” (Knezevic, 2009, p. 16-17). Wildlife management will continue to play a major role in society as the expansion of communities into wildlife habitats continues.

Summary. Hunting as wildlife management and hunting as sport are important to understand while researching perceptions of hunting. Hunting as sport is one of the oldest forms of recreation and has been passed down through the generations. This topic has come under heated debate with animal rights groups and brings to light the question of whether hunting should be allowed or not. In recent years, the number of active hunters has been on the decline despite the approval of hunting remaining relatively unchanged. More recently, hunting has come to be used by wildlife management agencies as a means of population control. Hunters, in this case, provide a necessary service to regulating agencies by assisting them in keeping animal populations at optimum levels to promote thriving habitats. Despite being the most accepted purpose for hunting, it has also been criticized for promoting harm to animals. The arguments for and against hunting have been growing in recent years, even though both sides seem to have many of the same goals. Notable perceptions, practices, and trends have been discussed to present a background of hunting and the role that it plays in society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of hunting and the factors that influence these perceptions amongst RPTA students at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do RPTA students perceive hunting?
2. What factors influence the subject's perception of hunting?
3. Is there a relationship between the number of active hunters in the subject's immediate family and their perception of hunting?
4. Does gender affect perceptions of hunting?

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the following parameters:

1. Information on hunting perception was gathered from RPTA students currently attending Cal Poly.
2. Perceptions, hunting background, and demographics were analyzed.
3. The data were collected during the spring of 2013.
4. Information for this study was gathered through a self-administered questionnaire.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. The instrument used in this study was not tested for validity or reliability.
2. Due to limited resources a convenience sampling method was used.
3. Due to time constraints the sample size was limited to selected RPTA students.

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. It was assumed that participants would respond honestly and to the best of their knowledge.
2. It was assumed that participants were actually RPTA students at Cal Poly.
3. It was assumed that participants understood what was meant by hunting.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Carrying capacity. the maximum population of a given species that can be supported indefinitely in a defined habitat without permanently impairing the productivity of that habitat (Rees, 1996)

PETA. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

RPTA. Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration

Sport hunting. the pursuit of game as a recreational activity

Wildlife management. the manipulation of wildlife populations and habitat to achieve a goal. The goal is usually to increase populations but can also be to decrease or sustain them (Michigan Department of Natural Resources, 1999)

Chapter 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of hunting and the factors that influence these perceptions amongst RPTA students at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. This chapter on methods and procedures is organized into the following four sections: description of subjects, description of instrument, description of procedures, and method of data analysis.

Description of Subjects

The subjects of this study were currently-enrolled RPTA students at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The RPTA department had a student population of approximately 300 students at the time of the study. A sampling goal of 100 students was selected. Participants were determined based on the criteria that they were currently enrolled RPTA students. Subjects were selected using a convenience sample of three RPTA courses; RPTA 101, RPTA 342, RPTA 360

Description of Instrument

This study was conducted by administering a pen-and-paper questionnaire (see Appendix A). The instrument for this study was a one page questionnaire designed to determine the perceptions and the factors that influence perceptions of hunting. Participation in this survey was voluntary and anonymous. The survey was introduced by

a brief introduction paragraph describing the purpose of the study followed by eleven questions.

Questions one and two were asked to determine personal exposure to hunting. Questions three through eight used a Likert-type scale to identify participants' perceptions of hunting. Question five determined factors that may have influenced one's perception of hunting. Finally, questions 10 and 11 were related to the demographics of participants, which included concentration and gender.

The pilot test of this instrument was conducted with eight individuals who were within the population of the study. The questionnaire was distributed to the pilot test subjects as if it were the actual data collection period. Upon completion of the pilot study, the researcher made necessary changes to the wording and category of questions to increase the usability of the instrument and simplify the data analysis process.

The instrument, informed consent letter, and procedures for implementation were submitted and approved by Cal Poly's Human Subjects Committee. The informed consent letter was made available to the participants and included the purpose of the study, contact information, and an indication that participation was voluntary and anonymous (see Appendix B).

Description of Procedures

Using a convenience sampling method, the researcher visited selected RPTA courses and distributed the questionnaire to enrolled RPTA students. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher read a script that described the reason for the study and gave brief directions for completing the questionnaire. After reading the script, the

researcher stated that if any students had previously completed the questionnaire to please not complete a second one. The researcher then made sure that participants were aware that participation was voluntary and that the data collected would be used as a senior project. Following this brief description, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to all eligible students and collected them as the subjects completed the survey. After data were collected from a sample of three courses, it was entered into a Microsoft Excel database.

Method of Data Analysis

Once the questionnaires were completed, qualitative and quantitative data were collected and input into a Microsoft Excel database. The first research question determined how RPTA students perceive hunting. Questions three and four on the questionnaire sought to answer this question by using a Likert-type scale to identify how participants perceived different aspects of hunting and how it should be regulated. Data for these questions were coded and analyzed according to mean and standard deviation. The bivariate analysis involved a T-test.

The second research question was used to determine which factors influence perceptions of hunting. Questions one and two on the questionnaire addressed this research question by identifying past hunting experience of participants and their immediate family. The data collected were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Question nine of the questionnaire also addressed this research question. The question identified any other perceptions that RPTA students had about hunting. The data were collected using frequencies and percentages.

The third research question determined whether there was a relationship between the number of active hunters in one's family and their perceptions of hunting. Data from questions two and four were used to answer this. A correlation was used to determine if there was a relationship between the number of active hunters and one's perception of hunting.

The fourth research question was used to determine if gender affects perceptions of hunting. A t-test was used to determine if differences existed by gender for each of the five perception items.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of hunting and the factors that influence these perceptions amongst Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration students at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The data were collected with a survey administered in three RPTA classes on April 29, 2013 and April 30, 2013. The 100% response rate resulted in a sample size of 107 subjects.

Demographics

The demographics measured in this study included gender and major concentration within RPTA. Of the 107 participants, females (n = 82, 76%) outnumbered males (n = 25, 23%). The majority of participants were concentrating in Event Planning and Management (39%), as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1
Concentration According to Frequency and Percentage

Concentration within RPTA	<i>f</i>	%
Event Planning and Management	42	39.25
Outdoor, Adventure, and Resource Recreation	12	11.22
Tourism Planning and Management	22	20.56
Sport Management	26	24.30
Community Services Management	2	1.87
Minor	3	2.80

Hunting Experience and Exposure

The participants were asked about previous hunting experience, as well as their connections to hunting through immediate family members. The majority of the subjects ($n = 91$, 85%) had never hunted, while 16 (15%) had previously hunted. Participants were also asked the number of active hunters in their immediate family to determine their exposure to hunting. The majority of participants had no immediate family members that were active hunters ($n = 73$, 68%). Please refer to Table 2 for details on participants' exposure to hunting.

Table 2
Exposure to Hunting through Immediate Family Members According to Frequency and Percentage

Number of Immediate Family that are Active Hunters	<i>f</i>	%
0	73	68.23
1	12	11.22
2	13	12.15
3	6	5.61
4	3	2.80

Note. Due to rounding of numbers, percentages may not equal 100%.

Perceptions of Hunting and its Regulation

The participants were asked about how they thought hunting should be regulated. The rating system was based on four degrees of regulation. The first being that hunting should not be regulated at all, followed by somewhat regulated, then heavily regulated, and finally that hunting should be banned. Participants responded strongly towards hunting being somewhat regulated ($n = 57$, 53%) as well as heavily regulated ($n = 46$,

43%). This question was analyzed using frequencies and percentages, which can be seen below in Table 3.

Table 3
Feelings about the Regulation of Hunting According to Frequency and Percentage

Degree of Regulation	<i>f</i>	%
Hunting Should not be Regulated	1	0.95
Hunting Should be Somewhat Regulated	57	53.27
Hunting Should be Heavily Regulated	46	43.00
Hunting Should be Banned	3	2.80

Note. Due to rounding of numbers, percentages may not equal 100%.

Participants were then asked about their perceptions of five aspects of hunting. These aspects included hunting for trophy, hunting for wildlife population control and management, hunting for survival and sustenance, hunting for gun safety and education, and hunting as a means for habitat conservation. The rating system was based on a 4-point Likert-type scale with 1 being very negative and 4 being very positive. Overall, participants perceived the most positive aspect of hunting as hunting for survival and sustenance (mean = 3.41, SD = 0.629). Hunting for trophy was perceived as the most negative aspect (mean = 2.01, SD = 0.830). These results can be found in Table 4.

Table 4
Perceptions of Hunting Aspects According to Mean and Standard Deviation

Main Aspects of Hunting	Mean	SD
Hunting for Trophy	2.01	0.830
Hunting for Wildlife Population Control/Management	2.92	0.634
Hunting for Survival/Sustenance	3.41	0.629
Hunting for Gun Safety/Education	2.81	0.814
Hunting as a Means for Habitat Conservation	2.93	0.663

The number of active hunters in one's immediate family was correlated with their perceptions of hunting aspects in Table 5. The data were tabulated using a Pearson product-moment correlation, which results in an r^2 score. This score measures the relationship between two variables between -1 and 1. If the r^2 score is positive, it means that there is a positive correlation between the two factors. This means that as one variable increases the other variable increases as well. The exact opposite would occur for a negative r^2 score. The significance of the relationship is determined by how close the score is to either 1 or -1. All of the perceptions regarding certain aspects of hunting had a positive correlation with the number of active hunters. This means that as the number of active hunters increases in a subject's family, the subject's perceptions of hunting are more positive. However, the r^2 scores show that none of these relationships have a strong enough correlation to be significant.

Table 5
Correlation between Number of Active Hunting Family Members and Perceptions of Hunting Aspects

Main Aspects of Hunting	r^2
Hunting for Trophy	0.131
Hunting for Wildlife Population Control/Management	0.177
Hunting for Survival/Sustenance	0.056
Hunting for Gun Safety/Education	0.201
Hunting as a Means for Habitat Conservation	0.125

Comparing the gender of the participants to their perceptions of each of the five hunting aspects illustrated a difference in how participants perceived hunting. Subjects were asked to rate their feelings regarding five different aspects of hunting using a 4-point Likert-type scale. Data on participant's perceptions of hunting were categorized in

by to gender and analyzed using a t-test to determine if differences in perceptions existed by gender. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between males and females with regards to their perceptions on three aspects of hunting at an alpha level of 0.05. These three categories were hunting for trophy, hunting for survival and sustenance, and hunting as a means for habitat conservation. In each of these cases males had a more positive view. For a complete presentation of results, see Table 6 below.

Table 6
Gender Perceptions of Hunting Aspects According to Mean and Statistical Significance

Main Aspects of Hunting	Gender		P-Value
	Male Mean	Female Mean	
Hunting for Trophy	2.44	1.88	0.006*
Hunting for Wildlife Population Control/Management	3.00	2.89	0.484
Hunting for Survival/Sustenance	3.64	3.34	0.017*
Hunting for Gun Safety/Education	3.04	2.74	0.061
Hunting as a Means for Habitat Conservation	3.16	2.87	0.049*

*Significant at an alpha level of less than 0.05

Participants were also asked to consider the factors that may have influenced their perceptions of hunting. The open ended responses were categorized into five general topic categories. Most participants acknowledged family, friends, and upbringing as their main source of influence (n = 49, 46%). Following this was television, media and general knowledge (n = 26, 24%) Table 7 includes a complete distribution of influential factors regarding perceptions of hunting.

Table 7
Influential Factors of Hunting Perceptions According to Frequency and Percentage

Influential Factors	<i>f</i>	%
Protection of animals	14	13.08
Family, friends, and upbringing	49	45.79
Television, media and general knowledge	26	24.30
Lack of knowledge and exposure	8	7.48

Note. Due to non-responses, percentages are less than 100%

Summary

The results presented in this chapter indicate a relatively neutral to positive view in regards to hunting amongst RPTA students at Cal Poly. It also indicated that family, friends and one's upbringing were influential factors that shape hunting perceptions. A detailed summary and a discussion of the findings will follow in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The research in this study helped to identify perceptions of hunting and influential factors that helped form these perceptions. This concluding chapter will include the following: summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, limitations, conclusions based on the research questions, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of hunting and the factors that influence these perceptions amongst Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration students at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Recent trends have shown a decrease in active hunters and a more negative view towards hunting. Hunting, which used to be a major part of society, has become a very controversial topic in recent years and it is important to understand how people view hunting and what has been altering their perceptions.

Two of the main aspects of hunting are hunting for sport and hunting for wildlife management. Hunting for sport is controversial because of the assumptions that it is just for fun. Perceptions of hunting are very widespread which makes it difficult to have a targeted public awareness campaign. In recent years the number of active hunters has been decreasing and this has caused some to worry about the sport and its positive impacts.

Hunters and those who oppose the sport aren't much different. They are both like-minded, in that they have similar goals for the wildlife and habitat conservation. However, the respective sides have two completely different approaches. Hunting is a main tool used for wildlife population control which in turn helps keep their habitats thriving. It is important to understand the differences between these two groups of people, their differing perceptions on hunting, and what factors influence their views. This information could then be used to improve hunter education and awareness programs designed to introduce people to the idea of hunting as a positive recreational activity and wildlife management strategy.

The research for this study was conducted using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to three RPTA courses which resulted in a sample of 107 participants. The results from this study indicated that RPTA students have a relatively neutral to positive view regarding hunting as population control and management, hunting for survival and sustenance, hunting for gun safety and education, and hunting as a means for habitat conservation. Hunting for trophy was the only aspect of hunting that was perceived negatively. The majority of participants indicated that family, friends, and one's upbringing were influential factors in their lives that had shaped their perceptions. Results also indicated that there was a significant difference between males and females regarding their views on three aspects of hunting. These aspects included hunting for trophy, hunting for survival and sustenance, and hunting as a means for habitat conservation.

Discussion

The following section will discuss the findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations for future research on this topic. This section will also analyze how these findings relate to previous research. Lastly, this section will identify any limitations that affect the study.

Most participants in this study are concentrating in Event Planning and Management, however, the overall sample is representative of the RPTA department's student population. This study addresses perceptions of hunting amongst RPTA students and reveals that they have a relatively neutral to positive position in regards to hunting and also that there are a few distinct factors that influence these perceptions. This study confirms previous research regarding overall perceptions of hunting and how perceptions have remained neutral or slightly in favor of hunting. These results are consistent in all five aspects of hunting that participants have been asked to rate except for hunting for trophy. This was the only category that maintains a negative perception throughout most of the survey results. Hunting for survival and sustenance maintains the most positive perception. This also supports the conclusions of previous studies.

After rating how they perceive each of these aspects, the subjects have been asked what they thought influences these perceptions. A few patterns arose out of the data, resulting in four categories of influential factors. These factors include: protection of animals; family, friends and upbringing; television, media and general knowledge; and lack of knowledge and exposure. Family, friends, and upbringing are the themes that appear the most. This is also found in previous research that discusses the influence that one's surroundings has on views and perceptions toward the sport of hunting. This is

followed by television, media and general knowledge. These themes have been on the rise with many popular shows on television that deal with hunting as well as the massive domain that the media covers. With current technology, news from all over the world is available instantly and it comes to no surprise that media and television maintain an influence on this subject.

RPTA students were also asked about their exposure to hunting through their immediate family. This is used to see if there was a relationship between the number of active hunters in a subject's family and the perceptions they hold. There is a weak, positive relationship between the number of active hunters and how positively or negatively the subject's perceived each of the 5 aspects of hunting. As the number of active hunting family members grows, the subject's perception of hunting becomes more positive.

Gender effects on perceptions of hunting have also been analyzed in this study. The results indicate significant differences of perceptions between genders on the topics of hunting for trophy, hunting for survival and sustenance, and hunting as a means for habitat conservation. This is interesting because it was not expected to be different in the cases of hunting for survival and sustenance and hunting as a means of habitat conservation. In both of these cases males have a more positive view when compared to females. Hunting for trophy has the greatest difference in views between genders. Males also have a more positive outlook on hunting for trophy. However, the mean is still a negative score. This data supports findings in previous research.

These results demonstrate the complexity of the way people perceive hunting in society and the many different factors that come together to form each person's views.

This study has assisted in determining how generation Y individuals perceive hunting and factors that continue to influence those perceptions. This study was limited by convenience sampling, which could introduce bias. This study was also limited in the sample size within the RPTA department. Furthermore, the instrument was not tested for validity or reliability, thus the data may be skewed. Future studies should try to get a better distribution of subjects with a wider variety of backgrounds. This would allow for more reliable data and provide further analysis of hunting perceptions among generation Y.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. RPTA students perceive the five aspects of hunting in a relatively neutral to positive manner.
2. The factors that influence hunting perceptions includes: family, friends, upbringing, television, media, general knowledge, protection of animals, and lack of knowledge and exposure.
3. The number of active hunters in a subject's family has a weak positive relationship with how the subject perceives hunting.
4. There was a statistically significant difference in how positive the topics of hunting for trophy and hunting for survival/sustenance was perceived in regards to gender.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Continue marketing to generation Y the positive aspects of hunting to ensure a long lasting relationship between hunters and non-hunters.
2. Future studies should include a larger population and a more diverse sample size to allow for more reliable data and a more thorough study.
3. Future research should investigate demographics further to analyze specific influences on perceptions of hunting.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Perceptions of Hunting Questionnaire

Thank you for taking this survey about students' perceptions of hunting. We would like to know how you feel about hunting. This information will help us determine how to improve hunter education and awareness programs. Completing this questionnaire is voluntary and your responses will be kept anonymous. Thank you.

1. Have you ever hunted?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. How many members of your immediate family are active hunters? (at least once per year)

3. Overall, how do you feel about hunting regulation?

- ☐ Hunting should not be regulated
☐ Hunting should be somewhat regulated
☐ Hunting should be heavily regulated
☐ Hunting should be banned

Perception

4. What is your perception of the following elements associated with hunting? (Circle One)

	Very Negative	Negative	Positive	Very Positive
Hunting for trophy	1	2	3	4
Hunting as population control/management	1	2	3	4
Hunting for survival/sustenance	1	2	3	4
Hunting for gun safety/education	1	2	3	4
Hunting as a means for habitat conservation	1	2	3	4

5. In thinking about your answers to the preceding questions, what do you think has influenced your perception of hunting?

6. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female

7. What is your concentration or minor?

☐ Event Planning and Management ☐ Outdoor, Adventure, and Resource Recreation

☐ Tourism Planning and Management ☐ Sport Management ☐ Community Services Management

☐ Other: _____

Appendix B

Informed Consent Letter

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT,
PERCEPTIONS OF HUNTING AMONG RPTA STUDENTS AT CAL POLY,
SAN LUIS OBISPO

Senior project research on perceptions of hunting is being conducted by Matthew Cole in the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The purpose of the study is to determine RPTA students' perceptions of hunting and the factors that influence those perceptions.

You are being asked to take part in this study by completing the attached questionnaire. Your participation will take approximately 3 to 5 minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also omit any items on the questionnaire you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated with participating in this study. Your responses will be provided anonymously to protect your privacy. Potential benefits associated with the study include insight into how to better hunter education and awareness programs.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Matthew Cole at (831) 262-8984 and mcole02@calpoly.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at (805) 756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Dean Wendt, Interim Dean of Research, at (805) 756-1508, dwendt@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by completing and returning the attached questionnaire. Please retain this consent cover form for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.