

The Importance of Hunting in Human Culture

Samantha M. Howell

Department of Psychology, Casper College

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Kristina Pham

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The History of Hunting

There are many different attitudes attributed with the sport of hunting. It, of course, started as a necessity of survival. Many authors contributed to the book *The Role of Meat in the Human Diet: Evolutionary Aspects and Nutritional Value*, and according to them, “humans and their hominin ancestors have been consuming meat for >3 million years” (Mann, 2010, 2018). Protein found in meat was essential for early people because “due to a process of ‘encephalization’, humans have a larger brain size than would be expected for their body size. To sustain an expansively large brain, energetic compensation was required during hominin evolution” (Leroy et al., 2023, 12). Eating meat helped with evolution, which is why it has been such a staple in human history.

However, the book *Trophy Hunting*, written by Adam Hart and Nikolaj Bichel, then describes how after evolution and the formation of society, hunting became a sport. “The perception of hunting as a courageous challenge and test of manhood comes from Antiquity in Greece and China” while associating hunting with privilege is thanks to Medieval Europe (Bichel & Hart, 2023, 1). If someone were to examine the base of hunting known today, they would find these attitudes have not changed since the sport was first recognized.

The Psychological Effects of Hunting

The thought of taking another human being’s life is often thought as a terrible act, even described as inhumane. In a society where it is encouraged to stand out and be unique, it is understood that despite differences every individual of the society is still a part of the society. “Being human” is a philosophical phrase that is often used to describe qualities such as compassion, the inherent freedom every person possesses, and responsibilities every person undertakes. To be described as “inhumane” is an insult so culturally deep we as a species rarely

use it and wholeheartedly mean it. However, taking this into account, it is interesting how killing an animal is not considered the same as killing a human. In fact, hunting is normalized and in some subcultures, encouraged. According to research done by Michigan State University, hunting is actually really good for your health. “Hunting tasks require walking, bending, stretching, balancing, pulling and hauling, which are cardiovascular (aerobic), strength building and stretching activities” (Abram, 2020), all of which exceed the suggested activity an adult should get. The CDC says adults should get “150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and 2 days of muscle strengthening activity” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

In addition, hunting can be very good for mental strengthening. “They need to be able to read a compass and control their breath and nerves while aiming. Many hunters have tales of missed opportunities due to nerves. Some refer to these nerves as "Buck Fever, "when their hearts race, breathing increases and their knees and bodies shake when they see that they have a shot. Being able to recognize and control these physical and mental responses is key to a successful hunt” (Abram, 2020). On top of these various benefits are the innate mental benefits just from being outdoors: “natural antidepressant, lowers blood pressure and heart rate, reduces stress, and the sunshine increases vitamin D intake” (Abram, 2020).

My Theory on Why It Is Still Valued

Hunting is a sport that has a long deep tie to human history. Not only can it be found as a popular pastime in the United States, but all over the world. In most cases, hunting is a tradition within families. Overall, it’s a very positive pastime and often carries sentimental value. For these reasons, I would not be surprised to see this sport continue.

*The art piece included with this project was taken by a family friend. Credit: Cole Waltner, Chasing the Wild Outdoors Photography

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