AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF


Title: The Influence of Wilderness Activity Portrayals on Individual Participation

Abstracted approved:

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Celeste Walls

Individuals in and around a small college town were asked to take part in an interview to study their perception of wilderness activities depicted on television and other forms of media and the potential impact of these depictions on an individual’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities. This study linked Uses and Gratifications Theory along with previous personal experience in shaping an individual’s perception of the world around them. Results concluded that an individual’s personal experiences influence how they consume and interpret wilderness activity portrayals on television and in the movies.
The Influence of Wilderness Activity Portrayals on Individual Participation

by

Crystal Chorlton Kelley

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Crystal Chorlton Kelley, Author
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilderness Activities in Books and Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical Justification</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultivation Theory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses and Gratifications Theory</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative Research Design</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sampling Technique</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coding Scheme</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implications of Participation in Wilderness Activities</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilderness Activity Portrayals</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender in Wilderness Activity Portrayals</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of Wilderness Activity Portrayals on Willingness to Participate</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 5: Discussion</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Implications</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Television and Movies in Shaping Perceptions</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Television and Movies on Participation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Implications</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Personal Experience</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Underrepresented Groups</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A-- Wilderness Activities in the Media Interview Questions</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B-- IRB Informed Consent Document</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Introduction

According to Nielson Media Research, the average American home has 2.73 televisions and only 2.55 people (CBS News, 2006). Moreover, the average American watches three to four hours of television a day and the television set is turned on for over eight hours a day (CBS News, 2006; Hendriks, 2002). Clearly, television is an integral part of American society; in fact, some researchers go so far as to identify “television as a primary socializing force in society” (Mastro & Belum-Morawitz, 2005, p. 111). Research on prime-time and reality television consumption suggests that a high degree of television consumption vs. a low degree of consumption is associated with adoption of traditional gender roles (Ward, 2002, 2003; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006). As a result of the prevalence of television in American society, much emphasis has been placed on studying the impact of media images on a variety of topics, including body image, initiation of smoking behaviors, attitudes about crime and violence, and other social and cultural issues and values.

One particularly interesting and relatively new genre of media is “reality-television” in which non-actor characters live out real-life events that are edited into entertaining episodes. Reality television has expanded from game shows such as The Biggest Loser and recording the daily routine of celebrities in Keeping up with the Kardashian’s to theme-specific shows that are focused on wilderness activities. These shows include Survivor, Man vs. Wild, Everest Beyond the Limit and Survivor Man. For the purpose of this study, and based on my compilation of several different
but similar definitions, wilderness activities are defined as any activity in the out-of-doors that removes the participant from the conveniences of civilized life (Beringer, 2004; Clark, Marmol, Cooley, & Gathercoal, 2004; Peel & Richards, 2005; Russell, 2000, 2002). In wilderness activity reality-television the characters participate in different wilderness activity. As the characters demonstrate their skills and emotional struggles dealing with their respective challenges, the viewers may then virtually experience survival on a deserted island or they can summit Mount Everest without leaving the comforts of their own living room. Unfortunately however, these types of programs may have a negative impact on their viewers because viewers may be unable to distinguish between television portrayal of wilderness activities and what is consistent with actual participation in such activities. According to Baudrillard’s Theory of Hyper-reality, some individuals may even have difficulty deciphering between occurrences in the real world and occurrences in another reality, such as movies or television (Fox & Miller, 2005; Morris, 2005; Simon & Baker, 2002). Thus, the inability to recognize the entertainment aspect of television portrayals of wilderness activities may negatively impact viewers’ willingness to participate in wilderness activities.

Because the development of so-called “reality-television” further blurs the lines between reality and media depictions of reality, it is important to study how television and movies could affect one’s desire to participate in wilderness activities. In short, consistent with the theory of hyper-reality, if an individual cannot
distinguish between what is real in the world around them and what is real on his/her television set, then a person’s judgment as to whether or not to participate in wilderness activities may be negatively effected by the programs watched. In turn, these individuals will miss out on the many benefits associated with participation in wilderness activities including leadership skills and improved self-efficacy (Borrie & Paterson, 2000; Caulkins, White & Russell, 2006).

Much research already has determined that media influences its users extensively (Gentles & Harrison, 2006; Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006; Hetsroni & Tukashinsky 2006; Harmon 2001 & 2006; Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). For example, Hendricks (2002) found a positive relationship between watching television programs containing idealized depictions of female bodies and the likelihood that the female viewer would suffer from depression and/or eating disorders. In addition, Gutschoven & Van den Bulck (2005) found a positive relationship between the degree of consumption (high or low) of television depictions containing smoking behaviors and the age at which viewers were likely to adopt similar smoking behaviors. However, with the exception of books and literature (e.g. London’s White Fang), little has been done to assess how media depictions of wilderness activities may affect an individual’s willingness to participate in such activities.

It is critical to examine what effect, if any, television programs and other forms of media have on an individual’s perception of wilderness activities because participation in these activities is linked to the development of leadership skills, self-
efficacy and general well-being (Borrie & Paterson 2000; Caulkins, White & Russell, 2006; Kanters, Bristol & Attarian, 2002; Peel & Richards 2005; Werhan & Groff 2005). More specifically, each of these benefits are often realized through wilderness therapy, which I will discuss in greater detail later.

Wilderness therapy is the organized and intentional use of wilderness and adventure activities for personal growth (Friese, Hendee & Kinzinger 1998, p.40-41). Benefits of wilderness therapy include psychological benefits such as improved self-efficacy and critical thinking skills as well as physical benefits such as improved cardiovascular functioning and a decrease in stress/anxiety (Borrie & Paterson, 2000; Caulkins, White & Russell, 2006; Ewert & McAvoy, 2000; Kanters et al., 2002; Neill, 1997; Peel & Richards, 2005; Pohl, Werhan & Groff, 2005).

Although the most common use of wilderness therapy is for youth who suffer from an addiction or a behavioral dysfunction (Werhan & Groff 2005), research demonstrates other individuals also can benefit from participation in wilderness exposure programs (Buller & McEvoy, 1995; Davis-Berman & Berman, 1996; Gass, 1987, 1999; Kanters, Bristol & Attarian, 2002; O’Keefem 1989). Furthermore, it is likely that individuals can attain the benefits associated with wilderness therapy without intervention from psychologists, making the benefits of participating in wilderness activities accessible to the average individual (Kanters, et al., 2002). Thus, because of the clearly identified benefits that can result from participation in wilderness activities, we need to better understand the role television and
movies play in shaping the realities of wilderness activities through depictions of these activities.

In this paper, I examine how television and movies depict wilderness activities, and further, how these depictions may affect an individual’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities. To begin, I review how literature has tended to depict wilderness activities. Next, using Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory and media Uses and Gratifications Theory, I provide a theoretical justification for an examination of the impact of television and movie depictions of wilderness activities on viewers’ likelihood of participating in such activities. Finally, I review the relevant research regarding both theories as a basis for my contention that because television has been shown to affect viewers’ behavior and attitudes regarding a myriad of activities, it is likely that media also could affect some viewers’ willingness to participate in wilderness activities.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Wilderness Activities in Books and Literature

As previously stated, wilderness activities are defined as any activity in the out-of-doors that removes the participant from the conveniences of civilized life (Peel & Richards, 2005; Russell, 2000, 2002). Because there is a lack of research on social constructions of wilderness activities in television and movies, I begin my review of the literature focusing exclusively on literary depictions of wilderness activities. These constructions of wilderness activities exist in the form of narratives (either fact or fiction) or as instruction guides. Understanding literary constructions of wilderness activities may be a first step to better understanding the role today’s media may play in social constructions of wilderness activities.

First, wilderness or nature has been communicated as a narrative in both fiction and non-fiction books. Looking at the historical context of wilderness, when American settlers were spreading across the continent, wilderness was an adversary and something to be conquered for survival. As a result, literary critics interpreted this narrative of “settling the frontier” as one which contributes to the masculine perception of engaging nature (Egan 2006; Town, 2004). Trends in novels reveal a “rite of passage” mindset between males and wilderness. Caren Town (2004), of Georgia Southern University, critiqued a variety of Sinclair Lewis' novels, most of which center on male characters seeking wilderness experiences in order to define themselves as “men”. She attributes this association between masculinity and
wilderness to the settling of the frontier. Other classic American writers use a similar narrative in their depiction of wilderness. Jack London, who is best known for his works, *To Build a Fire* (1902 & 1908), *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906), similarly depicted wilderness as a masculine environment where individuals struggled to survive and where masculinity is, in part, defined by the ability to survive in the wilderness (Egan, 2006).

In terms of non-fiction books, the same focus on personal experience in the wilderness confirms that wilderness is often defined as a masculine environment. In a rhetorical analysis of gender specific and gender neutral “how-to” books on backpacking, Glotfelty (1996) reported that unisex guide books generally demonstrated a male bias because of the use of masculine pronouns and the inclusion of sexist jokes and chauvinistic comments. For example, in Fletcher’s (1968) *The Complete Walker*, a unisex backpacking guide, the author comments on the equality of the information in the book for both sexes saying, “Everything I have to say in this book about men applies equally to women. Well, almost everything. And almost equally” (cited in Glotfelty, 1996, p.441). Glotfelty also compared unisex books and books written specifically for women in terms of technical content. Although there was much that was similar between the texts, the women’s guide book contained additional subjects that were absent in the unisex versions, including discussions of appearance, personal hygiene, and tips for protecting oneself from male backpackers (Glotfelty, 1996).
In a seven year period, from 1976 to 1983, at least a half dozen female-specific backpacking guide books authored by females were published. This is significant because, according to Gloftelty (1996), (a) until this time there were virtually no female specific guide books on the market and (b) the authors of the gender neutral guide books were primarily male. Although these depictions are limited in their scope, arguably they suggest that early portrayals tended to feature males. Though more current guidebooks do feature female-specific issues and concerns, their relatively recent development may further suggest that sex role expectations may affect how written narratives are formed. Arguably, these same sex role expectations also may show up in other depictions of wilderness activities such as those on televisions or in the movies. Thus, research needs to be conducted to determine if media images in television and movies tend to promote a masculine reality that then serves to make women less likely to participate in wilderness activities. Next, I discuss the theories I’ll use to examine how television and movies may influence an individual’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities.

Theoretical Justification

Cultivation Theory

According to Gerbner (1969), the absence of an adequate theory to analyze mainstream television necessitated the development of Cultivation Theory. Its very name, cultivation, emphasizes change over time. The basic premise of the theory
states that heavy consumption of television messages will change the viewer’s perception of reality to match the reality that is presented in the television message (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Although this change is not strictly causal, the relationship between television viewing and changed behaviors and attitudes warrants further consideration.

There are two main assumptions of cultivation theory: (a) change occurs over time, and (b) one’s adopted view of reality is homogenized (Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). In order for change to occur, individuals must be exposed to television messages over an extended period of time. Therefore, Cultivation Theory does not suggest that a change in worldview will occur rapidly, or from a single viewing. Rather the theory suggests that for heavy viewers vs. light viewers, changes are more likely to occur gradually. In short, the amount of television viewed is positively correlated with the potential influence of that television portrayal (Hendriks, 2002).

Additionally, the worldview that is being adopted by the television consumer must be homogenized, meaning the messages must be consistent regardless of the number of message sources (e.g. one vs. multiple sources). More specifically, unlike single source messages, which are likely to be internally consistent, when messages are generated from multiple sources, the messages themselves must be consistent in order to not conflict with one another. Thus, when multiple sources agree, or at the very least have commonalities, they tend to reinforce a worldview that the television viewer is likely to adopt.
Cultivation Theory has been used to analyze the relationship between an individual’s worldview and the amount of television they consume. Examined topics include such areas as body image, initiating smoking behaviors and crime. Next, I will discuss each of the research of these areas in more depth to better understand the impact television seems to have on shaping an individual’s perception. My main contention is that if television can influence an individual’s attitudes and behaviors in the areas to be discussed below, arguably, it also can influence one’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities.

Much research has gone into understanding whether television can influence an individual's perception of their expected body image. The overwhelming consensus of researchers is that heavy amounts of exposure to television (and print media) does influence the expectations that individuals have of their own and others’ bodies (Gentles & Harrison, 2006; Harrison & Canton, 1997; Hendriks, 2002; Irvin, 1990; Kalodner, 1997; Stice & Shaw, 1994). In fact, the data suggests that the more an individual consumes messages containing the idealized body type, the more likely they are to adopt that belief about the ideal body type as their own.

Researchers have found a positive correlation between the amount of exposure to media and reports of eating disorders. For example, using Cultivation Theory along with Social Cognitive Theory to examine research done by others, Hendricks (2002) concluded that television, as a part of media, has a direct negative relationship to an individual’s self-image. Specifically, she argued that as television
consumption increased, positive body image and self-esteem decreased. For that reason she called for television to use more realistic body images as a means of helping women maintain a healthy body image as well as the desire to maintain a healthy body.

In other related research, Kalodner (1997) reported that when women not reporting difficulties with eating disorders were exposed to idealized body portrayals, they were much more likely than the control group to report negative feelings about their own bodies. Interestingly, this study found no significant difference in male participants’ body image regardless of their exposure. Kalodner’s conclusions were consistent with other studies (e.g., Irving, 1990; Stice & Shaw, 1994) that also found that as exposure to media containing messages about ideal body image increased, the rate of reported eating disorders, negative perception of body image, and an acceptance of the common description of the ideal body also increased.

Harrison and Canton (1997) discovered in their analysis that the extent to which selective viewing plays a role in the adoption of the portrayed worldview in television was still unclear. Specifically, they suggested if an individual has a predisposition to watch a certain program (i.e. self-selection), then it becomes important to separate self-selection biases from program content as the factor that was most likely to have altered their opinions. Thus, in terms of Cultivation Theory, although more research is needed to flush out this discrepancy (1997), on the whole, there seems to be evidence for a correlation, not causation, between television
consumption and adoption of television portrayals of body image. To learn if this relationship between television consumption and adoption of portrayed behaviors and attitudes is consistent across contexts, I will next discuss the research on television consumption and initiation of smoking behaviors.

In addition to television’s influence on body image, research has also been conducted on smoking behaviors. Notably, most of the research on smoking habits and television consumption involves youth participants. Consistent with previous body image research, the research on television and smoking habits also suggests that as the amount of television consumption increases, the likelihood that an individual will initiate smoking habits also increases (Gidwani, Sobol, Dejong, Perrin & Gortmaker, 2002; Gutschoven & Van den Bulck, 2005). Consistent with Cultivation Theory, Gidwani, et al. (2002), found that heavy television consumption of five or more hours of television a day, increased an adolescent’s likelihood of engaging in smoking behaviors by nearly six times the rate of light viewers (less than two hours of television per day). Further studies in this area suggested that increased consumption of television not only increases the likelihood of adolescents adopting smoking behaviors, but also correlates with how quickly the viewer will adopt these behaviors (Gutschoven & Van den Bulck, 2005).

The reason for the increase in smoking behaviors in relation to the amount of television consumed is associated with rewards and punishments of smoking behaviors in television. According to Gidwani, et al. (2002), smoking behaviors on
television and other media tends to be rewarded. As a result, the use of rewards may play a role in influencing viewers’ selection of behaviors and attitudes from television to adopt in their worldview. For example, characters who engage in smoking behaviors were often portrayed as professionally successful, financially secure, physically attractive, and/or admired by their peers. Thus, the idea of success is associated with smoking, leading youth consumers to adopt smoking behaviors while in their youth. These findings may need to be further explored to determine if they are reproducible in adults as youth may be more susceptible to influence in this specific example.

In other smoking-related research Gutschoven and Van den Bulk (2005) reported that there is a strong correlation between the amount of television consumed and the age at which an individual had their first cigarette. Participants who consumed heavier amounts of television reported starting smoking at a younger age than participants who consumed lighter amounts, suggesting that for each hour of watching television, the age at which an individual will start smoking is lowered by three months (Gutschoven & Van den Bulck, 2005).

To conclude, consistent with previous research, Gutschoven and Van den Bulck (2005) suggested that the more adolescents watched television, the more likely they seemed to align their worldview with the one presented on television. Thus, the more exposure to television messages rewarding smoking behaviors, the more the adolescent tended to agree with this value judgment. In turn, agreement with the
value judgment led adolescents to adopt behaviors that matched the worldview presented by the television program (Gidwani et al. 2002), suggesting once again that there is a positive correlation between media consumption and adoption of behaviors and attitudes on television. This correlation is not linked to body image only.

Another area of concern in society is crime and violence. Accordingly, researchers have studied television consumption as it relates to viewer’s perceptions about crime and violence. Generally, the data suggests that increased consumption of television does indeed influence how an individual perceives their risk of exposure to crime and violence. For example, according to Romer, Jamieson and Aday (2003) television tends to portray crimes as occurring more often than reported in the real world. Cultivation Theory explains this phenomenon by suggesting that there is a positive correlation between viewer’s consumption of crime portrayals on television and movies and viewer’s perceived level of risk of being involved in real-life criminal episodes. Research confirms this hypothesis. When individuals who consume high amounts of television are asked to estimate the amount of crime that actually occurs they report a higher rate of crime than individuals who consume a lower amount of television (Hetsroni & Tukashinsky, 2006; Nabi & Sullivan, 2001; Romer, et al., 2003; Wilson, et al., 2005).

News programs are one of the most prevalent ways factual crime and violence are communicated on television and are, therefore non-fictional accounts of
crime and violence. Because of the organization of news programs, which report crime in a variety of contexts (international, national, regional and local), viewers often consume larger amounts of crime messages (Romer et al., 2003). Thus, consistent with previous research in other contexts, as the amount of news programs an individual consumes increases, so does the likelihood of the individual adopting a worldview that projects a higher amount of crime and a higher degree of risk than is actually warranted (Hetsroni & Tukashinsky, 2006; Wilson, Wilson, Martins & Marke, 2005).

In related studies, the attitudes about crime and violence depicted in television impacted not only an individual’s perception of crime, but also their attitudes about specific types of crimes (Kahlor & Morrison, 2007; Wilson, Wilson, Martins and Marke 2005). Specifically, Wilson et al., (2005), found that the more news programs parents and children consumed, the more they reported being fearful of being a kidnapping victim. In this way, research on consumption of television portrayals of crime and violence have demonstrated a positive relationship between the consumption of the crime portrayals and increased perceived risk of becoming a victim.

The last area of interest regarding the influence of television messages I’ll discuss is the portrayal of social and cultural values, both of which are often emphasized on television and thought to be influential in the development of heavy television viewers. For the purposes of this study, cultural values refer to qualities
that are significant to a group and can include ethnic traditions as well as characteristics commonly associated with stereotypes (Mastro & Belum-Morawitz, 2005; Saito & Ishiyama, 2005). In contrast, social values refer to broader common attitudes or enactments such as consumerism and community involvement (Harmon, 2001 & 2006). Increased consumption of television images containing social and cultural value messages can overpower other avenues of communicating these values, such as the passing down of traditions from generation to generation or teaching values in an educational setting (Harmon, 2001 & 2006; Mastro & Belum-Morawitz, 2005; Saito & Ishiyama, 2005).

Harmon (2001) reported that individuals who consumed high amounts of television tended to hold a worldview that matched the social and cultural values expressed in the programming. Specifically, individuals who consumed high amounts of television vs. those who consumed light amounts, reported feeling less happy and satisfied with their financial status and life in general. Values such as consumerism, materialism, community interaction, satisfaction and diversity were all studied and commonalities between the studies suggested that the worldview depicted by the television program was more likely to be adopted by the viewer as their television consumption increased (Harmon, 2001 & 2006; Mastro & Belum-Morawitz, 2005; Saito & Ishiyama, 2005). For example, Mastro and Belum-Morawitz (2005) analyzed television programming for quantity and quality of Latino character representation. They found that Latinos were generally under-represented and often portrayed in a
negative light. Based on Cultivation Theory, the implication of these findings for Mastro and Belum-Morawitz is that “the nature of these portrayals is consequential as heavy, long-term exposure to these persistent images should ultimately result in a belief in the authenticity of these characterizations (2005, p. 125-126)”. In turn, the belief in these mediated portrayals could negatively influence intercultural interactions in the real-world, making the impact of these portrayals problematic.

Effects of media are not limited to American contexts however. For example, Saito and Ishiyama (2005) conducted a similar study on representation of disabled persons in Japanese television programming. They found that disabled persons were misrepresented in television both by amount of disabilities as well as type of disability. Specifically, the percentage of disabled persons in the population were under-represented in the portrayals and the types of disabilities displayed were not authentically portrayed in terms of social interactions. The concern these findings raised was that interpersonal interactions as well as governmental policies may be negatively influenced by these types of television portrayals.

The research on social and cultural values concludes that television can influence an individual’s perception of values and needs. As predicted by Cultivation Theory, individuals that consume heavier amounts of television are more likely than light viewers to be influenced by the messages presented on television. Thus, media depictions of such values as equality, diversity and financial responsibility may
influence the worldview of the viewer in such a way as to encourage viewers to take on the positive behaviors and attitudes portrayed on television and movies.

The research on television’s influence on individuals’ worldview suggests that television can impact individuals’ perception of reality. Using Cultivation Theory as a theoretical grounding for analysis, the bulk of the literature presented suggests that over time, television consumption may gradually affect users in terms of attitude, belief and behavioral change. In short, individuals who consumed heavy amounts of television vs. light viewers were more likely to change their worldview to match the worldview portrayed by television. So far, Cultivation Theory has been used to describe the behaviors of heavy television consumers on topics ranging from body image and smoking behaviors to social and cultural values. Though strictly correlational, intuitively, on the basis of these findings, it seems plausible that television and movies portrayals of wilderness activities may influence viewers’ behaviors and attitudes about participation in wilderness activities. Additionally, the viewers role may not be as passive as Cultivation Theory seems to suggest. Thus, to further understand the active role of viewers in media consumption, I will review Uses and Gratifications Theory next.

*Uses and Gratifications Theory*

Another approach to studying media’s influence on the consumer is Uses and Gratifications Theory, which was developed in the absence of a theory that (a) adequately address how mass media relates to an individual’s social and
psychological needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973) and (b) the explicit role of viewer selection in media consumption. Uses and Gratifications Theory presents the audience as a conscious selector of the types of media to which it voluntarily exposes itself to (Katz, et al., 1973; Mc Quail, Blumler & Brown, 1972). As a result, the audience is portrayed as an active consumer of media messages because consumers use the media for their own individual purposes (Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006; Paletz, 1999; Rayburn, 1996). Uses and Gratifications Theory examines the categories of uses and gratifications that audiences consume media for, as well as analyzes the outcome of identified uses (Cantril, 1942; Klapper, 1963; Rayburn, 1996; Ruggiero, 2000). General usage categories of Uses and Gratifications Theory include modifying moods, informing individuals, providing companionship, allowing the individual to visually experience events they may not be able to experience firsthand, and communicating social norms (Lull, 1990; Mc Quail, et. al., 1972; Mendelsohn, 1964).

According to Zuribriggen and Morgan (2006), from these categories of usage, two predominant categorical uses emerge: ritual use of television and informative use of television.

Ritual use of television includes watching television to pass time, or to create background noise while participating in or completing other activities. Informative use of television is more active and includes watching television as a means of gathering information about the world, including, for example, watching the news to gather information on the current stock situation or watching a documentary to learn
about whales. In contrast to the ritual use of television, the informative use of television reflects greater viewer intentionality. Although research suggests that individuals who use television for informational purposes rather than ritual purposes are more prone to the cultivation effects discussed earlier (Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006; Rubin, 1983, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987), ritual uses of television consumption are still important in the socialization of television viewers.

Ritual uses of television (e.g. companionship) serve to inadvertently, perhaps subconsciously, act as an information-gathering technique for the individual. Thus, while the individual is meeting their need of companionship, they are also using the television as a means of learning social norms or engaging in the socialization process (Finn & Gorr, 1988; Katz, et. al., 1973; Perse & Rubin, 1990; Rubin, Perse & Powell, 1985; Rubin & Rubin, 1982). For example, Finn and Gorr (1988) found that when individuals identified motivations for watching television programs, these motivations could be categorized as social compensation and/or mood management. Additionally, Perse and Rubin (1990) learned that “chronic loneliness reflects reduced interactions with friends, family and social activities, and increased use of movies and television” (p. 47). Thus, Uses and Gratifications Theory looks at how individuals use television as “equipment for living” (Young, 2000, p. 451). In short, individuals use what is at their disposal, in this case television, as a means to learn and make decisions about the world around them.
Even though researchers are concerned about the consequences of information seeking through television consumption, their concern does not end there. Research has also been conducted on the possible implications of ritualistic television consumption. Audiences repeatedly indicate that messages originating from fictional television programming cannot or should not be critiqued because these messages are just entertainment and nothing more (Bell, Haas, & Sells, 1995; Liebes & Katz, 1990; Rockler, 1999). Nonetheless, Hall (1979) explains that fictional portrayals are not neutral because entertainment television makes a set of behaviors “normal” through the character’s portrayals. As a result, television media has been used as an avenue to communicate about socially challenging issues for decades. In fact, some critics place pressure on humorous sitcoms, such as Will & Grace, to use their timeslot as a means of social reform (Hays, 2004). The contention from viewers that entertainment programming does not contain social messages actually makes the messages all the more powerful precisely because the individual does not perceive the potential for influence in the first place (Jhally & Lewis, 1992; Rockler, 1999).

For example, Rockler’s (1999) research on college women’s perception of Beverly Hills 90210’s social influence is consistent with the consumer’s notion that entertainment television messages are neutral. Most participants did not think that Beverly Hills 90210 had any social influence because it was so unrealistic. Eventually, some participants did report that the show had potential for social influence but that
influence was limited to other individuals only. In short, the concern for viewers of fictional television and movies is that each leads to uncritical evaluation of programs that may indeed affect viewer’s real-world perceptions (1999).

The emphasis on viewer selection to help explain an individual’s choice of television programming revealed a relationship between psychological state and the use of television. Using a sample that was representative of the United States population, Conway and Rubin (1991) compiled 331 completed surveys suggesting that psychological states such as being anxious, creative, assertive, seeking sensations, or seeking parasocial interaction were associated with different uses and gratifications self-identified by the viewer (Conway & Rubin, 1991). More specifically, this research indicated that uses and gratifications are influenced by the psychological state of the viewer (Finn and Gorr, 1988; Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006; Rubin, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1985). Next, I will look at the uses viewers report for their consumption of crime and violence on television and movies.

Although Cultivation Theory research has demonstrated a relationship between the amount of violence that individuals watched on television and their perceived risk of being victims of violence (Hetsroni & Tukashinsky, 2006; Nabi & Sullivan, 2001; Romer et al., 2003; Wilson, Martins & Marke, 2005), this research does not account for personal preference or personality in the selection process the individual uses when choosing a television program. Thus, to better understand the potential influence of violence on television, Uses and Gratifications Theory helps
reveal the role of motivation in the selection of programming in the first place. The reasons individuals seek out violent programming may have an impact on how individuals then consume the violence and thus, how they may be influenced by the consumption of violent messages. Next, I review some relevant studies linking television to attitudes about violence.

To understand what motivates individuals to watch violence on television, Johnston (2005) asked high school students why they watched graphic horror films. Several common reasons were identified including, curiosity or fascination with destruction, excitement or stimulation, desensitization to overcome fears, and escape (Johnston, 1995). Of these, the one that raised the most concern for Johnston was curiosity or fascination with destruction; according to Johnston (1995) this reason revealed the most morbid responses from participants such as “I watched because I’m interested in the ways people die”, and “I like to see the victims get what they deserve” (p. 536). Johnston concluded that the reported motivation for participants to watch graphic horror can be a predictor of how the viewer will respond to the message. Thus, consistent with the hypothesis underlying Uses and Gratifications Theory, the desired gratification for viewing a specific media message can determine what lasting impression the viewer will take away from the experience (2005, p. 543).

In a follow up study, Kremar and Greene (1999) surveyed undergraduate students to assess if individuals who were attracted to risky behaviors satisfied their
needs by watching rather than participating in risky behaviors. Participants’ risk-taking behaviors were evaluated and these results were then compared to the amount of violence they reported consuming. The authors reported a negative correlation between participation in high amounts of risk-taking behaviors and high amounts of violence consumption in television such that individuals who did not participate in risk-taking behaviors may have sought to experience risky behaviors via television rather than in real life (Kremar & Greene, 1999). Consequently, use may drive the selection rather than the selection driving the use. Similar to the “chicken and the egg” question, this relationship is complex and variables not easily separable from one another. An examination of the research on television use as it relates to self-esteem and social needs follows.

From a Uses and Gratifications perspective, researchers express concern that individuals sometime attempt to meet self-esteem and social needs via consumption of television. The use of television for those purposes has the potential to develop a dependency in the individual such that individuals will over-rely on television rather than other means such as interpersonal interactions to meet their self-esteem and social needs. As a result, one’s engagement in interpersonal relationships often decreases as one’s dependency on television to meet one’s social needs increases, resulting in the potential for greater isolation (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Perse and Rubin, 1990).
Self-esteem and social needs are not the only reason television is relied upon; for some individuals economic status plays a role (Blumler, 1979; Greenberg & Dominick, 1969; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979). More specifically, individuals low on the economic hierarchy tend to be more dependent on television to meet their needs as a direct result of (a) low income, (b) high stress levels and (c) pronounced social confinement to the home (Grant, Guthrie & Ball-Rokeach, 1991). Thus, the process of dependence on television coupled with removal from physical social contact often is cyclical because, as individuals are motivated to fulfill their needs via television consumption rather than simply ritualistically watching the programming, those individuals’ acceptance of the programming as representative of reality increases (Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006; Rubin, 1983, 1984; Rubin & Perse, 1987).

The body of research regarding the influence of television on its viewers has social and individual significance. Using Uses and Gratifications Theory as a grounding for analysis, the bulk of the literature suggests the reason why an individual consumes television or movies plays a role in determining if and how much of the worldview depicted therein will be adopted by the individual through either ritual and informational lenses (Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006). To date, Uses and Gratifications Theory has been used to describe the behaviors of individuals who consume messages about violence, self-esteem and social needs. However, there is a lack of research on viewers’ motivation for watching wilderness activities in television and movies and the influence this may have on the individual’s perceptions
about wilderness activity participation. For these reasons, it can be inferred that portrayals of wilderness activities too may have an impact on an individual’s perception of their own self-efficacy in terms of successful participation in wilderness activities.

**Conclusion**

Both Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory suggest that television and movies have the potential to influence individual’s behaviors and attitudes (Gentles & Harrison, 2006; Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). However, as independent theories Cultivation Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory do not give a complete picture of the impact of television and movies on viewers. However, taken together each provides a more in-depth and nuanced perspective of how individuals use television. As a result, the impact of media on the individual can be better understood (Ruggiero, 2000; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006). As previously stated, many studies have demonstrated that individuals can benefit from participation in wilderness activities and/or wilderness therapy (Russell, 2000 & 2002; Peels & Richards, 2005); yet the influence of television and movies on perceptions of wilderness activities and individual’s willingness to participate in such activities remains unclear. To remedy this situation, further investigation needs to be done. If television does influence an individual’s perception of wilderness activities, in what way does it do so? More specifically, if media does influence perceptions of wilderness activities, is that influence positive or
negative? To answer this question, the following research questions are proposed:

**RQ1**: What role does television and movies play in shaping an individual's perception of wilderness activities?

**RQ2**: To what extent does this perception impact the individual's willingness to participate in such activities?
Chapter 3: Methods

Qualitative Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design because my goal was to (a) describe and better understand rather than predict or explain, (b) privilege subjective experiences rather than blend multiple experiences into one common reality, and (c) capitalize on the depth and detail that I was able to gather from each participant so as to accurately record the participants’ reality in their own terms. This would not be the focus of a quantitative research design since that approach seeks to make generalizations about a population based on data obtained from arguably representative samples. Qualitative research differs from quantitative in that it privileges subjective experiences vs. generalizable inferences or estimations which, although they have their own benefits, do not allow for the in-depth kinds of analyses afforded by a qualitative approach. Thus, with this in mind, I took a qualitative approach to studying media’s potential impact on an individual’s perception of wilderness activities and, in turn, their own willingness to participate in wilderness activities.

First, my goal was to describe and better understand my participants’ reality. Qualitative research places emphasis on describing a phenomenon because it takes the stance that in order to understand and interpret data an in-depth description of it must first be obtained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The emphasis on description allows the researcher to negotiate the description of the participant’s reality with the
participant in order to ensure an accurate reporting (p. 41). Next, qualitative research privileges subjective experience and therefore multiple perceptions of reality; it values understanding social constructions of reality allowing me to fully embrace competing and differing worldviews. I believe it is vital to allow the respondent to take charge in reporting to the interviewer what is true in their reality as to avoid privileging the researchers experience or leaving information out simply because the researcher did not think of it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yow, 2005). In this study I was particularly concerned about my personal biases regarding the positive value of participation in wilderness activities, and so made I made a critical effort to allow for respondents’ potential contrasting views. Finally, as a result of the depth and breadth of each interview, individual differences can be studied to better understand how individuals, and thus distinct segments of the human race, are effected differently by the same phenomena (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000).

To sum up, interpretation via the naturalistic paradigm allows me to see constructs of a contextual nature that lead to shared beliefs and individual perceptions at the same time (Thorne, Kirkham & O’Flynn-Maggee, 2004; Thorne, Kirkham & MacDonald-Emes, 1997). In short, since the majority of the research conducted on the influence of television has been conducted through a quantitative lens, the results have suggested a singular reality that does not take into account the unique lived experiences of the individual. As a result, a holistic perspective has been under-analyzed, especially in the area of wilderness activity portrayals.
Sampling Technique

A non-random network sample was used to recruit respondents for the study. Individuals from my social network were given recruitment letters to distribute to qualifying individuals from their own social networks. In this way, I was able to recruit a more diverse group of respondents that were not immediately familiar with either me or the subject of the research. Individuals were required to meet two qualifications for inclusion in the study: (a) the individual must have been able to recall seeing a wilderness activity portrayal on television and/or the movies and (b) the individual must have been willing to participate or consider participation in a wilderness activity of their choosing. The rationale for these parameters was that by meeting both of these criteria respondents would have adequate life experiences pertaining to the nature of this study to provide insightful answers.

Sample

Respondents ranged in age from 21 to 50 years and watched wilderness activities portrayed in television or movies ranging anywhere from 15 minutes per month to 15 hours per week. Clearly, in this sample light viewers were in the former category and heavy viewers in the latter. The interviews lasted anywhere from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. Of the 19 respondents in the sample, nine were women. With the exception of one individual, respondents self-identified their ethnic background: one respondent was Filipino-American, one was Hispanic, two were European, two were African-American, and the remaining twelve were Caucasian. All
participants lived in the Willamette Valley at the time of the study with eleven having grown up there as well. Five of the remaining respondents grew up in various states across the United States (Colorado, Georgia, Ohio and Tennessee), and three grew up in countries outside of the United States (British Columbia and England). Finally, all respondents either had attended, or were still attending, post-secondary schools, including technical schools and universities. Thirteen respondents reported that they had earned B.A./B.S. or Masters degree.

Procedure

Nineteen face-to-face interviews were conducted. Each respondent was given an informed consent document before the start of the interview, at which time I explained the process to them, including informing the respondent that he/she could choose to not answer any question or stop the interview process at any time without penalty. Respondents were informed that no information would be used to identify them. To ensure respondents’ confidentiality, pseudonyms were used during the interviews and in reporting the data. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher for subsequent analysis. Respondents were made aware of the audio-taping at three different times: the recruitment letter, the informed consent document and again prior to beginning the interviews. None of the respondents were compensated for their participation in the study and all were made aware that participation was voluntary. Interview questions that addressed demographic information were collected for identifying trends only.
Instrument

The measurement instrument was composed of a series of open-ended questions that were designed to probe the individual’s own ideas regarding their impression of wilderness activities depicted in television, movies and other forms of media. Among the questions, respondents were asked the following: (a) Do you feel that there are impacts (benefits or consequences) on an individual because of their participation in wilderness activities? If yes, how do you think participating in wilderness activities impacts an individual? (b) Did viewing the depiction you described above affect your willingness to participate in that activity? Why or why not? (c) Based on your gendered description of the host/participants of the television programming or movie, do you think it is more acceptable for one sex to participate in wilderness activities than another? If so, which sex? Please explain why you feel this way (see Appendix A for a complete list of interview questions). Responses to these and other questions were designed to provide a holistic view of the individual’s perceptions of wilderness activity portrayals as well as the impact of these portrayals on consumers of such images.

The interview protocol was semi-structured, allowing me some freedom to explore respondent’s unexpected responses or relevant tangents. For example, one respondent unexpectedly identified family structure as a factor in his perception of wilderness activities. Additionally, because of the semi-structured nature of the interview, I was able to ask additional clarifying questions, allowing the respondent
to share more fully how his family structure shaped his perceptions of wilderness activities. Finally, as the interviews proceeded, minor changes were made to the instrument including rearranging the order of the questions in a more efficient and logical manner and adding both clarifying questions to obtain greater information and logical probes to better address related issues.

**Coding Scheme**

The interviews were coded using a combination of Gerbner’s (1969) suggested categories for public messages as well as Katz et al.’s (1973) social and psychological functions of mass media. Gerbner (1969) identified four categories for analyzing public messages including: attention, emphasis, tendency and structure. Attention refers to the presence of a topic, item or idea. Media purveyors select which items to include or exclude. Consequently, based solely on time allotment, the choice to include one concept necessarily excludes other concepts. Emphasis refers to the composition of the information presented. For example, location and size in the media can be indicators of the importance of a topic to the audience. Tendency refers to the consistency of how a message is communicated and structure refers to relationships between aspects of communication and can be, for example, proximal or logical (1969, p. 145-146).

The five social and psychological functions of mass media Katz et al. (1973) identified include informational needs, emotional needs, status needs, social needs, and stress relief needs. Informational needs refer to using mass media as an avenue
from which to gather information about the world around the individual. Emotional needs refers to using mass media as a form of pleasure or enjoyment. Status needs refers to using mass media to enhance self-confidence and credibility. Social needs refers to using mass media to strengthen interpersonal interactions and stress relief needs refers to using mass media as a means to remove oneself from interactions for the purpose of escape or release (1973, p. 166-167). Respondents’ assessment of media consumption of wilderness activities and the potential impacts of such consumption was coded for further analysis using a process of open coding.
Chapter 4: Results

This study examined individual’s perception of the influence of television and/or movie depictions of wilderness activities on themselves and others. In particular, I wanted to learn if these portrayals had an impact on an individual’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities. To answer these questions I first provide an overview of the respondents’ perceived implications of participation in wilderness activities. That is followed by respondents’ identification and description of their most memorable wilderness activity portrayals. Next, the respondents share their perceptions of the role that gender of the host and/or participants played in the wilderness activity portrayal, leading finally to a discussion of the influence of wilderness activity portrayals on respondents. Each of these categories seeks to answer the research questions proposed earlier in this study.

Implications of Participation in Wilderness Activities

To better understand the data, respondents were asked to identify if they believed there were any implications associated with participating in wilderness activities. Two broad types of implications emerged: positive and negative. More specifically, all respondents reported that participation in wilderness activities had positive impacts with nine of the respondents identifying both positive and negative impacts. None of the respondents suggested that participation in wilderness activities was solely negative.
Included in the positive impacts of participation in wilderness activities were physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual impacts. Of these, physical and mental impacts were the most cited with physical benefits being cited thirteen times and mental benefits being cited seventeen times. Participants identified that participation in wilderness activities had physical impacts in terms of better or improved health. For example, Carla and Chad identified that being in the fresh air was a positive physical impact of participation in wilderness activities, as did Ben who said, “I think just as another benefit, it’s a chance to recharge and get away from anything that’s artificial -- that pollutes your body”. In addition to fresh air, most participants identified exercise and fitness as another positive implication. Evan identified “a sense of well-being in terms of feel-goodness [from the] fresh air and a form of exercise”. More specifically Greg identified, “physically, [participation in wilderness activities] does wonders, just walking all day, cardio-vascular, leg strength, [it has] a lot of benefits”. Jeremy agreed saying, “[wilderness activities are] pretty rigorous-- physically”. Further Grace reiterated why these benefits are associated with wilderness activities, “it’s healthy with the fresh air and the exercise you can get that’s more encouraged when you have less transportation such as cars-- it’s healthy”. Finally, Donna shared, “a lot of time involvement in wilderness activities will lower blood pressure and lower heart rate.” The mental implications associated with participation in wilderness activities are discussed next.
Participants identified several mental benefits of participation in wilderness activities, including relaxation or relief of stress. For example, Grace made a connection with being in natural settings and the reduction of stress asserting:

I feel that it’s beneficial for somebody to participate in wilderness activities because they actually get to experience natural things that were created, not just by humans, and some people never actually set foot off the concrete or planted grass and they can appreciate more natural things...it’s more relaxing and peaceful there’s less stress and pressure.

Ben reiterated that reduced stress is experienced by:

Getting away from our everyday lives. I think that nature is a lot more simple than our everyday lives ...[because] we have so much going on and so many different things that we think we need or that we want, but if you boil it down to nature, it’s very simple.

Related to, though distinct from mental benefits are responsibility and self-efficacy. Respondents reported that both of these are improved through participation in wilderness activities. Amy put it well when she gave an example from her own experiences with her family in wilderness activities:

We have done things outdoors; sometimes they’re hard things you have to work out. It’s been really good, especially when our kids were little, like camping to have to pull together. [For example] if you forgot something you’d have to figure out a creative way [to make do without] and I think that’s a positive thing --to get creative.

Donna also identified that the benefits of participation in wilderness activities can linger when she stated that, “there’s something in [after the participation in the wilderness activity], your ability to handle stress later when you’ve had this type of rejuvenation.” There also seemed to be an assumption that individuals’ with predominantly urban experiences would experience greater self-efficacy by
participating in wilderness activities. For example, Haley shared, “[Participation in wilderness activities are] especially beneficial for young kids and inner city kids or families that don’t get to travel much, it’s even more beneficial for them.”

Several participants identified that participation in wilderness activity encouraged responsible behavior in many different ways. For example, Emilie shared that she felt her children learned responsibility because:

[I use wilderness activities to teach my children to] not throw their garbage down [and to be] more aware of what is going on around them. [For example, by] making sure the fire is out when they leave [camp, they learn] responsibility, stewardship, all of that. [Similar to when] you teach them turn the stove off when [they] are done [at home, likewise] you also can’t leave your camp unless the fire is out, and you take your garbage out with you.

Despite respondent’s acknowledgement of the many positive implications associated with participation in wilderness activities, nearly half of them also noted some negative impacts of participation in wilderness activities. These negative impacts largely focused on the risk of physical harm. Ryan shared, “[there is] risk or injury involved.” Further, Greg elaborated that the problem is not getting hurt in the outdoors; it’s that when you get hurt its “hard to get out”. More serious than injury is the risk of death; as Carla put it, “you could die out there.” Further, Dan shared “that some people who climb enormous mountains are at risk of dying, mountaineers die.” Interestingly, when some participants mentioned the risk of injury or death they did so with a tone of sarcasm as if the risk of harm was obvious not because of being in the wilderness but because of being alive. For example,
when Evan was listing positive impacts of participation in wilderness activities he ended his list with a sarcastic, “apart from getting lost and dying.” This tone was consistent with several participants, regardless of sex. Next, participants were asked to recount a wilderness activity portrayal in television and/or movies.

*Wilderness Activity Portrayals*

Participants self-identified the sort of wilderness activity portrayals they had seen. Several common television programs and movies were identified and could be categorized into two main groups: documentary or non-fiction informational and entertainment. Both categories were represented in television and movies. Documentary or non-fiction informational programming, as identified by the respondents, included local and national news programs, movies such as *Into Thin Air*, and television programs such as *Oregon Field Guide*, and *Survivor Man*. Respondents reported that documentary and non-fictional programs were, in their minds, educational and thus more factual than the second category of depictions. On the other hand, entertainment programming was identified as distinct from documentary or non-fictional information programming and included television programs such as: *Survivor, Man vs. Wild, Crocodile Hunter* and movies such as *River Wild, Into the Wild* and *Contract*. Next, I will discuss the perception of the respondents on the characters portrayed in the wilderness activity depictions they consumed.
Gender in Wilderness Activity Portrayals

Respondents were asked to recall the characters they saw depicted in the wilderness activity portrayals, including either the hosts of the programs and/or the individuals actually engaging in the wilderness activity in the programming. Though a few respondents reported having seen both sexes equally represented, most of the respondents reported seeing mostly males in either of the two roles (host/participant). In fact, no one reported having seen a female host, or a group of mostly women participating in the wilderness activity portrayal.

Based on their description of the characters engaging in the wilderness activities, respondents were asked their perception regarding the roles of the characters, specifically relating to gender issues. Again, most of the participants identified that they felt media promoted male participation in the portrayals of wilderness activities on television or movies. For example, Whitney shared “anytime the women are involved [the men] are all, ‘No you have to stay back, we’re big macho, and we’ll take care of it.’ And it’s the women that get lost – [the women] are too weak for guys.” Additionally, Grace identified that:

[Wilderness activity portrayals] are so extreme and dangerous that they play off of things like making you squeamish or [featuring activities that are] physically hard. Showing that even they, as a male, who is physically naturally a stronger more physically capable being--it’s obviously hard for them it’s probably going to be even harder for you as a woman.
Further, Evan gave a specific example with rock climbing portrayal in media:

I think it tends to get portrayed as being more of a male sport, which is a shame because I think there are dynamics in our culture that turn women off of doing stuff that I really hope and wish wouldn’t happen. I think it’s [because of] the people you see doing it. I think you see men portrayed as doing the more masculine things like the strength moves and they seem to be more dramatic for television than women doing the same thing.

Respondents reported that in both specific wilderness activities, such as rock climbing above, or in wilderness activities in general, they see a gender bias. Matt explained this as a social issue because it is portrayed that:

Women aren’t supposed to be out in the wilderness getting dirty and not taking care of themselves. Society, television, music, and sitcoms always talk about the guys going camping and the women never wanting to and staying home.

Despite what seems to be most respondents’ general agreement with gender bias in the types of media as shared above, a small number of respondents reported that they felt no gender bias in the specific media they had selected prior in the interview. For example, a few respondents selected the movie *River Wild*, in which a female plays the role of leader, expert and heroine. Respondents identified that this portrayal was unique in that it went against the gender role expectation. For example, Matt shared that he thought in media it is generally portrayed that it is more acceptable for men to participate in wilderness activities than women, however:

This movie was [de]bunking that trend because the expert, the only one that could get them down the treacherous part of the river was a woman, so that [de]bunked the trend. But I would say overall that
these types of movies and documentaries [featuring wilderness activities] are skewed towards male participation.

Respondents, who did not see a gender bias in their media selections of wilderness activity portrayals, explained that their views were based on their assumptions of unintentional gender representation. More specifically, respondents reported gender bias in television and other forms of media was not an issue because the point of the television program was not to promote gender roles but rather just to entertain or inform of wilderness activity opportunities. For example, when sharing about the movie *Contract*, Hank shared that gender roles were “not the point of the movie.” Further Adam explained in the reality-game show *Survivor*:

> The women do just as well as the men. They are strong competitors just like the men. And it may be the way they pick the women, the way they pick who they want in the show. But they do a very good job of picking some strong women, just like the men are strong.

Finally, Amy agreed that despite hosts and groups being comprised of mostly males participating in wilderness activities, it does not affect gender roles because, “if you are game to [participate in wilderness activities], you should--it doesn’t matter what your sex is.” Next, I will discuss the effect of wilderness activity portrayals on respondent’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities.

*Impact of Wilderness Activity Portrayals on Willingness to Participate*

Respondents were divided in their perception that wilderness activity portrayals had an impact on their participation in wilderness activities. Responses fell into two categories indicating that either wilderness activity portrayals actually influenced their willingness to participate in wilderness activities or that their
willingness had been unchanged by the wilderness activity depictions. Respondents who indicated the wilderness activity portrayals had influenced their willingness to participate in wilderness activities, identified the relationship as either positive or negative—either they were motivated to participate in the activity or they reported not wanting to participate because of the portrayal.

Five respondents reported no change in their willingness to participate in wilderness activities because of television and other forms of media portrayals attributed this to their interpretation that either: (a) the wilderness activity portrayal was fictional and thus had added drama or, (b) in the case of factual portrayals, the situation was unusual and extreme. It seemed that respondents based their perception of the accuracy of the portrayals as being inconsistent or inconsistent from their own personal experiences. For example, Hank explained why viewing a wilderness activity portrayal had no influence on his own participation in the activity saying, “[I] hadn’t thought of it in that way, it’s just a movie.” More specifically, when Carla was describing her viewing experience of River Wild, she identified that the portrayal was fictional, “it was an extreme…it was the Hollywood version.” Additionally, Grace agreed that “media needs to do things to pump people up to watch what is out of the normality of life. The wilderness activities that I would engage in are probably less extreme, but still enjoyable.” In addition to identifying that drama may be added to wilderness activity portrayals for entertainment
purposes, participants also reported not being influenced by media because of their previous experiences.

Respondents reported varying degrees of personal experience with wilderness activities from little to no experience all the way to participating in wilderness activities on a weekly or more often basis. In the case of non-fictional portrayals participants also drew on their lived experiences rather than the depictions, as illustrated when Emilie shared her perception of a news report covering a duck poaching incident. She stated that viewing this portrayal had no impact on her willingness to participate in hunting because, “we don’t do that, we have more respect. We get the hunting licenses, we get the fishing licenses and whoever killed that many ducks had to be poaching.” Similarly, in television and other forms of media Evan explained that his personal experiences in the activities portrayed are the basis for his decision to participate in wilderness activities stating, “I’ve done [rock climbing] before and I’m fairly interested in climbing and [the portrayal] didn’t increase or decrease it.” Next, I’ll discuss respondents who indicated that television and movies’ wilderness activity portrayals did impact their willingness to participate in wilderness activities.

Most participants indicated a positive effect on their willingness to participate in wilderness activities because of viewing the wilderness activity portrayal. This was the case for new activities as well as activities the participants had already engaged in. The most common reason given was that the wilderness activity looked
enjoyable, as was the case for Jill who after watching a documentary on backpacking in Ecuador indicated that she wanted to participate in this new activity because of “the beauty of the country, and the history of the people. I want to engage in the hiking activity to see the country the way they were seeing it.” Likewise, Matt indicated that after watching *Into the Wild*, he wanted to “go to Alaska and go to the bus that’s in the movie.” Both of these are examples of new activities the participants wanted to engage in because of the viewing of the wilderness activity portrayal.

In addition to new wilderness activities, participants indicated that watching wilderness activity portrayals of activities they had already participated in also made them want to do that same activity more. This suggested that personal experience had an important bearing on respondent’s interpretation of the television or movie portrayals of the wilderness activities. For example, after watching a film featuring white water rafting Donna indicated that “I wanted to jump on the river. I like the river anyway.” Additionally, Ryan who had also participated in white water rafting indicated that watching a film featuring this activity:

> It definitely did [effect my willingness to participate in that activity]. It had wild parts in it, which would obviously be over my ability to do, but …partly I knew that it wouldn’t ever be as difficult as shown in that particular movie.

In both of these examples, despite the wilderness activities being portrayed in an unrealistic manner, which was often more dangerous than the average participant experiences in that activity, the respondents reported that they were motivated to
participate in a realistic version of the activity because they had positive experiences participating in the portrayed activity.

Additionally, respondents were motivated to participate not only in the wilderness activity depicted in the portrayal, but also to participate in other wilderness activities not featured in the portrayal. Respondents reported their interest was peaked by watching the wilderness activity portrayal, as was the case for Ben, who reported that he wanted to participate in the portrayed wilderness activity because it “made me more interested in trying those activities, because the skills that are learned in that specific area can be applied to different wilderness activities.” Similarly, Matt indicated that watching wilderness activity portrayals, “helped me remember what it is like to be out in the wilderness and the feelings that you have when you are away from electricity and plumbing and cell phones and money, [I] wanted to do the activities more.” Jeremy explained that for him the reason watching one wilderness activity portrayal makes him want to participate in a different wilderness activity is “because you think they might be fun too.” Next, I will discuss the small number of responses that indicated that viewing the wilderness activity portrayals made them not want to participate in wilderness activities.

None of the male respondents reported their willingness to participate in the wilderness activity decreased as a result of viewing the wilderness activity portrayal. The female respondents were more divided in their reports with nearly half reporting their willingness to participate in wilderness activities decreased as a result of
viewing the wilderness activity portrayal and the remaining reporting no change or an increase in willingness to participate in wilderness activities. Four of the nine female respondents indicated that they did not want to participate in the wilderness activity because of the portrayal they viewed. The reason given by these respondents was that the wilderness activity portrayal was unappealing due either to perceived discomfort or perceived danger. Of these four respondents, two had little to no previous experience with wilderness activities and as we will see later this had tremendous implications for interpreting “dramatic license” in certain wilderness activity portrayals. In terms of discomfort, Haley explained that on Survivor the contestants:

Do not have water so they have to travel very far to get water --that’s something I am not interested in and because of the extremes of the situations... it makes the activities look less fun to me.

In addition to being uncomfortable, participants also indicated they did not want to participate in wilderness activities because they were portrayed as being too dangerous.

The most common danger association respondents identified with wilderness activity portrayals was connected with the emotion of fear, as explained by Whitney after watching the movie Everest, “it makes me totally scared and afraid.” She further explained:

I watched the movie, Everest, and they went climbing, climbed the mountain to reach the top. The trip started out nice everyone was doing [fine] and then bad weather came and everyone died--that just freaks me out. [I’l] never do any outdoor snow activities and also if
you hear on the news about hikers getting lost on Mt. Hood I would just never go climbing because of that.

Carla agreed with Whitney after having watched a different movie, *Into Thin Air*, also about climbing Mount Everest, “I couldn’t believe that someone would go to those extremes to conquer a mountain. I know I would never climb Everest, I would probably never mountain climb...because of how it’s portrayed. It’s too dangerous.”

Grace also explained that the need for media to entertain contributes to the message that participation in wilderness activities is dangerous:

> They make it seem very scary and hard to do, why would anyone care to watch if they could do it themselves? [It] made me not really want to do the activity, it looked ultra-uncomfortable and dangerous and not something I would probably ever really be excited about doing.

In short, respondents reported that viewing wilderness activity portrayals either influenced their willingness to participate in wilderness activities or it did not. Of those that reported that viewing wilderness activity portrayals did influence their participation in wilderness activities, the portrayals either encouraged or discouraged their participation in wilderness activities. Although most respondents reported positive implications of wilderness activity portrayals, nearly half of female respondents reported a negative impact. Of these female participants two had little to no personal experience with wilderness activities and the remaining two had moderate personal experience.

In summary, overall respondents reported their perceived implications of participation in wilderness activities were positive. They identified television and movies as the medium through which they viewed wilderness activity portrayals and
they categorized the types of television programs and movies as informational and/or entertainment-driven. Respondents also reported that because the sex composition of the individuals portrayed in the wilderness activities tended to be mostly male, there is a gender bias in wilderness activity participation portrayals. Finally, most respondents indicated that viewing wilderness activity portrayals affected their willingness to participate in wilderness activities such that most reported that their desire increased. However, nearly half of the female participants reported that viewing wilderness activity portrayals negatively impacted their willingness to participate in wilderness activities. Interestingly, this negative impact seemed to be positively correlated with limited or no exposure to wilderness activities in real life. The implications, limitations and future direction of this study are presented next.
Chapter 5: Discussion

*Theoretical Implications*

The research presented reveals insightful results in several areas. Aligning the results with the research questions that guided this paper, the results will be discussed using the following two categories: (a) What role television and movies play in shaping an individual's perception of wilderness activities? (b) To what extent does this perception impact the individual's willingness to participate in such activities? Within each of these categories, examined subtopics include: (a) to what degree does the sex of host and/or participants influence use of wilderness activity portrayals? (b) To what extent does respondent’s perceived risk influence use of wilderness activity portrayals? And (c) to what extent does respondent’s prior experiences influence adoption of worldviews contained in selected wilderness activity portrayed? Each of these will be discussed in detail below.

*Role of Television and Movies in Shaping Perceptions*

According to Bate (1988) mass media influences our adoption of gendered role expectations by manipulating how the sexes are portrayed in media. This is especially so concerning how women are portrayed. Bate (1988, p. 207) cites three ways mass media does this: (a) by omitting information about women, (b) by emphasizing the dramatic and (c) by focusing on sexuality. Respondents reported that some degree of each of these played a role in their interpretation of wilderness activity portrayals in television and/or movies. Results of this study are consistent
with this understanding of gender role expectations in that sex does play a role in influencing use of wilderness activity portrayals as does the extent to which respondents perceive risk.

First, what role does sex play in shaping an individual’s perception of wilderness activity portrayals in television and movies? Consistent with research on literary depictions of wilderness activities (Glotfelty, 1996), respondents reported that they predominantly saw males depicted in wilderness activity portrayals in television and movies. Further, respondents indicated this over-representation of males was associated with wilderness activities being portrayed as a male activity and contributing to the male bias in wilderness activity portrayal. These results agree with Bate (1988), that by not featuring women in mass media, specifically in this study in wilderness activity portrayals, the communicated gender role expectation is that the activity is not the expected place for women. This is particularly important because if this assumption is correct, then women may lose out on the benefits of participation in wilderness activities simply because they are not proportionately represented in media portrayals of wilderness activities.

Second, to what extent does the degree of perceived risk influence the use of wilderness activity portrayals? Consistent with previous research on the nature of literary wilderness activity portrayals (Egan, 2006; Town 2004), respondents reported that wilderness activity portrayals in television and movies tended to be depicted as more extreme than the average participant actually experiences. Generally, these
portrayals were identified as being dangerous and physically challenging. This too is consistent with Bate (1988) who asserted mass media focuses on the dramatic or extreme. Additionally, this also agrees with other data suggesting that increased perceived risk is associated with consumption of entertainment and news programs in television and movies as reported by Hestroni and Tukashinsky (2006) and Wilson et al., (2005). Respondents also reported that the extreme nature of the wilderness activity portrayals in television and movies emphasized previously mentioned male biases. Specifically, respondents indicated that the combination of the two, male bias and dramatic nature of the depictions, contributed to the gendered stereotype that wilderness activities are strictly masculine.

Finally, Bate (1988) identified a third aspect of mass media’s portrayal of the sexes that can affect one’s expectations of gender roles: media’s emphasis on sexuality. Though not as significantly reported as the previous two topics, a few respondents did report emphasis was placed on female sexuality in the wilderness activity portrayals they shared with me. Specifically, they reported that female sexuality was, in their opinion, exploited for means of survival rather than other attributes such as physical ability and mental capacity. These reports are consistent with past research that suggests that media depictions influence gender role expectations regarding sexuality especially (Kahlor & Morrison, 2007; Ward, 2002 & 2003). This is particularly interesting when taken together with the idea that males are more suited to participate in wilderness activities because of their physical ability.
For example, one respondent reported that female sexuality as featured in some wilderness activity portrayals reality-game shows, such as *Survivor*, only propels the females “so far” before the activities were ultimately dominated by males.

*Influence of Television and Movies on Participation*

Now that an understanding of how television and other forms of media tend to portray wilderness activities has been established, the next question to be addressed is what influence, if any, do these portrayals have on an individual’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities? Per Rubin (1984) and Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006), two consistent categories of media use have been used to explain media’s influence in past research and both of these categories were reported by respondents in this research as well: informational and ritual, or, as reported by respondents, “entertainment”. Also addressed within each of these categories were subtopics such as (a) the degree to which sex influences willingness to participate in wilderness activities, (b) the degree to which perceived risk influences willingness to participate in wilderness activities, and finally (c) the degree to which prior experience influences adoption of worldview from wilderness activity portrayals will be discussed.

Current research on uses of media consumption tells us that individuals who use media as an information gathering technique rather than for entertainment purposes, are more likely to align their worldview with what is portrayed on the television or movies (Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006; Rubin & Perse, 1987). Consistent
with this assertion, those respondents who reported that their willingness to participate in wilderness activities was affected by their consumption of wilderness activity portrayals on television or other forms of media, did indeed align their worldview with that depicted in the media. My analysis revealed that three factors were generally correlated with these results: (a) sex of the respondent, (b) interpretation of portrayal as either informative or entertainment and (c) the degree of personal experience the respondents had with the portrayed wilderness activity.

The complex nature of my results lay in seemingly contradictory findings from previous research. In this study, respondents identified watching wilderness activity portrayals for both informative and entertainment reasons. According to previous research (Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006; Rubin & Perse, 1987), respondents should have been more influenced by informational sources than entertainment sources, however this was not the case for all of my respondents. The reason for this is may be linked to the nature of personal experience the respondent takes with him/herself into the viewing experience (Morley, 1992; Rockler, 1999).

Individuals with a high degree of previous experience reported either an increase or no change in their willingness to participate in the portrayed wilderness activity. It is important to note that in respondents who indicated an unchanged willingness to participate in wilderness activities, nearly all reported being willing to participate in the wilderness activity. This is important because there was no discernable difference between respondents viewing informational programming
compared to entertainment programming. Thus, in this study, it appears the respondents used their personal experience as a basis for interpreting the wilderness activity portrayed on the television or movie. More specifically, the more the wilderness activity portrayal aligned with the respondent’s worldview that wilderness activity participation was accessible to them, the more likely the respondent was to agree with the wilderness activity portrayal. This is evident in the reasons given by the respondent for why a wilderness activity portrayal did or did not influence his/her willingness to participate in the wilderness activity. For example, in instances where the respondent identified a wilderness activity portrayal was inconsistent with their worldview they offered explanation as to why this was the case, most often citing the need for the production company to provide entertaining television.

In contrast, respondents with a lower degree of personal experience reported a more complex relationship with the wilderness activity portrayals and generally, tended to be more influenced by both the informational and entertainment programming. Consistent with the respondents just discussed, these respondents reported similar findings in their willingness to participate in the wilderness activities. However, in contrast to their study counterparts, a small number of these subjects also reported being negatively impacted by the wilderness activity portrayal and, thus reluctant to participate in the wilderness activity as a result. Consequently, these participants were unable to use their own personal experiences to interpret the wilderness activity portrayals on television and movies and so had a diminished
ability to assess media images as either accurate or inaccurate representations. In short, consistent with Baudrillard’s Theory of Hyper-reality (Fox & Miller, 2005; Morris, 2005), these respondents were unable to distinguish between the risk portrayed in the wilderness activity depiction and the actual risk of participation in the wilderness activity. To sum up, if an individual does not have a competing reality with which to counter what they view on television and movies, how can they challenge the information being presented? In turn, the “reality” they are presented with goes unchecked and is more likely to be accepted by the viewer. This assertion was supported by respondents like Haley, who stated stated:

Aside from camping which included a pop up trailer, my parents have never been outdoorsy people. [As far as my own experiences in the outdoors], they were usually always in a sport. [But now] I’ve seen a whole new side of women being outdoors through my husband’s family. [The women in his family] can travel for months alone and live in the outdoors for days and days and be completely fine. I think [they have] opened my eyes to the fact that more women [participate in wilderness activities] than I thought and more women [participate in them] alone.

Finally, a respondent’s perceived risk from participation in the portrayed wilderness activity seemed to be related to their level of expertise on the subject. As previously reported, when respondents were unable to distinguish between media-reality and actual-reality there appeared to be a link to the respondent’s limited or no-existent personal experience with the wilderness activity portrayed. Thus, inexperienced respondents adopted the worldview presented on the television or movies and reported a higher degree of perceived risk. In short, lack of personal
experience was linked with adoption of worldview portrayed in the wilderness activity depiction, which was then linked to a higher degree of perceived risk. In turn the higher degree of perceived risk contributed to the respondent’s reported decrease in willingness to participate in the wilderness activity.

In summary, respondents reported that wilderness activity portrayals on television and movies do play a role in shaping an individual’s perception of wilderness activities and this perception is consistent with literary depictions of wilderness activities as being both a male-dominated context and with events in nature involving danger in terms of extreme occurrences. Furthermore, the relationship between wilderness activity portrayals on television and the movies and an individual’s willingness to participate in such activities is a complex one. Other factors such as sex of the viewer, the viewer’s consideration of the portrayal being informational or entertainment-based, and the individual’s degree of personal experience with the portrayed wilderness activity all influence how the media portrayal of wilderness activities will affect the consumer. Specifically, females with limited personal experience participating in wilderness activities reported a higher degree of aligning their worldview about wilderness activities with the worldview presented on television or in the movies. Thus, these respondents reported a decrease in their willingness to participate in wilderness activities despite having previously reported holding the opinion that participation in wilderness activities has positive effects on the individual, suggesting that the significant finding of this study
is that personal experience mediates viewing effects for both television and movies, for women, especially.

Limitations

Although many of the findings of this study are consistent with current research on the impact of viewing on television and movie depictions on the consumer and television and movie depictions of wilderness activities, there are some limitations. Among them is the sample and the testing instrument. First, the sample was largely homogenous. More specifically the sample was predominantly Caucasian, though some respondents identified with diverse ethnic backgrounds. Even though this study did not examine or draw any conclusions related to ethnic background or educational status, race may have been a factor in respondent’s responses. Further research should explore what impact these factors had on the specifics presented in this study. Arguably, interviewing more diverse respondents in these and other areas will provide some further degree of insight. Specifically, future research should aim to study participants from differing ethnic background, different education, and differing geographic location as each of these factors may have a large impact on the access, experience and desire to participate in wilderness activities.

Related, the unique characteristics of the region from which respondents were drawn from also may have influenced these results. All of the respondents lived in the Willamette Valley at the time of the study and though they did not all
grow up there also, there are unique qualities of the culture of the Willamette Valley that may have influenced responses. Specifically, respondents suggested that the Willamette Valley has a rich culture of participation in wilderness activities. Additionally, several respondents suggested that the geographical features of the Willamette Valley make it easier to participate in wilderness activities. Arguably, because of this, respondents in the study may have a higher degree of wilderness activity participation and that affinity may better explain the sex differences in terms of the negative effect of certain wilderness activity portrayals on women specifically.

Lastly, some of the questions were directed at identifying characteristics of current wilderness activity portrayals in television or movies that may influence an individual’s willingness to participate in the wilderness activity. When asked to think about the gender composition of the portrayals, respondents exhibited a degree of reluctance or discomfort with reporting on the characterization of gender in the programming. This may be due in part to issues related to social desirability. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002), it is not unexpected for interview respondents to report faulty information simply to save face with the interviewer. Consequently, the challenge for the interviewer is to promote accuracy through anonymity and neutrality when recording responses and to ask clarification questions to obtain further explanation and understanding. Despite my best efforts to abide by these guidelines, respondents still may have reported inaccurate information.
Future Implications

With the rapid development of media technology, it is probable that media will continue to be an ongoing part of our culture in the future and, arguably, it may become an even more prominent cultural feature than it already is as new technologies are developed. Consider the increased availability of internet access in urban settings, where already users can download video on the internet or on a cell phone. Thus, from the perspective that media is here to stay, it is vital that an understanding of the its influence on wilderness activity portrayals be further examined, so that the effect of these portrayals on participation can be better understood. Accordingly, in terms of future research, this qualitative study should be expanded in two important directions including: (a) greater emphasis on the role of personal experience and, (b) greater representation of marginalized groups such as women and social minorities.

Influence of Personal Experience

First, as demonstrated by this study, there appears to be a relationship between an individual’s expertise with the portrayed wilderness activity and the impact as well as their interpretation of the wilderness activity portrayal on television and movies. It may be helpful to further examine the link between personal experience and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Specifically, understanding where individuals with lower levels of personal experience gain information about wilderness activities may be helpful in understanding what role, if any, television and
movies play in shaping their perception of wilderness activities. Future studies aimed at discovering how individuals shape their reality about wilderness activities which they have limited to no previous experience with may reveal other outside factors besides media that influence an individual’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities. Thus, improved understanding would enable us to find ways to introduce newcomers of wilderness activities to the mainly positive impacts (i.e. improved leadership and self-efficacy) associated with participation in wilderness activities.

**Impact of Underrepresented Groups**

Second, as reported by respondents, primarily males were seen hosting and/or participating in the wilderness activity portrayal. Overall, respondents reported that this male representation contributed to a sex bias in gender role expectations regarding participation in wilderness activity. This begs the question, what impact, if any, would female hosts and/or participants in wilderness activity portrayals have? Further, what impact, if any, would members of other underrepresented groups have in playing the role of host and/or participants in the wilderness activity portrayals? Intuitively, since respondents reported male representation in media wilderness activity portrayals perpetuated a male gender role expectation of participation in such activities, it is likely that representation of females and other underrepresented groups may reflect a similar worldview. Further, such a worldview would have positive impacts on its viewers as the benefits of participation in wilderness activities would be potentially more accessible to
females and other marginalized groups through the shift in role expectations perpetuated by such media wilderness activity portrayals.

It is important to note however, that there may be problems with such portrayals. For example, in 2006, CBS’s Surviv or initially divided tribes by race. In an interview with Time Magazine, Jeff Probst, the host of Survivor, shared that the idea to organize tribes by race came from critics of the show stating that there was not enough ethnic diversity in the programming. When questioned why this was the case, Probst suggested that the lack of minority representation of the participants discouraged future minority participation in the show as applicants (Rawe, 2006). Negative reactions to this 13th season of Survivor centered mostly around the racially organized teams and thus the propagation of racial stereotypes through the portrayals.

While interesting, these critiques centered primarily on the programming not being politically correct by its representation of minority groups (Carter, 2006). While this example of representation of marginalized groups in wilderness activity portrayals provides some speculation on what role the sex and/or race of the host and/or participants of wilderness activity portrayal has on shaping gender expectations as well as racial stereotypes, the emphasis on the controversy surrounding the program overpower much of the discussion that could be relevant to this study, thus additional research needs to be conducted. In short, understanding what role the sex and/or race of the host and/or participants in the wilderness
activity portrayals has in shaping wilderness activity perception, if any, may lead to greater understanding of what potential influence wilderness activity portrayals on television and other forms of media may have on an individual’s willingness to participate in wilderness activities and thus reap the benefits associated with such participation.

Conclusion

Media studies have repeatedly shown that television and movies, among media, indeed do have a potential impact on influencing an individual’s worldview (Gentles & Harrison, 2006; Haridakis & Whitmore, 2006); however the topic of wilderness activity portrayals in media has been virtually untouched. Because the potential for media to expand its current reach is probably, further research into television and movie depictions of wilderness activities needs to be done as participation in these kinds of activities is clearly associated with positive benefits (Caulkins, White & Russell, 2006; Peep & Richard, 2005).

This study has examined how television and movies tend to depict wilderness activities. Consistent with research on literary depictions, respondents reported wilderness activity portrayals to be dominated by males and they tend to be depicted as more risky than they may in fact be. Although, most respondents reported their willingness to participate in wilderness activities either increased or did not change due to watching the wilderness activity portrayals on television and other forms of media, nearly half of female respondents reported they were discouraged from
participating in the portrayed wilderness activities. Further investigation into this seeming contradiction suggested a relationship between the degree of personal experience an individual has with the portrayed wilderness activity and how they then process the wilderness activity portrayal. Specifically, respondents with a higher degree of wilderness activity experience tended to privilege their personal experience over the wilderness activity worldview depicted on television and/or the movies. Similarly, respondents with lower degrees of wilderness activity experience appeared to not have established their own worldview about wilderness activity portrayals. As a result, when these respondents were presented with a portrayal, because they had no prior basis on which to evaluate the depiction, and they tended to be more willing to accept the worldview presented. Since participation in wilderness activities is associated with many benefits for the individual, understanding media’s role in promoting or discouraging participation in such activities is vital. Clearly, the sense of greater self-efficacy, empowerment and leadership developed as a result of participation in wilderness activities has the potential to carry over into other factors of life, making this research highly valuable.
Bibliography


   Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.


Appendix A
Wilderness Activities in the Media Interview Questions

Part I:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today.

Before we start into the interview I want to ask you a couple of questions to verify that you qualify to participate in the study. This information ways presented in the letter and consent form you received from me so it should be familiar to you.

First, throughout the interview I will be using the phrase “wilderness activity”. To make sure we are on the same page I will define the phrase for you.

For the purpose of this study the phrase “wilderness activity” refers to any activity in the out of doors that removes the participant from the conveniences of civilized life.

Second, can you recall having seen any wilderness activity depicted on television?

Finally, do you currently, or are you willing to participate in a wilderness activity?

Now that we are on the same page we can begin the interview questions.

1. What comes to mind when you think about wilderness activities?

2. Do you feel that there are impacts (benefits or consequences) on an individual because of their participation in wilderness activities? If no, move to question #3
   a. If yes, how do you think participating in wilderness activities impact an individual?

3. You indicated before starting the interview that you watched in the past, or you currently watch television programs, movies or other forms of media that include wilderness activity portrayals.
   a. Please describe the depiction for me.
b. Please identify what qualifies the activities as wilderness activity portrayals.

4. Did viewing the depiction you described above affect your willingness to participate in that activity? Why or why not?

5. Did viewing the depiction affect your willingness to participate in other wilderness activities? Why or why not?

6. Over what type of medium did you view the depiction you described above? For example was it a television program, a movie, a documentary, did you view it over the internet, etc?
   a. Can you remember the name of the television programming, the movie or other media where you saw the depiction?
   b. If so, please identify.
   c. If not, please tell me any details you remember about the depiction.

7. Did the depiction you described above have a host? If not skip to question #8.
   a. What was the sex of the host?
   b. Did the host seem comfortable with their role? Why or why not?

8. Did the depiction you described above have participants? If not skip to question #9.
   a. How would you characterize the group of participants, where they: mostly men, mostly women, or equally mixed?

9. a. Based on your description of the host/participants of the television programming, movie or other media being mostly men, do you think it is more acceptable for men to participate in wilderness activities than women? Why or why not?

   b. Based on your description of the host/participants of the television programming, movie or other media being mostly women, do you think it is more acceptable for women to participate in wilderness activities than men? Why or why not?
c. Based on your description of the host/participants of the television programming, movie or other media being equally men and women, do you think it is more acceptable for one sex to participate in wilderness activities than another? If so, which sex? Please explain why you feel this way.

10. Please identify the most memorable portrayal of wilderness activity that you can remember.

11. What was it about the television, movie or other form of media portrayal that made it stick out most in your mind?

12. Does this experience have any bearing on your willingness to participate in wilderness activities? Why or why not?

13. Thinking back over the different wilderness activity portrayals you have shared with me today, do you associate any message about wilderness activities with the specific depictions? If no, skip to question #14.
   a. If yes, please explain.

   b. Do you feel the particular medium in which the wilderness activity was portrayed intentionally constructed the depiction to provide the viewer with the message you perceived? Why or why not?

Now we are going to shift gears from media portrayals of wilderness activities to your own experiences with wilderness activities.

14. Did you participate in wilderness activities growing up? If no, skip to question #15

   a. If yes, which ones?

   b. How often did you participate in these activities?

   c. Who participated with you in these activities?

   d. Why did you participate in the wilderness activities?

      i. If participants participated because their parents made them, ask to speculate on why they think their parents wanted them to participate.
15. Do you participate in wilderness activities now? If no, skip to question #16
   a. If yes, which activities do you participate in?
   b. How often do participate in them?
   c. Why do you participate in these activities now?

16. You indicated before the start of this interview that there are wilderness activities you would be willing to participate in.
   a. Please identify what these activities are.
   b. What is it about these activities that make you willing to participate in them?

**Part II:**
This concludes the interview portion of my questionnaire. To better understand your responses I need to know a little more about you. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential.

17. What is your age?
18. What is your sex?
19. With what race or ethnic group do you identify with?
20. What is your highest level of education?
21. How would you describe your economic status?
22. Where did you grow up?
23. Where do you live now?
24. How much would you say you view wilderness activities through the medium of television, movies or some other form of media? Specifically, identify in terms of how much time you spend watching these depictions?
25. Is there anything else about yourself, that is pertinent to the study, that you would like to share with me?
Appendix B
IRB Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Media Portrayals of Wilderness Activities
Principal Investigator: Dr. Walls, Speech Communication
Co-Investigator(s): Crystal Kelley, Speech Communication

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this research project is to investigate individuals' perceptions of the way media portrayals of wilderness activities affect their likelihood of participating in such activities. The information gathered from this study will be used in a graduate student thesis. We are studying this because we believe how an individual thinks about wilderness activities will influence their willingness to participate in wilderness activities.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits associated with the research, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you have expressed interest in participating in the study. You also have indicated that you have seen television depictions of wilderness activities and that you would be willing to participate in wilderness activities. For the purposes of this study wilderness activities are defined as any activity in the out of doors that removes the participant from the conveniences of civilized life.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

During the interview you will be asked a series of questions related to depictions of wilderness activities in television and your interpretations about these depictions. If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last for about 30 minutes.
WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You will not directly benefit from this study though we hope that indirectly you may apply the results to this study to your personal decisions about participation in wilderness activities.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential. We will only use any demographic information to identify trends across the sample. All information that is published will be presented using pseudonyms in order to guarantee confidentiality.

The interviews will be audio taped in order to transcribe the interviews. The only people to come in contact with the transcribed interviews will be the principal investigator and co-investigator. The tapes and transcribed interviews will be protected by way of locked cabinets and password protected electronic files.

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?

Yes. If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. You are free to skip any question that you prefer not to answer. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Crystal Kelley or Dr. Walls at Oregon State University.
If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): ________________________________________________

________________________________________ ________________________________
(Signature of Participant) (Date)

Co-investigator’s Name:  Crystal Kelley

________________________________________ ________________________________
(Signature of Co-investigator) (Date)