Slide 1

Sociology and Social Change

Week 8 Wednesday — Perspectives, socialization, community, and place

NRES 315: Human Dimensions of Fish and Wildlife Management

Last updated: October 14, 2026

1 / 23

Slide 2

Monday gave us the fundamentals

Structure and agency. Social facts. Troubles and issues. Social construction. Social order and social change.

Today: three **perspectives** that ask different questions of the same problem, and the **core concepts** that explain how a person comes to participate at all.

Source: Chapter 9, §§9.4–9.6

2 / 23

Slide 3

Today's question

Three sociologists examining the same decline in participation would ask different questions based on their theoretical perspectives:

1. What role does participation serve in maintaining social stability, and what happens to the larger social system when participation declines?
2. Who benefits from the decline in participation? How do power, inequality, and access to resources influence who participates and who does not?
3. What does participation mean to individuals? How do everyday interactions, identities, and shared meanings influence their decisions to participate?

Source: Chapter 9, §9.4 and Table 9.1

3 / 23

Slide 4

What you should be able to do

By the end of today, you should be able to:

- distinguish **functionalism**, **conflict**, and **symbolic interactionism**;
- explain **roles** and **identities** as socially constructed;
- explain **socialization** through agent, target, and context; and
- use **community**, **place**, and **stratification** to say who is served and who is not.

Source: Chapter 9, §§9.4–9.6.4

4 / 23

Slide 5

The Three perspectives

Functionalism · Conflict · Symbolic interactionism

Source: Chapter 9, §9.4 and Table 9.1

5 / 23

Slide 6

What each one asks

Perspective	View of society	Question
Functionalism	Interdependent institutions maintaining the whole	How do the parts relate and produce this outcome?
Conflict	Competition for resources and power; winners and losers	Who wins, who loses, and what sustains that pattern?
Symbolic interactionism	Meaning negotiated through everyday interaction	How do people construct meaning through interaction?

Source: Chapter 9, §9.4 and Table 9.1

6 / 23

Slide 7

Functionalism: parts maintaining the whole

Society is an **interdependent system** where specialized institutions work together to maintain stability, equilibrium, and social order.

- **Interdependence:** Institutions fit together like organs in a body
- **Manifest functions:** Recognized and intended outcomes (regulating harvest)
- **Latent functions:** Unintended or unrecognized benefits (intergen. bonding)
- **Dysfunctions:** Disruptions that destabilize the system (participation drops and agency funding models fail.

When one component of the conservation system fails, the disruption ripples across the entire social equilibrium.

7 / 23

Slide 8

Conflict theory: power, resources, and inequality

Society is characterized by pervasive inequality and struggle over **scarce resources**, where dominant groups shape institutions to protect their advantages.

- **Competition:** Resources like land, wildlife, funding, and decision authority are scarce; groups compete to control them.
- **Winners and losers:** Policies and social arrangements are rarely neutral; they consistently advantage some groups while marginalizing others.
- **Stratification in access:** When private lands are leased to high-paying nonresidents, affluent hunters gain exclusive access while local working-class hunters are priced out.
- **Institutional power:** Traditional agency structures historically prioritize license buyers over non-consumptive or underrepresented publics.

Conservation arrangements are not neutral — they reflect and

8 / 23

Slide 9

Symbolic interactionism: shared meanings

A micro-level lens: society is created and recreated through everyday **interactions, language, and shared symbols**.

- **Meaning guides action:** People act based on the meanings things hold for them, not biophysical facts alone.
- **Meanings are socially constructed:** Meanings arise, are sustained, and change through face-to-face interaction with family, peers, and mentors.
- **Symbols in conservation:** A firearm, a deer camp, or the phrase "outdoor heritage" are symbols carrying deep cultural and personal meanings.
- **Negotiated reality:** If the everyday social interactions that reinforce those meanings disappear, the activity loses its significance.

Participation depends on the meanings people construct through social relationships — not simply individual preference or information.

9 / 23

Slide 10

Three lenses on declining access

Three sociologists examine the exact same 44% decline in resident licenses:

Functionalism	**Conflict**	**Interactionism**
System stability	*Power & inequality*	*Meaning & identity*
• What function did walk-in access serve in the system?	• Who gained access when residents lost it?	• What does "being a hunter" mean to residents now?
• How does lost revenue disrupt agency operations?	• How does wealth dictate who hunts?	• How did losing mentors alter participation?
• How can balance be restored?	• Whose interests are served by commercial leasing?	• Whose "heritage" is being celebrated?

No perspective is "the right one." Each asks a different question and reveals a different mechanism for the same problem.

10 / 23

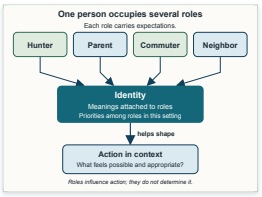
Slide 11

From perspectives to participation

Symbolic interactionism asks how interaction produces shared meanings.

Roles are social positions carrying expectations for behavior.

Identity is the meaning a person attaches to themselves based on how they understand and prioritize those roles.



Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.1

11 / 23

Slide 12

Socialization

Where do role expectations and shared meanings come from?

Socialization is how people learn the beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and role expectations of their culture.

Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.2

12 / 23

Slide 13

Agent, target, context

- **Agent** — the person or institution doing the socializing.
- **Target** — the person being socialized.
- **Context** — the setting in which it happens.

Primary socialization happens through parents in childhood. **Secondary socialization** happens through peers, teachers, extended family, media, and institutions.



Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.2 and Box 9.2

13 / 23

Slide 14

Which mattered more: agent or context?

The role of gender, rural upbringing, and whether the respondent's father hunted.

- 82% of males with a hunting father had tried hunting — and rural versus urban upbringing made **no difference** (81% vs. 83%).
- For females with a hunting father, the effect was modest: 27%.
- For females **without** a hunting father: 6%, with rural upbringing making no difference.

The presence of a hunting agent in the household mattered more than the rural or urban context in which socialization took place.

Source: Chapter 9, Box 9.2

14 / 23

Slide 15

When does rural upbringing matter?

Exactly one case: **males who grew up rural without hunting fathers** were far more likely to have tried hunting (59%) than urban males without hunting fathers (34%).

Rural upbringing fosters participation mainly by **standing in for absent primary agents** — other family, friends, or institutions step in where the behavior is widely seen as normative.

Source: Chapter 9, Box 9.2

15 / 23

Slide 16

Socialization can also exclude

Media can act as a secondary socialization agent, communicating who appears to belong.

Carini and Weber found that angling magazines showed women as:

- underrepresented relative to their actual participation;
- depicted in stereotypical roles, usually accompanied by men; and
- overtly sexualized.

When images reinforce a male-centric social space, people may not see themselves as suitable members of the group.

Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.2

16 / 23

Slide 17

From socialization to community

Socialization agents do not operate in isolation. Their relationships and institutions are organized within communities.

Community is the intermediary space between the individual and broader society.

Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.3

17 / 23

Slide 18

Three elements of community

- **Local territory** — a specific physical setting.
- **Local society** — the structures and institutions that meet local needs.
- **Social interaction** — active engagement of people with one another.

Together, these elements make community **place-specific**. They also allow a community to act in ways that cannot be predicted by averaging individual attitudes.

Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.3

18 / 23

Slide 19

Does local control guarantee equitable conservation?

No. Locally designed institutions can outperform centralized management, but success depends on context and the robustness of the process.

- **Credibility:** do short-term local interests override broader goals?
- **Capacity:** technical expertise, management skill, finances, political access.
- **Power:** collaboration can be derailed when elite factions hold disproportionate influence.

Without these assets, community-based approaches can reinforce existing inequalities rather than correct them.

Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.3

19 / 23

Slide 20

Why communities can reproduce inequality

Stratification: the processes allocating resources and opportunities by hierarchical ranking or socially agreed criteria. **Inequality:** the uneven or unfair distribution that results.

- The cost of equipment, transportation, and access can become prohibitive.
- Agencies risk losing large segments of their user base who can no longer afford to participate.
- Public trust thinking holds that wildlife is not owned by any group but held for the public benefit — which makes equity a trust obligation, not a preference.

Source: Chapter 9, §9.6.4

20 / 23

Slide 21

Pair rehearsal: name the perspective

With a partner, name the perspective behind each claim:

1. "The walk-in program held the access system together; what changed when it shrank?"
2. "How do rising nonresident leases and declining resident access reveal unequal opportunities?"
3. "'Heritage' means something different now than it did when my father said it."

Source: Chapter 9, §9.4

21 / 23

Slide 22

Friday

Read the **Week 08 Case Brief: Who Still Hunts Cedar County?** before class. It supplies the case facts; Chapter 9 supplies the concepts.

Licenses down 44% in twenty years. County population nearly flat. Farm operations down from 1,290 to 610. Posted acres up from 61,000 to 219,000.

Source: Chapter 9, §§9.3–9.6

22 / 23

Slide 23

Close

A useful response matches the diagnosed mechanism — structure, socialization, meaning, community capacity, or unequal access — and states plainly what and whom it leaves out.

Source: Chapter 9, §9.7

23 / 23