



# **Conceptual Models of Hunter Recruitment and Retention**



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# Presentation Adapted from Waterfowl Management Context

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**Waterfowl Hunter Recruitment and Retention Strategy  
Team formed in 2005**

**Draft strategy framework developed by summer 2005**

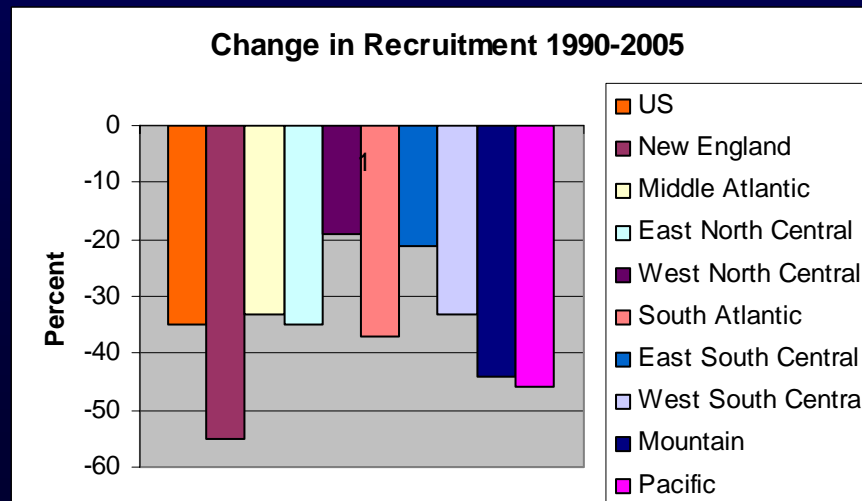
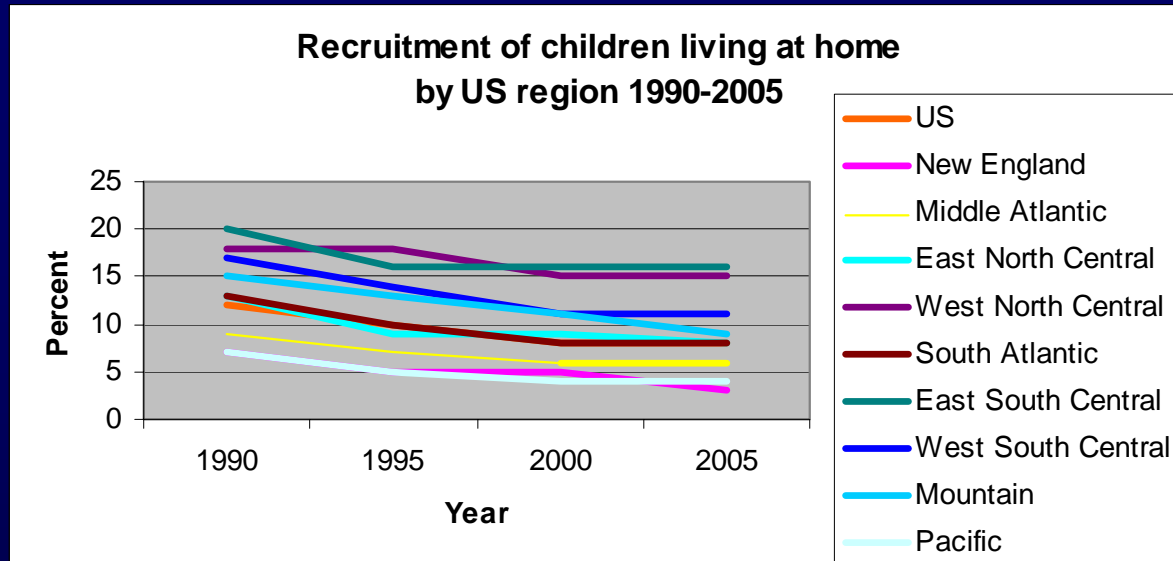
**Human Dimensions Working Group established fall 2007 to  
bring in social science foundation**



Photo Credit: Glenn Chambers

**One product: set of conceptual  
tools to improve thinking  
how recruitment and  
retention occurs**

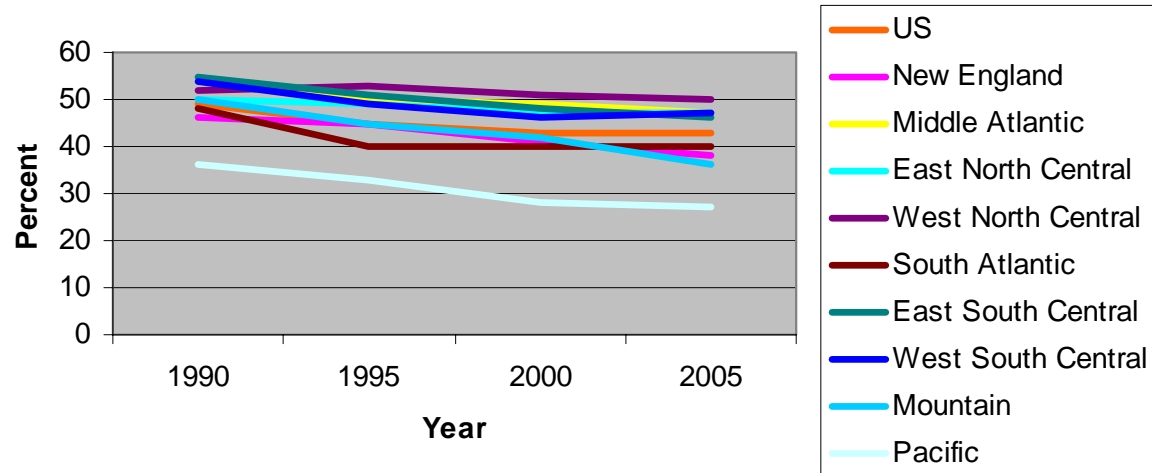
# Recruitment of Children into Hunting



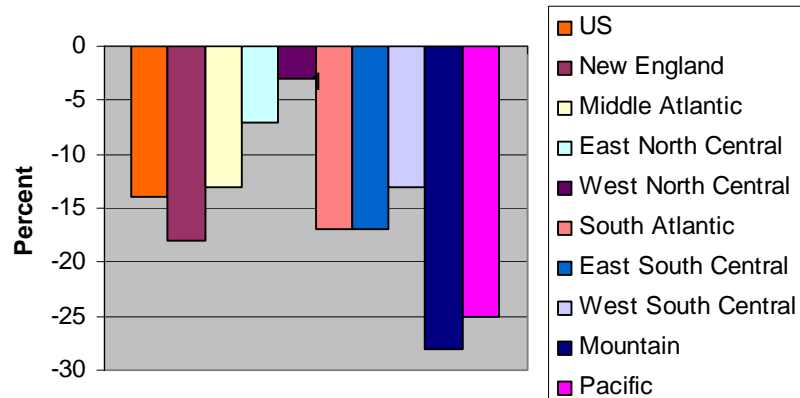
Source: USFWS

# Retention of Hunters

Hunter Retention Rate by US Region 1990-2005



Percent change 1990-2005



Source: USFWS

# Many Efforts...Any Successes?

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Most state wildlife agencies, and many conservation and hunting NGOs have been addressing these issues...

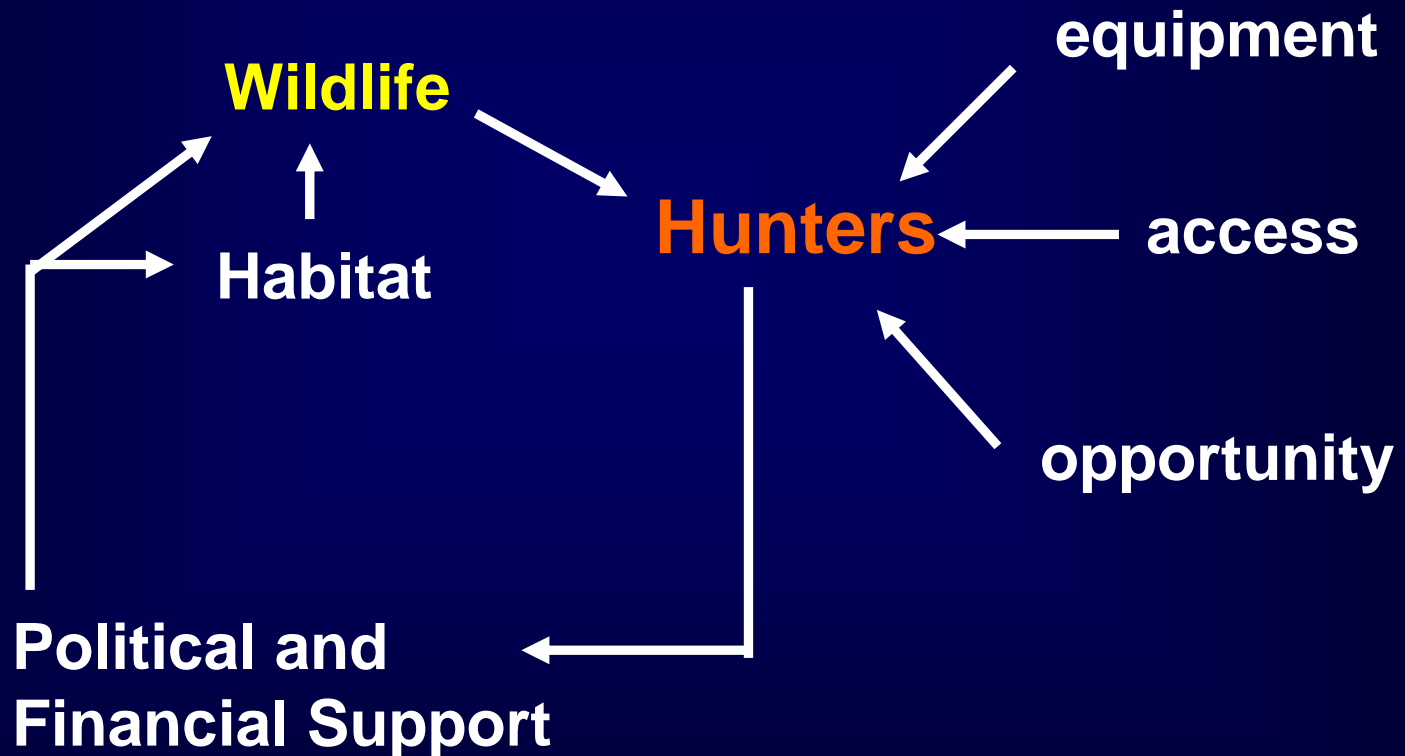
...in some cases, for decades.

Yet, the trends persist

# Existing Conceptual Model

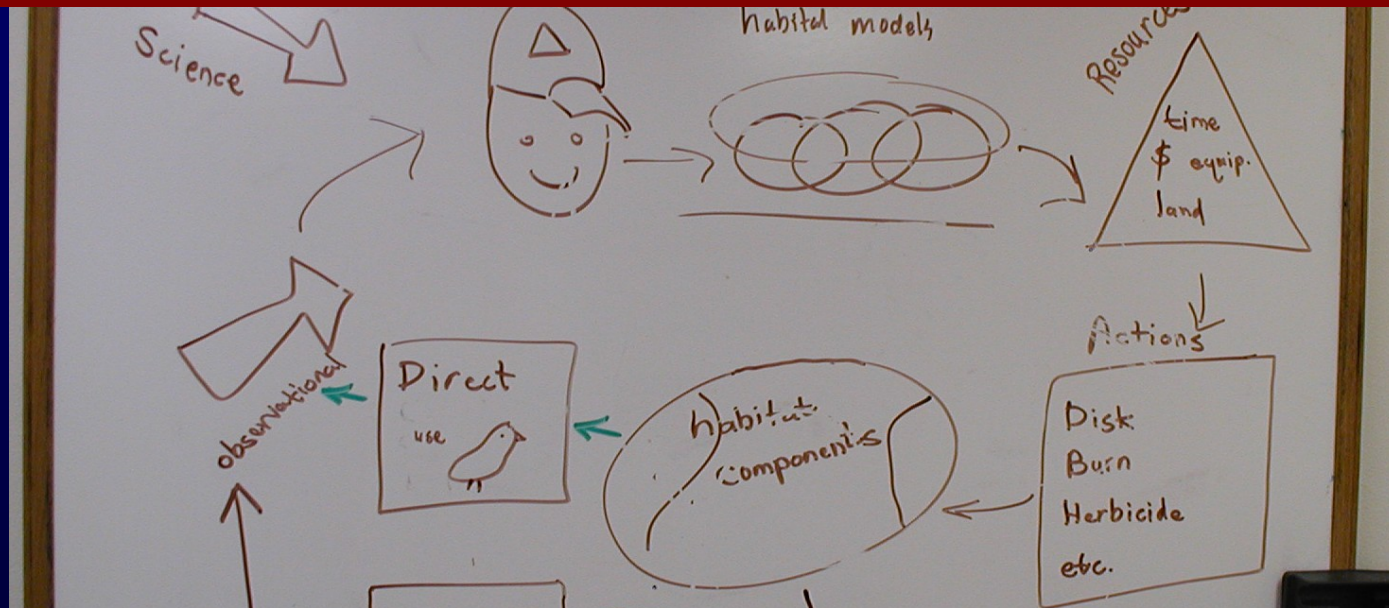
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Conventional wisdom: “if we make **it**, **they** will come.”



# General Rationale for Models

**“Model-building serves the purpose of putting people in a position to learn about a messy problem”  
(Vennix, 1996)**



**Models help clarify management “problem,” create a shared vision of the problem, and provide insights about potential strategies to address the problem.**

# What Specific Outcomes from Models?

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- Identify management problem – is it hunter numbers or something else?
- Better understand “natural processes” of hunter recruitment and retention – not what we hope will happen, but what has changed about these previously sufficient processes?
- Inform development of Hunter Recruitment and Retention plans – what are the constraints, and opportunities?



# Three Conceptual Models developed from different aspects of social science

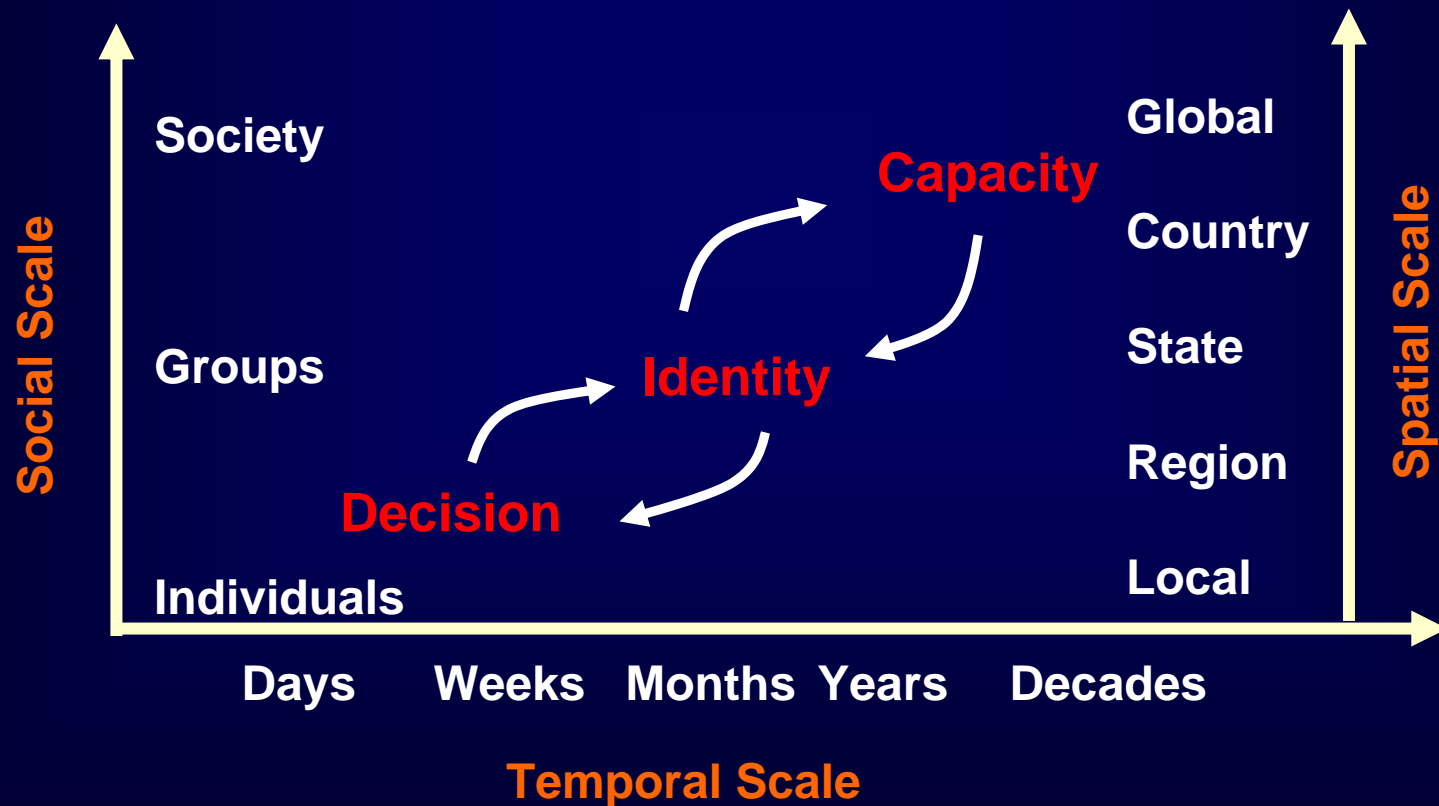
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1. Motivation-Constraint theories –  
Decision Model
2. Identity and Self-Perception theories –  
Identity Model
3. Social change and Cultural Capacity theories –  
Capacity Model

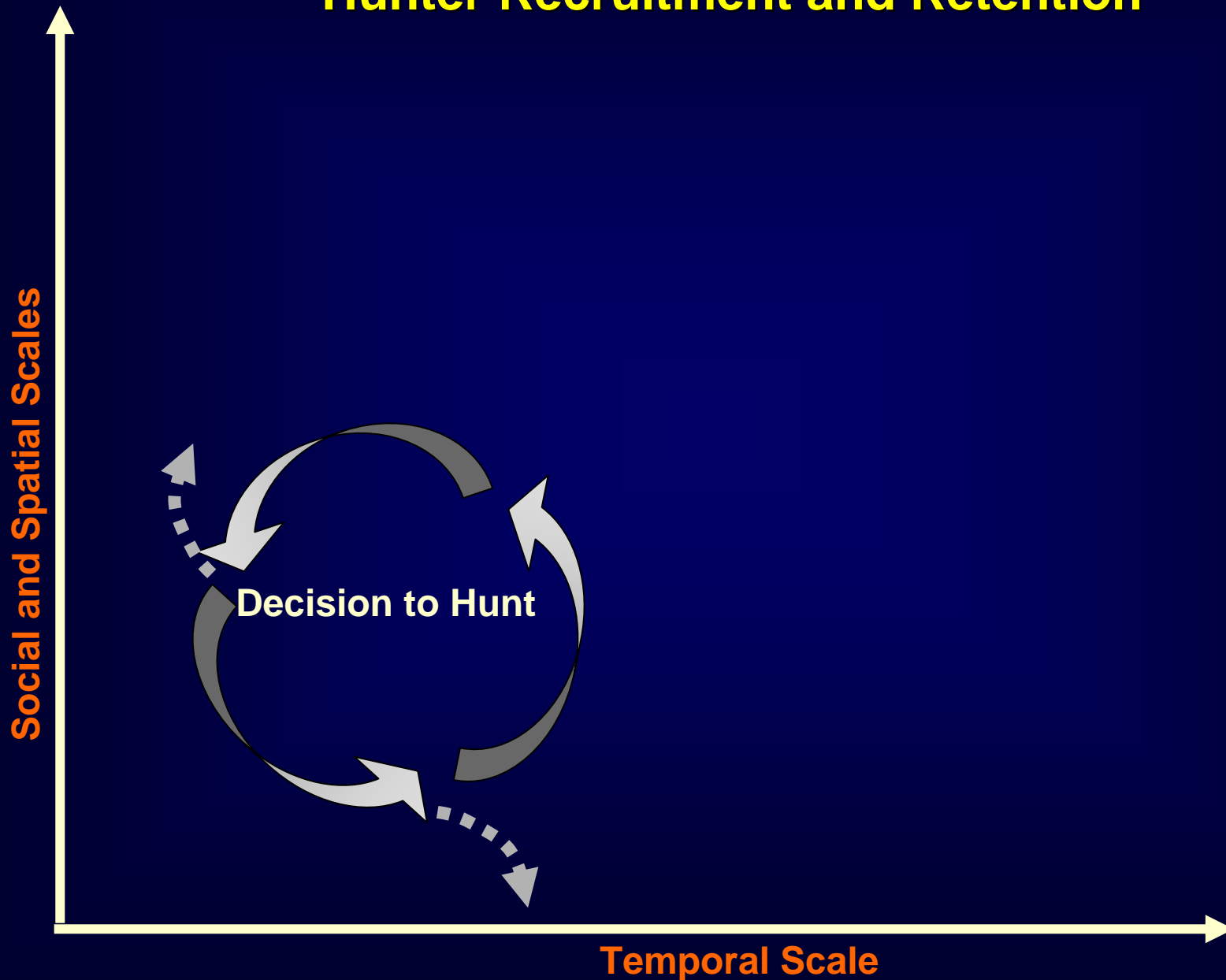
# Why Three Models?

Each relates to different part of temporal, social, and spatial scales

Models are complementary, not competing



# First Model to Address Hunter Recruitment and Retention



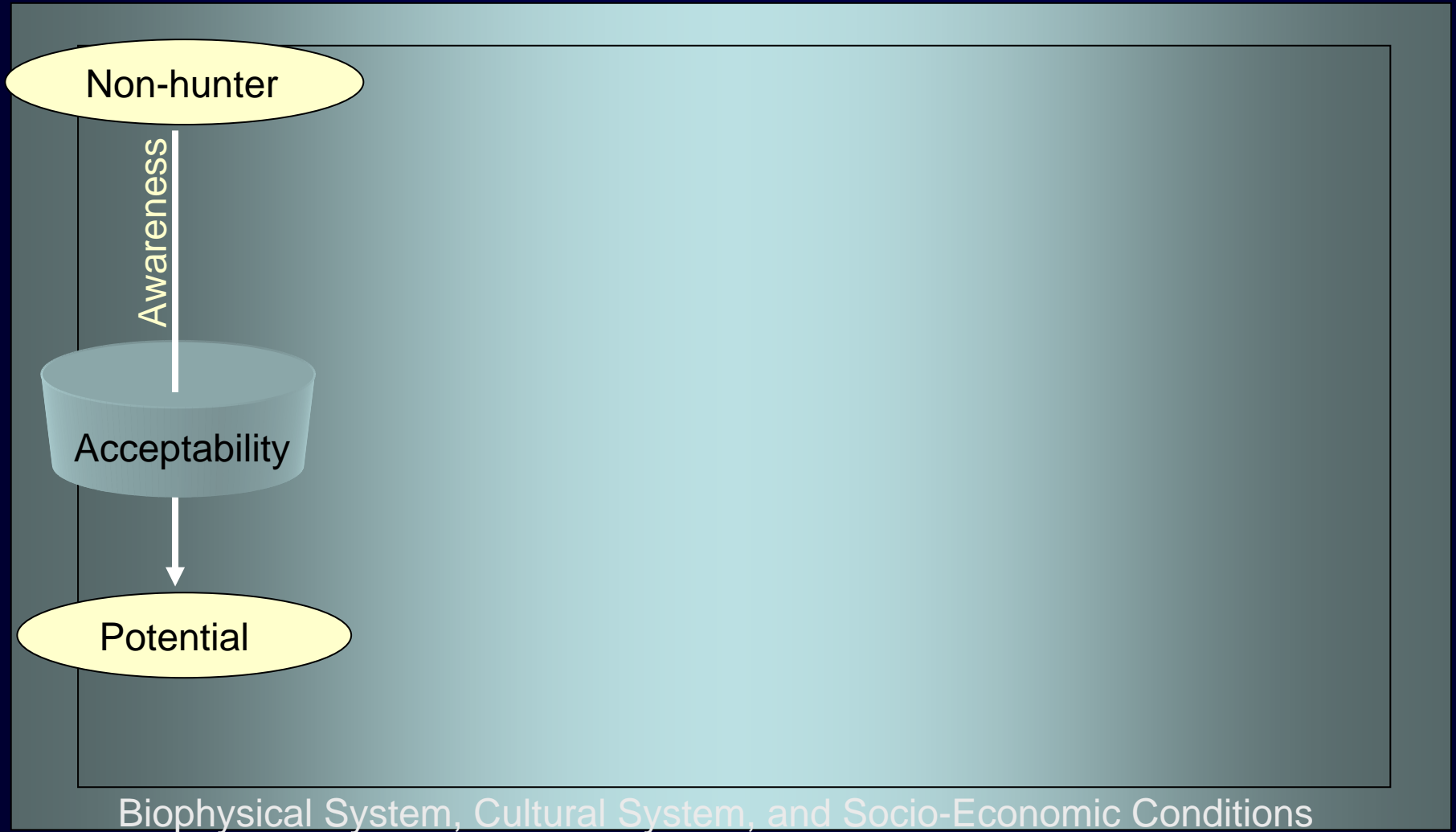
# Decision Model

## Recreation Motivation-Constraints Theory

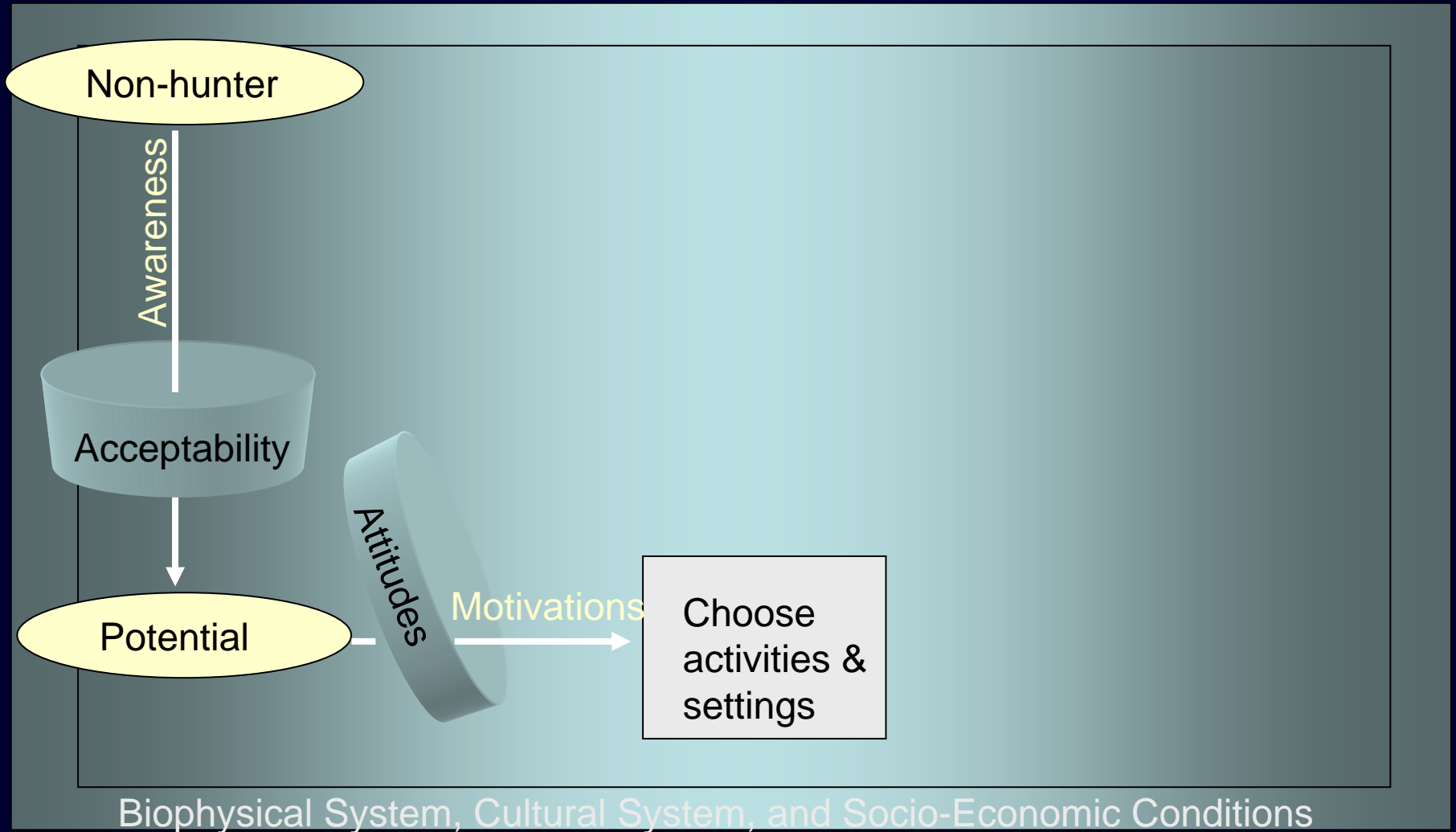
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- Assumes hunting is a recreational activity  
– participation or behavior basis
- Draws on research from leisure and recreation behavior
- Assumes hunting is primarily a psychological, or “individual decisions” outcome based on matching activities with motivations, and overcoming constraints

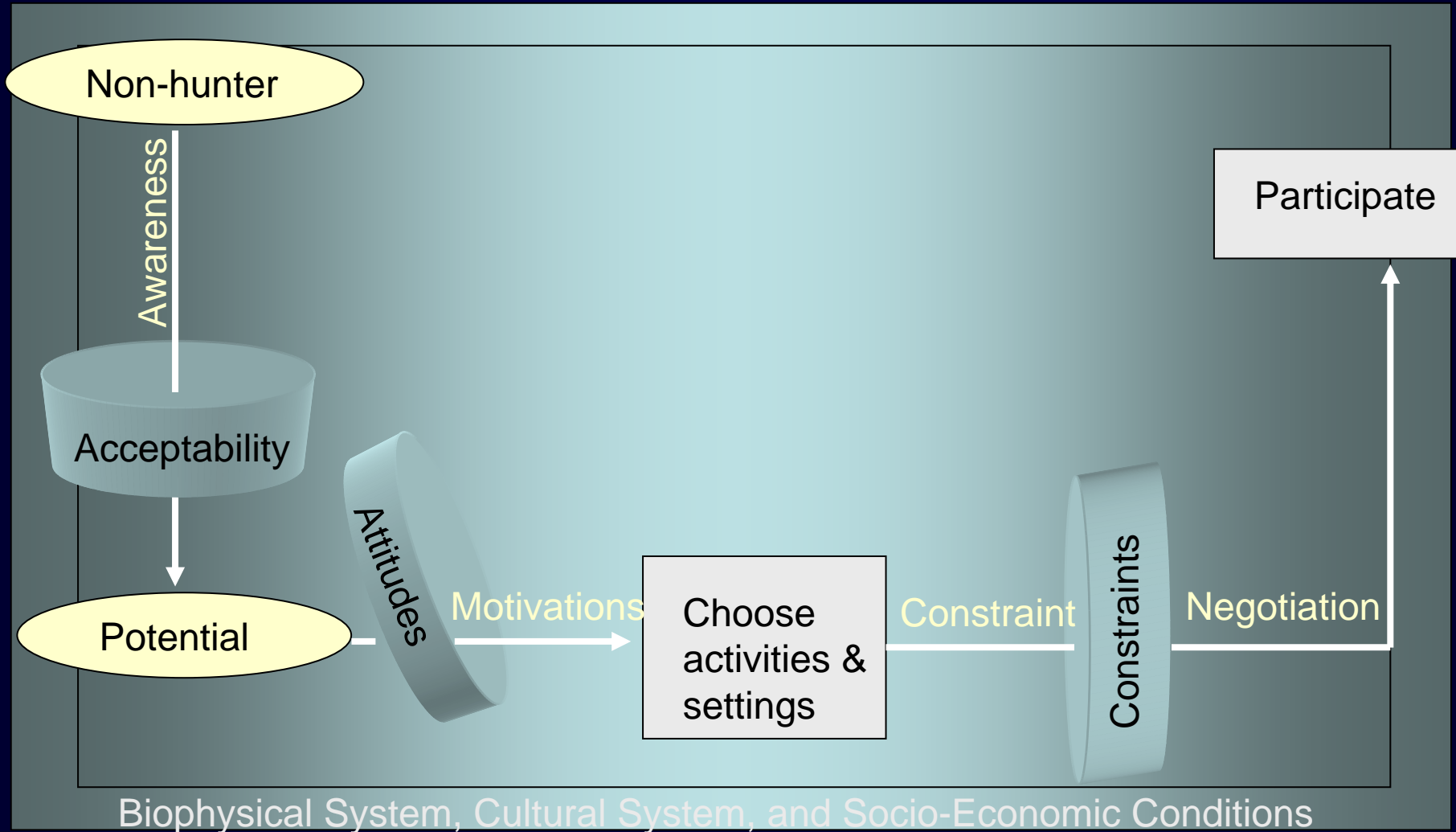
# Decision Model



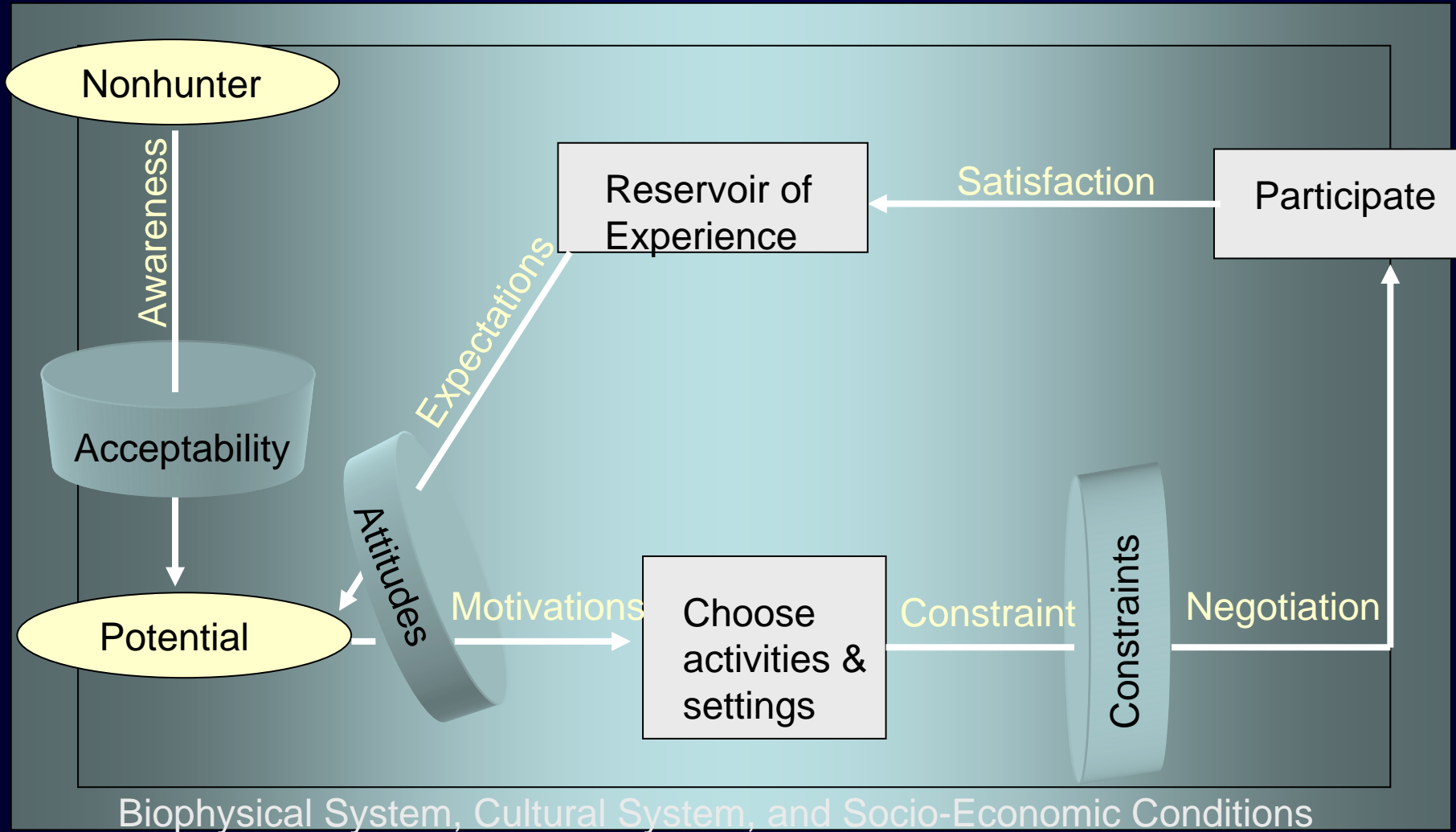
# Decision Model



# Decision Model



# Decision Model





# Strengths of Decision Model

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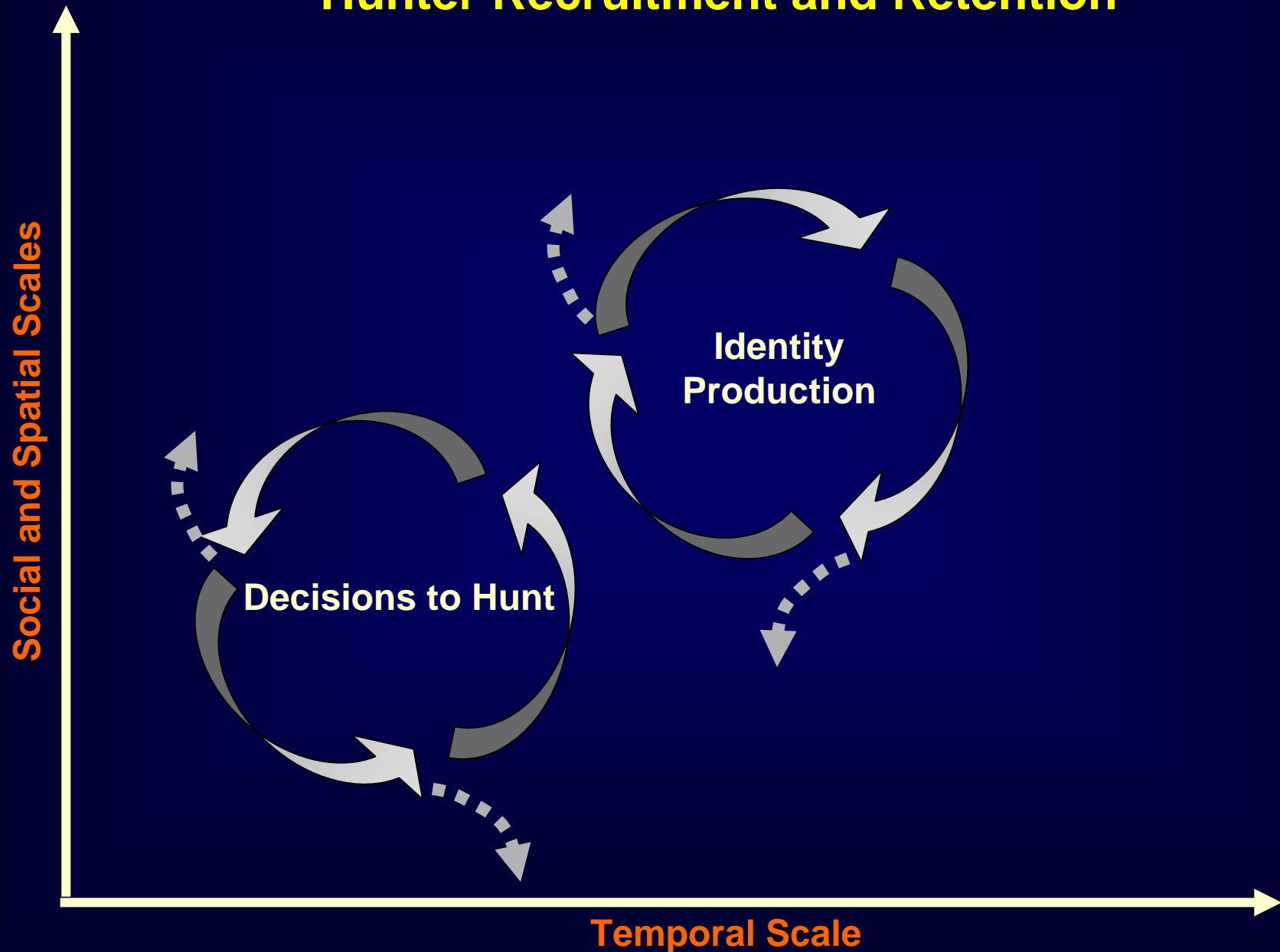
- Based on broad research foundation in recreation and leisure behavior
- Numerous studies have examined similar situations in other recreation contexts
- Many existing recruitment strategies are implicitly based on this model

# Weaknesses of Decision Model

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- Although model implies relationships, the strength of these relationships often found to be weak
- Can't be used as a mechanistic model to “fix” participation; best viewed as a heuristic model to help understand what encourages/discourages participation

## Second Model to Address Hunter Recruitment and Retention



# Identity Model

## (Theory of Hunter Identity Production)

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- Being a hunter is largely is an emotional enterprise based on an *almost unbreakable* psychological and cultural attachment to wildlife and its special habitats
- Once a hunter, (nearly) always a hunter, but not necessarily always a participant

# Identity Model

## Description and Premises

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- Persons become recruited through process of identity production
  - Behavior is important, but having a self-perception is key:
    - Some who hunt do not consider themselves to be hunters
    - Some who stop participating temporarily may still consider themselves to be hunters

# Description and Premises

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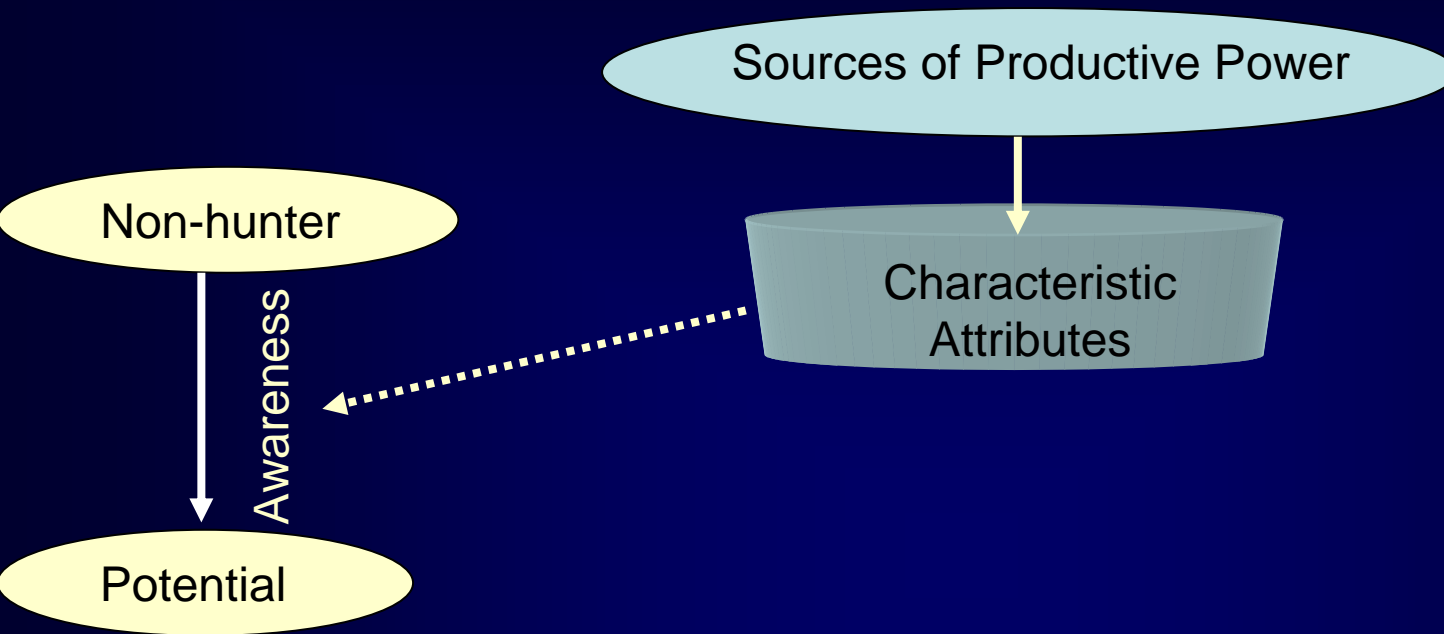
- Identity as a hunter can be defined in terms of *characteristic attributes*:
  - e.g., conservation-minded, ethical, patient, respectful, tenacious, etc.
- Not just one set of characteristic attributes
- Overlapping sets mean several hunter identities exist

# Description and Premises

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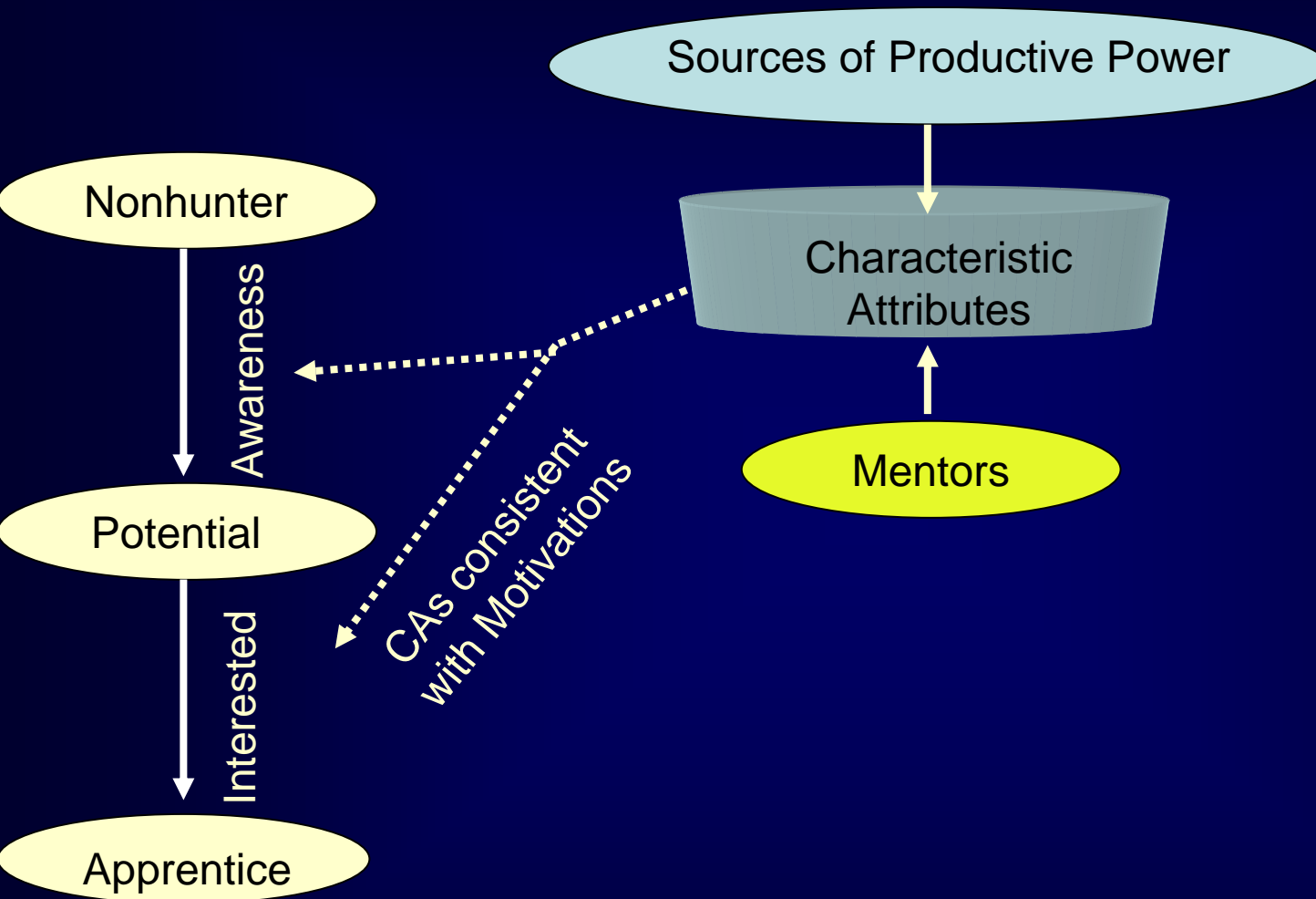
- Identity development is a *process* through which a person can proceed:
  - Non-hunter
  - Potential hunter
  - Hunting apprentice
  - Hunting recruit
  - Retained hunter

# Identity Model

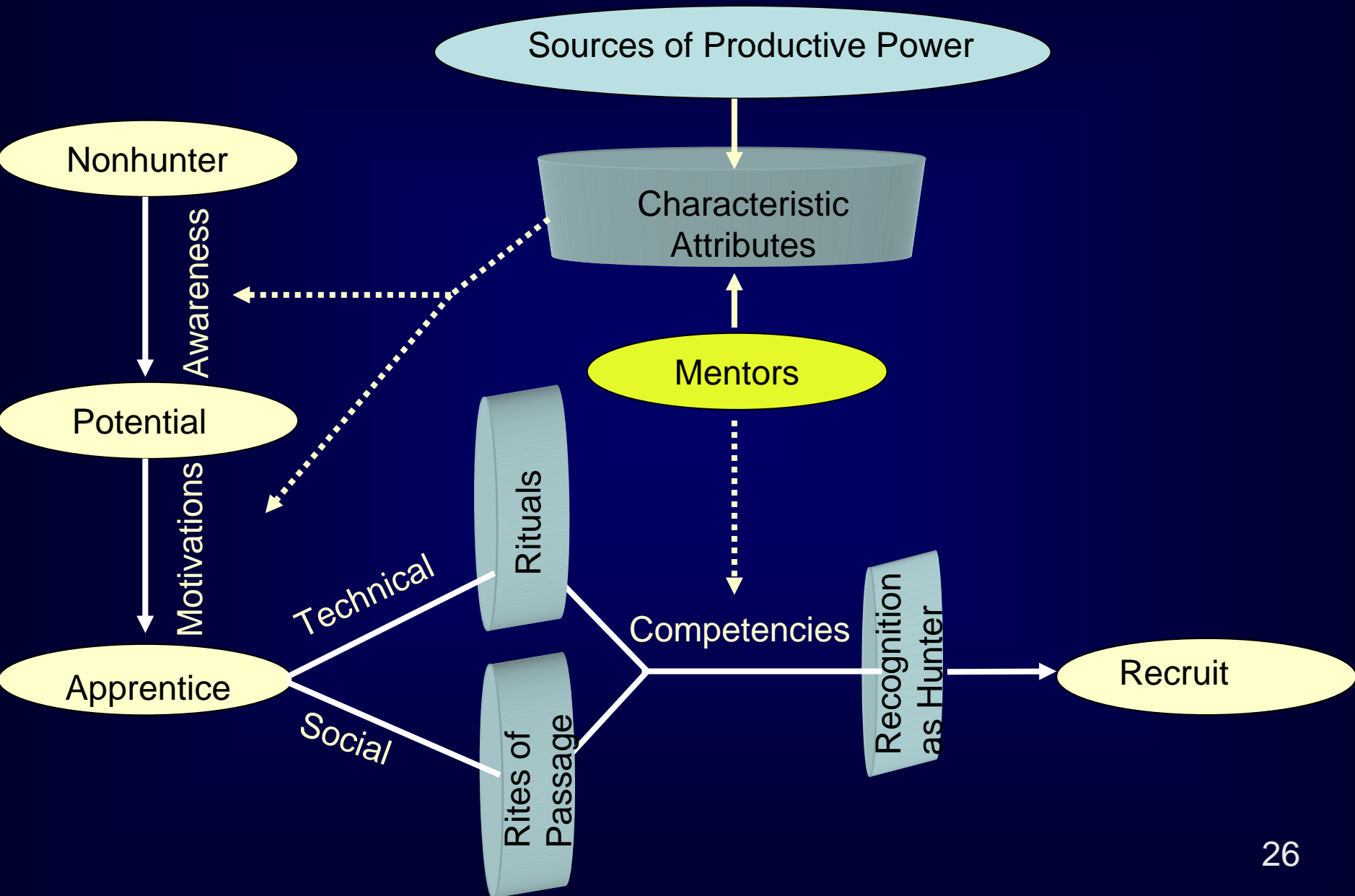




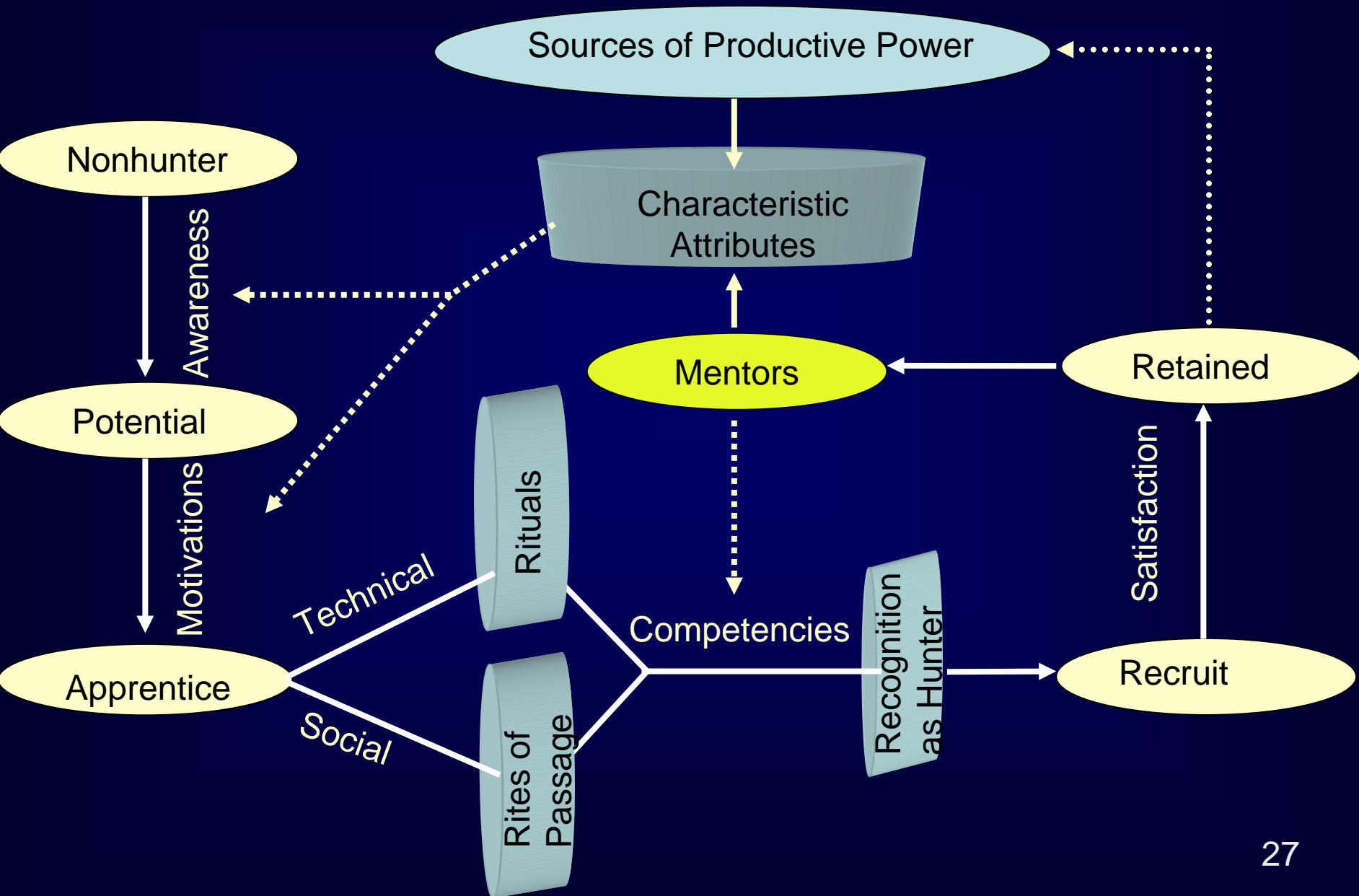
# Identity Model



# Identity Model



# Identity Model



# Strengths of Identity Model

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Identifies the role of “retained hunters” in recruiting new hunters

Specifically addresses long-term processes that could have more lasting impacts on hunter RR

Provides a bridge between individual decisions and more cultural explanations of hunter participation

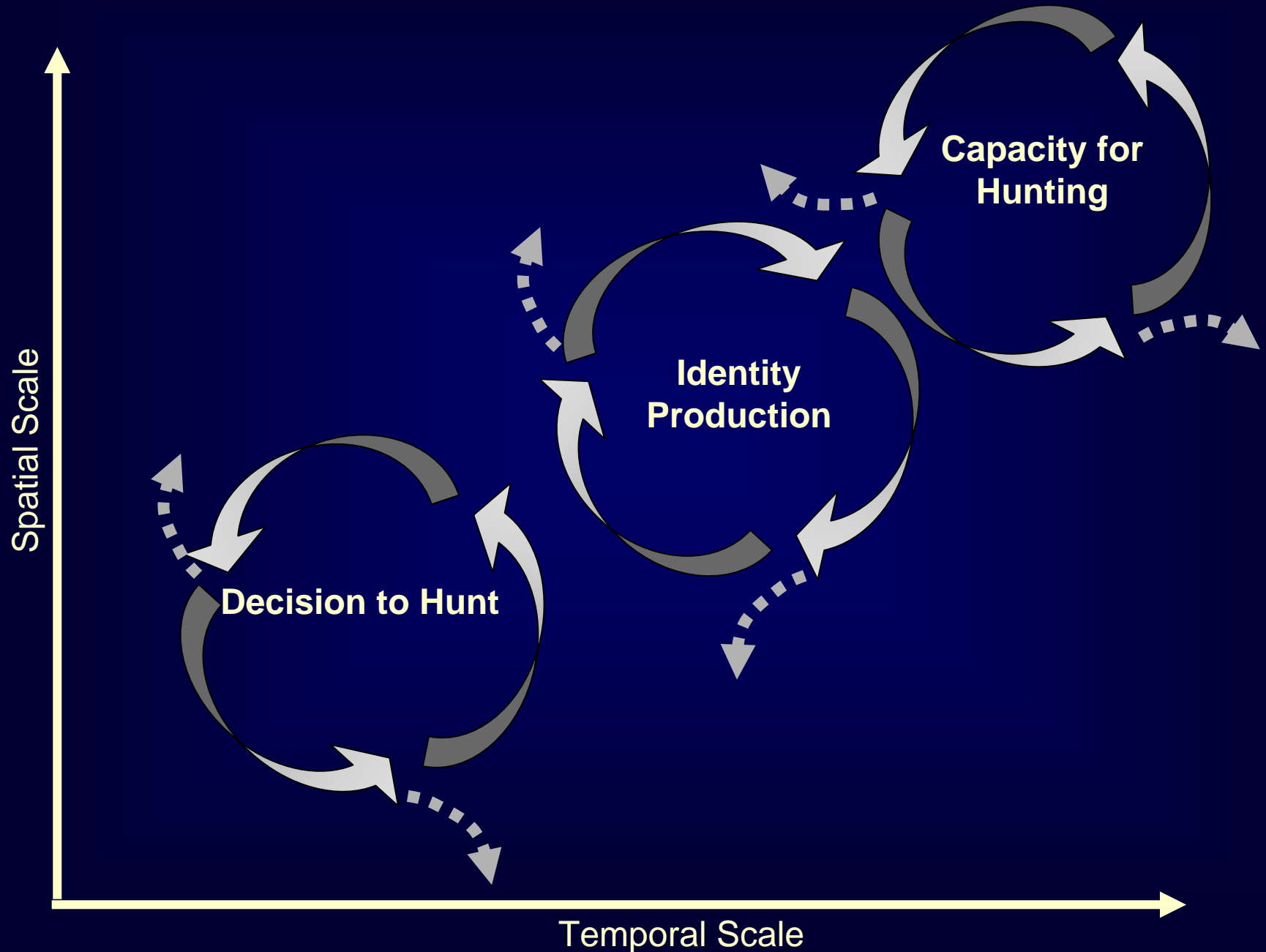
# **Weaknesses of Identity Model**

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Few empirical studies have been conducted using this theoretical framework

Need to develop and measure new metrics of success based on self-perceptions, not only behaviors

# Third Model to Address Hunter Recruitment and Retention



# Capacity Model

## Linking Social Structures to Social Actions

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- Assumes the broad structure of society and the culture of hunting are continually re-defined by the nature of our participation in these structures and culture.
- The characteristic attributes of hunting and the definitions of “acceptable” interactions with nature are socially defined.

# Capacity Model

## Links Social Structures to Social Actions

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- Need to understand the changes in social structures and culture that influence how we think about nature and how hunting is an expression of our relationship with nature
- Draws on research from on social organizations/institutions, communities and social movements



# Primary Factors Driving Social Change and Regulation of Land Use

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- Globalization of economy, politics, and culture
  - Land use is increasingly being shaped by global markets
  - Economic organizations that transcend national boundaries challenge existing forms of regulations
    - (e.g., limited free access, or access based on trust)

# Primary Factors Driving Social Change and Regulation of Land Use

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- Globalization of economy, politics, and culture
- Shift to Information-Based Economy
  - Shift in rural landscapes from productive to consumptive resources (e.g., family to hobby farms)
  - Economies are less tied to place and more tied to things

# Primary Factors Driving Social Change and Regulation of Land Use

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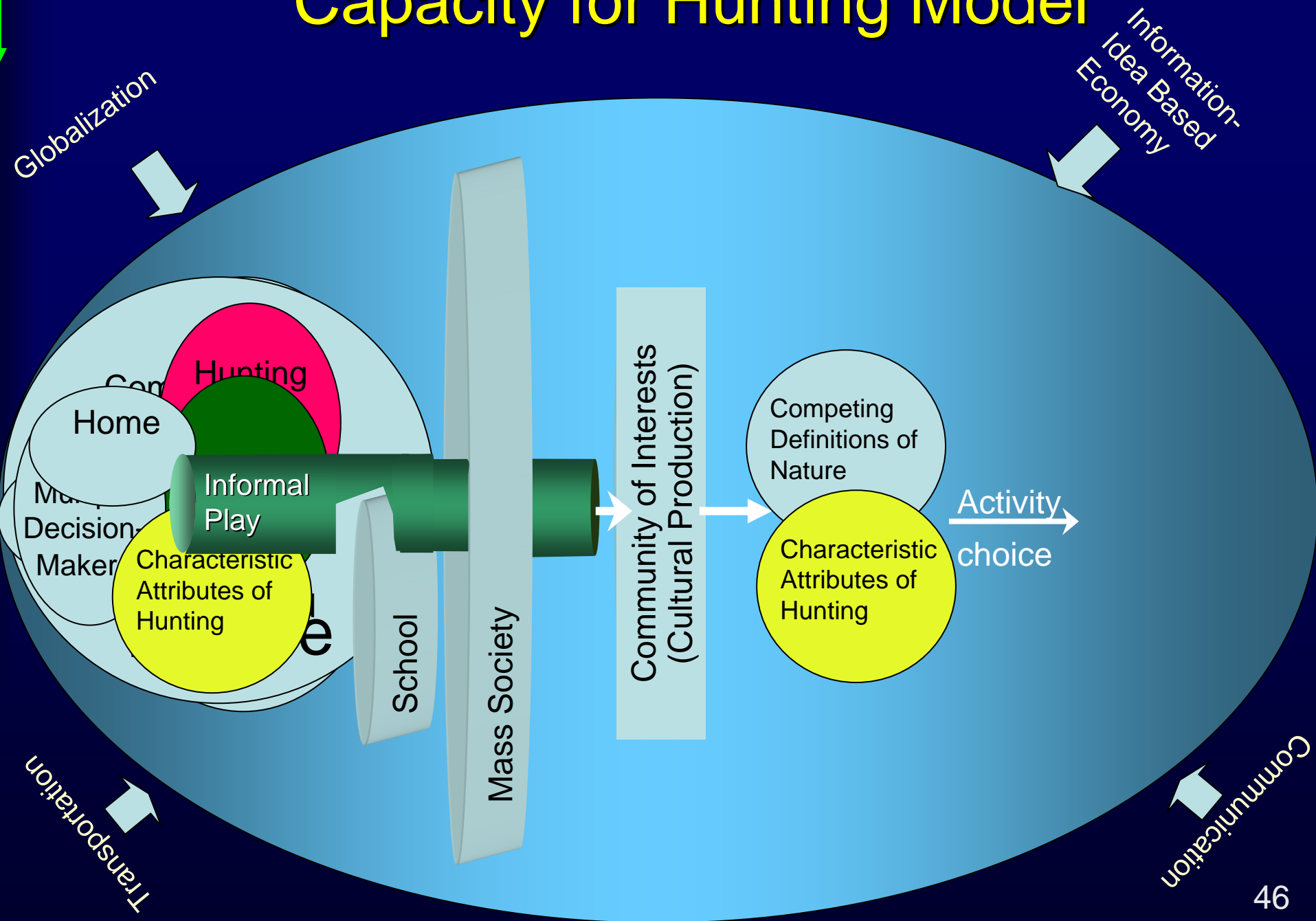
- Globalization of economy, politics, and culture
- Shift to Information-Based Economy
- Communication
  - Spatial boundaries no longer limit interaction
  - Sources of “cultural production” are no longer as tied to place.

# Primary Factors Driving Social Change and Land Use Patterns

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- Globalization of economy, politics, and culture
- Shift to Information-Based Economy
- Communication
- Transportation
  - Improved infrastructure more closely connects urban and rural areas (eg., growth in exurbia)

# Capacity for Hunting Model



# Implications

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- Sources of identity production are shifting from communities of place (family, friends, neighbors) to community of interests (magazines, internet sites, videos)
- Appropriate uses of nature will increasingly be defined beyond “local boundaries”
- Characteristic attributes may change from “place-based” attributes to something else.

# Implications

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- Control of amount and type of access is shifting from community or locally-based social relations to economic or state controlled relations.
- The characteristic attributes of hunting are shifting from an activity integrated in a “working” rural landscape to a more specialized single focus activity

# Strengths of Capacity Model

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Demonstrates the need to address social and cultural organization as well as individual choices

Highlights the dynamic process of defining “characteristic attributes” of hunting

Provides alternative ways to think about access



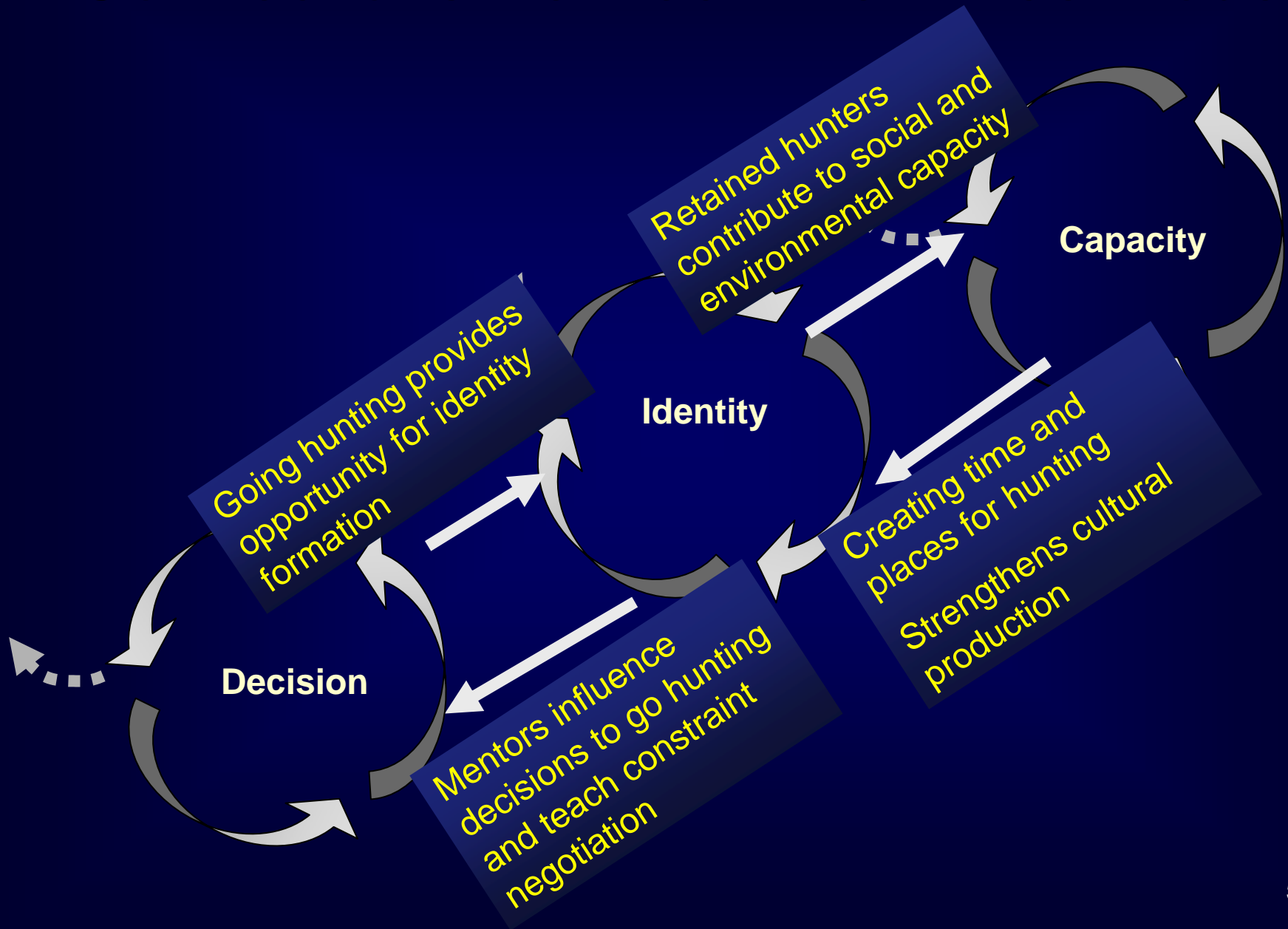
# **Weaknesses of Capacity Model**

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Almost no application of this theoretical approach to hunting and wildlife management issues

It is difficult to measure changes in social organization and culture

# Connections Between the Three Models



# Take Home Points

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- Understanding a person's motivations is not sufficient. **Also need to help them evaluate their motivations in the currency of characteristic attributes associated with being a hunter.**
- Teaching skills and other “how-to” lessons to apprentices is not sufficient. **Also need to communicate norms and values associated with being a hunter.**
- Strategies to **recruit mentors** may be as important as strategies to recruit new hunters

# Take Home Points

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- **Informal exploration of nature** helps build a foundation necessary for interpreting one's motivations in the currency of characteristic attributes - **provides context**
  - patient, tenacious, confident, skilled  
(as a hunter vs. as a basketball player)
- If a place to hunt is something to rent, then only the highest bidders can be hunters. **If a place to hunt builds character, then all those who embody those characteristics will become hunters.**



**Thank You**