



ECSO4002: Who Are We?: Culture and Identity

Theme 6: What do we mean by Cultural Capital? (Part 1)



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Session Recap

What did we cover in our last Theme?



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Cultural Capital?

- This concept has been mentioned several times during this Module
- But what does it mean?
- In the study of society we use the term capital in a number of different ways
- In this Theme we will explore these different meanings of the term Capital



Society

- As we have already said, we use the word society in our everyday speech
- We talk of 'modern' society, Building Society, 'high' society, 'civilised' society, 'polite' society etc.
- However even with such a common concept there are theoretical and ideological differences



Society

- For example, a late 20th Century Prime Minister once said;

“I think we have been through a period when too many people have been given to understand that when they have a problem it is government’s job to cope with it. ‘I have a problem, I’ll get a grant. I’m homeless, the government must house me.’ They are casting their problems on society. And, you know, **there is no such thing as society**. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no governments can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours. People have got their entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There is no such thing as an entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation.”

Society



Group Activity

In a discussion group we will discuss this quote from Margaret Thatcher.

What do you understand her argument to be?

Do you agree or disagree with her?

What is your own view of society?

Give these questions some thought and then use the Chat facility to share your thoughts.



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**We will now move on to look at an important theoretical concept
for the fields of sociology, social studies and advocacy.**

CAPITAL



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What do we mean by 'Capital'?

*Take some time to consider the term 'Capital'.
Consider the following questions in your discussion.*

- What does the term mean to you?
- Where have you seen the term used before?

Feedback to your Tutor
If you are online please raise your hand to contribute.



What is Capital?

In economic or financial terms capital is:

- A form of resource upon which an individual can draw/use within society
- The more 'capital' or 'resources' you have the easier your life will be
- The more 'capital' or 'resources' you have the more likely you are to sustain or gain more
- We often use the phrase to mean money
- But even in the world of finance it means more than this and can include stocks, shares etc.



What is Capital?

In sociological terms capital can be thought of:

‘accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its “incorporated,” embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private (e.g., exclusive) basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. . . . It is what makes the games of society – not least, the economic game – something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle’

What is Capital?

The quote on the previous slide is complicated and written in 'academic' language.

One way of processing and understanding such writing is to put it into your own words or 'paraphrasing' it.

This is a skill that you will have looked at briefly in Study Skills sessions (e.g. Study Skills for Students).



If Our Society was Equal and Fair (like a game of dice). . .

- **Everyone**, despite their age background, ethnicity, disability, gender etc. would be able to . . .
 - accumulate capital
 - be the recipient of hereditary wealth
 - be the recipient of acquired property
 - benefit from every moment (therefore life chance) being dependent upon the previous or next moment
 - obtain life's prizes
 - become anything in society that they want to



In Reality in our Society the Dice are Loaded

- Only a **few who are privileged** in society are able to . . .
 - accumulate capital
 - be the recipient of hereditary wealth
 - be the recipient of acquired property
 - benefit from every moment (therefore life chance) being dependent upon the previous or next moment
 - obtain life's prizes
 - become anything in society that they want to



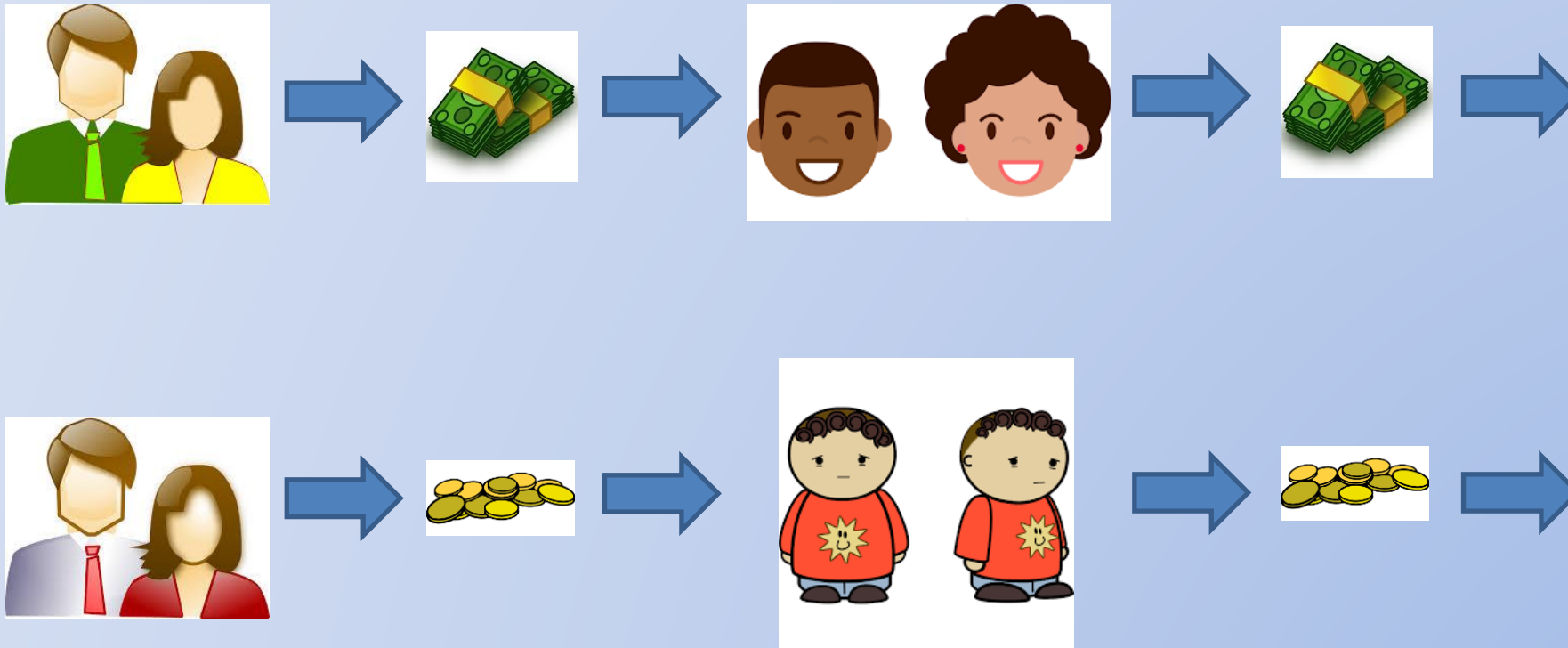
Social (Re)production of Inequality

Intergenerational Wealth



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In Summary



In simple terms

If You **ALREADY** Have It, it is Easer to Get **MORE** of It!

- If you have money it is easier to get more money
- If you have houses/businesses it is easier to get more houses/businesses
- If you have good health it is easier to maintain good health
- If you have things it is easier to get more things
- If you have status it is easier to maintain your status



What 'Capital' Tells Us About Our World/Society

- The structure and distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital represents the immanent (actual) structure of the social world
- Capital governs the functioning of the world (haves and have-nots)
- Lack of capital places constraints on people
- Capital determines the chances of success and failure for individuals/groups in society (remember the dice)

Capital

- So far we have only looked at capital in financial or economic terms
- However, in sociology/social studies we also use capital to mean a variety of other aspects of society

For example.....

Economic Capital

Financial Capital

Religious Capital

Cultural Capital

Human Capital

Social Capital

Identity Capital

And so on....



In our next sessions we will
look at these in more detail.



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