

Learning Forward



A guide for understanding social challenges and pursuing cultural change



O'NEILL

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

"The horizon **leans forward**,
offering you space to place new
steps of change."

- Maya Angelou.

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Ask Yourself



Do you wish you knew more about the challenges facing countless communities?

Have you ever wondered what you can do to make a sustainable difference to communities in need?

You can better appreciate a variety of perspectives by understanding **forms of capital**



From individual to group experiences - understanding forms of capital can lead to empathetic action and systemic change!

Forms of Capital

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu defined the following Forms of Capital:

ECONOMIC CAPITAL

- Money
- Salaries
- Wealth
- Income
- Generational Gifts

SOCIAL CAPITAL

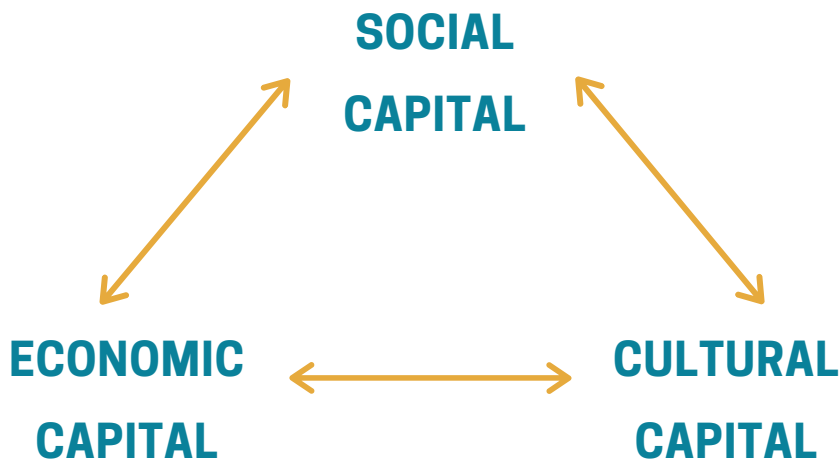
- Personal Connections
- Family Members
- Friends
- Work or Program Associates

CULTURAL CAPITAL

- **Institutionalized:** Educational experience and credentials
- **Embodied:** Language, knowledge, culture, ability status, tastes, mannerism
- **Objectified:** Access to technology, books, instruments, possessions which display wealth (cars, brands, etc.)

The benefits from different forms of capital are transferable.

Having access to some form of capital can assure more access to others. For example: someone getting a well-paying job from a friend who works at the company



With increased capital in one, some, or all areas, an individual's or community's opportunities for success increases.

Unequal Opportunity

Everybody has some form of privilege, whether it be from economic, social or cultural capital; however, accessibility to capital is not equal.



Accessibility to capital and opportunities to enhance capital correlate with factors including but not limited to:

- Race
- Sex
- Gender-Identity
- Sexuality
- Ability Status
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Nationality
- Socioeconomic-status

Due to disparities of capital in all forms, some demographics are over or under represented in positions of power or influence, including but not limited to:

Political Offices or Roles in Government

Admirable Media Representation

Business or Entrepreneurial Leadership

Fields of Interest such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics

When some populations have more access than others, problematic assumptions can be made about populations with less, regarding the work ethics or character

Outcomes

Unequal access and problematic assumptions can lead to the following social issues:

Bias: A conscious or unconscious preconceived judgment of an individual based on a generalization or stereotype of their represented population

Discrimination: Treating individuals and groups of people differently and often worse, through language, behaviors and policies, based on generalizations assumptions of a demographic

Microaggressions: A statement, often with good intentions, that implies a flaw found in an individual's demographic

Imposter Syndrome: When individuals feel undeserving of an opportunity, often because they are part of an under-represented population

While some problematic assumptions, behaviors and even policies may not have the worst intentions, the impact can still be harmful

	Behaviors or Phrases	Policy, Law, etc.
Explicitly Harmful to specific groups	Overt Discrimination: Bullying, slurs, harrassment, etc	De Jure Discrimination: Jim Crow Laws, Anti-LGBTQ+ policy etc.
Implicitly Harmful to specific groups	Covert Discrimination: Cultural Appropriation, Microaggressions, etc.	De Facto Discrimination: Red Lining, Real Estate Policies, Education Requirements, etc.

The Next Steps

Pursue the following actions to continue learning, growing and making change on individual, organizational and community scales

Personal Growth

- **Research** history, current events and human bias through books, documentaries, podcasts and journals from reliable sources
- **Attend** culturally relevant events and diversity trainings hosted by school-wide offices, professional organizations, and community groups
- **Seek** out new perspectives from diverse authors, musicians, artists, journalists, celebrities and influencers
- **Foster** new connections within your professional industry as well as social spaces

Community and Organizational Change

- **Share** resources for educational opportunities and sanctuary spaces in person, on organization documents, and syllabi
- **Be cautious** when leading discussions on sensitive issues by providing appropriate trigger warnings and thinking holistically about how the topic may impact participants
- **Donate** time, money and resources to organizations that empower those in need and strives to make positive social change
- **Participate** in committees, public forums and focus groups that aim to pursue institutionalized change
- **Advocate** for effective policy change from your school, organization and government

Sources

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Students for Change is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering the youth to lead in positive effective change. We equip students with the tools to learn effective advocacy techniques, create important connections, and establish local projects.

Visit us on social or at studentsforchange.org



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