

# ‘Fair Game?’

(A Participatory Game Based on Bourdieu’s Theoretical Concept About Agency in Life)

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**Abstract**—‘Fair Game?’ is a participatory game that was designed to allow its players to comprehend the possibility of life choices and cultural capital throughout their lifespan. The game's objective is to engage the players with multiple questions about life choices and involve in a dialogue. ‘Fair Game?’ is likely a suitable platform to mediate a dialogue through participation, utilizing a concept that individuals will be able to establish a connection to the rules of the game from their acquired knowledge of their own specific cultural setting, as well as forge each of their own agency in the game that is basically imitates and illustrates the life itself. The methodology used in generating this game is qualitative data through journal and article reading and testing on several game platforms. After the theory and concept are formulated, the game itself is formed to adapt the surroundings, especially the people who participates in it. The game's visualization imitates a traditional game like hopscotch, also combined with snakes and ladders to illustrates about agency. By the end of the game, the participants reflect on how the dice give them a sense of agency but also limits it, which proves Bourdieu’s theoretical concept about agency and decision in life not just depends on the how human develop their life with their own ability but also their capability which governed by cultural capital of every player.

**Keywords:** *cultural capital, Bourdieu’s theory, habitus, participatory art, hopscotch, agency*

## I. INTRODUCTION

This research and practice is initiated with the idea of belonging as a person and a community in a bigger setting. I worked collaboratively with other Artist Teacher that has different background as I do. As the research started, I began to collect the requisites to establish understanding between Bourdieu’s theoretical framework about social background, habitus and current relevant situation. Thus, criticality needs to be presented as one of the main approaches to comprehend the govern factors. Knowing how my praxis works in particular way can develop new to comprehension criticality and its implementation for this research, when after that this discourse can nudge another disciplinary to support this research, conscience about agency.

## II. BOURDIEU THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### A. Cultural Capital

First, this research started with the idea of every people has different background. As Bourdieu stated about a cultural capital, there are Four factors that would determine a person’s life choices. Then in a journal by Edgerton and Roberts elaborates ideas that differentiate and connect cultural capital and habitus as identity shaper factor [1]. Both of the mentioned factors are fundamental to determine a person’s life in the future, just as Freire would explain about a person’s past cannot be abandoned completely, instead it shapes the person critically, which implies that an individual has the freedom to shape his or her own life yet there is certain pattern that they are familiarized with from their backgrounds, which Bourdieu elaborates as habitus [2,3].

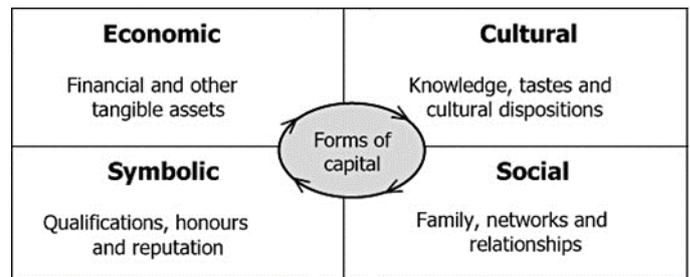


Fig. 1. Mindmapping of Bourdieu’s theory of capital.

### B. Determining Consciousness about Own’s Agency

Every person’s cultural capital plays a huge role on making future choices. This basic knowledge led the research further into deciding on how to entangle it with art practice and creative process. The main idea is to deliver self-criticism to bigger audience on their conscience about their own agency and their own cultural capital. Therefore, the form of practice needs to be participatory and self-included. Thus, forming basic theory as art practice foundation in form of participatory game. Also because the practice is done collaboratively, the idea was built because the collaborators have significant point of view, and that strengthen the initiative of making the ‘Fair Game?’.

**III. PREPARATION OF ‘FAIR GAME?’**

Bishop’s notion of participation from Borriaud’s concept of relational art, ‘the work of art is a “social form” capable of producing positive human relationships’ [4]. And thus, the intention of dialogue invitation during the performance will suffice to facilitate pedagogical action that was happening in the game just as Freire express that different views and arguments can be a platform of learning from one another through dialogue an equal value within pedagogical space [2].

Entangling theories to the life examples in the game is initiated from the perspective of how socially people build consciousness about their choices. In this case, my own experience in making life choices. Therefore the practice is hoped to challenge participants in combining both theoretical and participatory approach in the happening performatory practice.

The intention to enable critical thinking in the game was emerged during a discussion about cultural capital and social influence in the life of an individual of sort. I explained to my collaborative partner about how the idea of habitus is affecting my life historically and socially, and she elaborates her idea of cultural capital in the family has guided her to reach the point where she is standing in her current position. We linked the two and revisited our family’s influence in decision-making and how to shape our future from what our parents thought is best for us. Therefore, from that point we decided to connect how our family culture possess a similar approach, and intertwine some theories that we consider will eventually help us to revisit experiences that shaped current occurrence. Therewith to achieve this purpose, we agree that to respond to this concept, a game is likely a perfect platform to mediate a dialogical participation, utilizing a thought from Nash quoted from Edgerton and Roberts that individuals will be able to establish a connection to the rules of the game from their acquired knowledge of their own specific cultural setting [1].

**IV. ‘FAIR GAME?’**

**A. The Game**

The game is based on not only the Bourdieu’s theoretical background but also a fairly popular board game called ‘The Game of Life’. ‘The Game of Life’ asks the players to spin the arrow and then that arrow would determine the players’ background to start the game. ‘The Fair Game?’ also incorporates that approach but with dice. Because my collaborator and I wanted to input an old saying that uses dice as a term that represents choice. Thus, in ‘Fair Game?’ the roll of dice is used a lot. The picture of the dice is shown below.

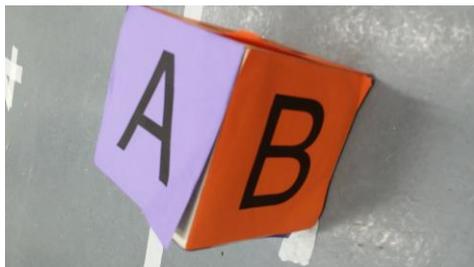


Fig. 2. ‘The Fair Game’ dice.

After the players have their role, the game rules are adjusted to fit each of the roles. There are two roles that needs to be played, purple colour is for those who born privileged. The other one is orange for those who born from at least middle class family lower. As the game was being developed, there were several roles that needed to be expanded. But as the time of the research was tight, those developments were postponed.

The platform of the game uses the space’s floor and masking tapes as lines. The idea of the platform follows the concept of hopscotch to integrate the rules with physical interaction. The argument is physiological factor of a person also plays a huge part in their ways to choose and their conscience about agency. The picture of the platform is shown below.

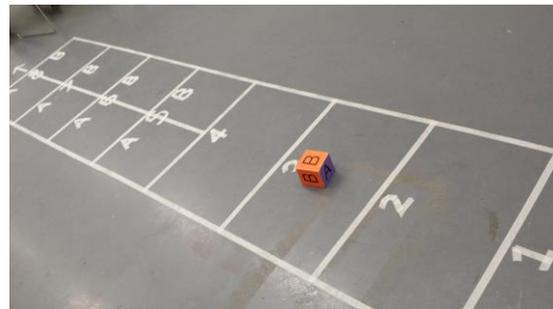


Fig. 3. ‘The Fair Game’ platform and dice.

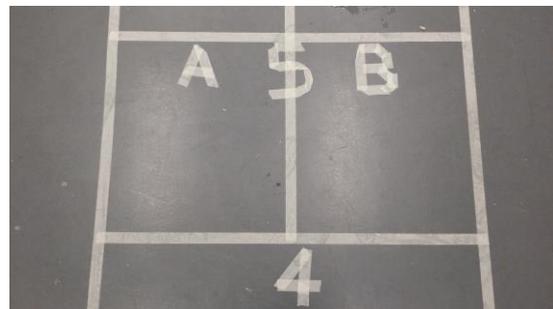


Fig. 4. ‘The Fair Game’ platform on the floor with masking tapes.

The rules of the game are simple, those who have given the role by first roll dice needs to roll another dice to progress. Just like ‘The Game of Life’, this game gives the players a sense of choosing their own future but with a roll of dice instead of a point of arrow. Later after the players rolled the dice, they are asked to move one step each roll and then handled a playing cards. After the card is handled, the players are requested to read them aloud and make comments about what’s written in the card based on their knowledge. It could be as blatant or entangled with theoretical background. The example of the cards is shown below.

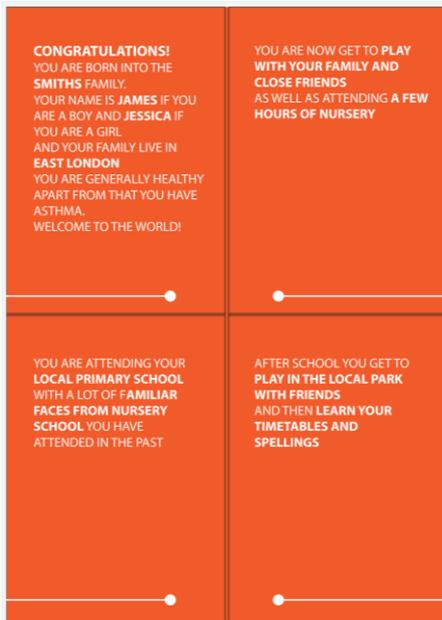


Fig. 5. 'The Fair Game' orange handled card example.



Fig. 6. 'The Fair Game' purple handled card example.

**B. The Players**

The participating players were students from different backgrounds. Although the players, most of them are British citizen whom are familiar with local educational situation and the rest are either EU or international students who genuinely had little idea of the related theme. As the participation delivered a diverse situation and condition of every student's idea, the 'Fair Game?' atmosphere expressed a contested situation within the participants. Furthermore, it would allow the players to understand each other through the participation from the start to the end of the game, and I was hopeful that the

game itself would provide learning as it provides me personally.

**V. REFLECTION**

Initially, the idea is to give relatable example to the participants. The purpose by giving a relational condition is that so everyone in the game could personally, retrospectively, reflect on the cause. Therefore, a relational situation is provided in the game. But, what somehow slipped through the process of production was a broader possibility that could emerge from the game itself if it provides broader examples.

It was hardly relational for me to the options itself, because some of the terms that was used in the examples were something that never occurred to my mind just before the production process. Yet, at some point, I consider it as a good idea because from there I could learn examples that would expand my point of view other country's cultural capital in the country that I am currently residing, better yet, allows me to expose myself to life experience of other cultural capital. So to have Britain's model of educational situation in the game that encourages participants of educational department students would be relatively relational to be conducted and to give insights to international students about British culture in educational sector. Yet, what I did not envisage was, the game itself became less participatory for international students, tragically, including myself.

The feedbacks that I gathered from some of the participants after the game, which are international students that is doing the same course as mine, that the dice rolls made the game really interesting and give the feeling of having the agency to determine the future but at the same time after the dice stops, and the card was given, there is other factor that took the agency out of their participation. Then, after the card was given and one of the elected participant from two groups read the statement in the cards and they started to lost the bond to the game because they did not understand what was given. I was fortunate because my partner explained the circumstances that might produce a condition of the statement written on the cards for me and I thought it was a good idea as well to use it. Yet, the chance for enabling antagonism to engage a diverse response and a more active dialogue. Borrowing the term 'antagonism' from Bishop [4], 'Without antagonism there is only the imposed consensus of authoritarian order—a total suppression of debate and discussion, which is inimical to democracy'. Therefore, an equality in a specific condition could also be achieved if there were an extreme imagery that will hopefully trigger constructive opposition.

There are still some issues that could be developed in order to fulfill its initial purpose, which was providing support to understand agencies that might determine an individual's future. The game provides understanding of both structure and spontaneity factors in life development, but there are almost no implications of social engagement metaphor from within the game. I must admit that the game itself was not that detail to be presented to begin with, but there is significance that for me is very important to not be overlooked, for instance, that examples represented in the game was not made to make comparison of good or bad, but to invite players (and hosts) to

revisit our life model. Therefore, some people would be able to critically reflect on their personal experience and give the opportunity to make decisions for the future, just as how culture play a role in an individual's growth. And in regards of relating life experience to the playtime, I think, if there is a contrast in the statements, it might deliver a more diverse response and probably triggers an antagonism from one example to another which will provide a constructive learning space, and therefore a contested space is also emerged from within the game.

I acknowledge that there are several circumstances that we could have done to provide agonism in the space, yet from this experience I learned that it is tempting to know more about what I have never experienced before, just for the sake of curiosity. From the card statements that was written in the card, I was able to visualise a certain condition in this country's education. And maybe from those statements I will be able to make comparison to my country's current educational condition, which I think carry a huge part in shaping my identity. A little bit different from the game, from this point on, the possibilities that I held to determine my future is expanding. To sum up, the collaboration and the game itself help me to understand the agencies in an individual's decision making in shaping their life, and also gave me insights that the life itself is a lot bigger than a game. This project is a starting point for me to understand better about life agencies and understanding the life course itself, therefore there are a lot of

things that needs to be developed and revisited in order to get a better perspective of critical reflection in understanding identity.

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