

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Traditionally the English people have been understood to view their 'society as an aspect of the Great Chain of Being, as a graded hierarchy of ranks, degrees and orders from the peasant labourer at the bottom to the duke and prince at the top, a view inherited from the Middle Ages but still current in the 16th and 17th centuries.' (Seaver 1999). In the early 1900s England, gaining economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital will not mean a thing if you were not born or married into the aristocracy or royalty. Opportunity to change your social class is limited and rare, but not impossible. However, since World War I or what was once called The Great War ended, the social world has been altered. Plenty of the aristocrats or their heirs participated in The Great War as a sense of pride. 'Wellington embodied it; Waterloo exhibited it. According to this code an Englishman should be guided by an overpowering sense of civic duty and diligence. Every man's first loyalty should be to the country of his birth and the institution in which he served. Loyalty to the institutions came before loyalty to people. Individuals should sacrifice their careers, their family, and certainly their personal happiness or whims, to the regiment, the college, the school, the services, the ministry, the profession or the firm.' (Bailey 2007). This event would eventually lead to a void of power, with the help of new modern thinking that does not support the aristocracy, common folks like working-class people can collect capitals much more easily.

After the war ended, people can collect economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital and now can be of the high class without being discriminated against because after the war England lost a lot of money so they accepted people even if they are not aristocrats or royals if they have big economic capital. 'It was only in the twentieth century, and particularly after the First World War, that 'class' came regularly to be defined in sociological terms of income, expenditure and, above all, occupation' (McKibbin 1998).

With 8.8/10 rating on IMDb and 93% on Rotten Tomatoes *Peaky Blinders* is a British drama series produced by BBC studios released on September 12th 2013 for the first time, the series originally air on BBC Two and BBC One for the UK audience and for international audience it can be found as one of the most popular series in Netflix. The story of the series has historical fiction genre and crime drama, it is about a criminal local gang with the same name as the title of the series that is led by the ambitious and incredibly intelligent Thomas Shelby. Throughout the series, Thomas Shelby as the head of the family leads the business empire from a local gang with business in illegal betting in season 1 to a successful legal company in season 5. From a street gangster, Thomas Shelby escalates his social status to a powerful government official as an MP for Birmingham.

According to 'Class, Place and History in the Imaginative Landscapes of *Peaky Blinders*' by Paul Long, the landscape of contemporary British television drama is indeed a wider discourse of social distinction and representation, *Peaky Blinders* is significant for the manner in which it deals with social class (Long 2017). In Paul Long's chapter explores characters' psychological complexity and representation of dynamic working-class main characters. Many studies of *Peaky Blinder* have been about psychological issues of the main character or the significance of social class.

While it is crucial to understand Thomas Shelby behaviour with psychoanalysis lenses, his journey to acquire power using various of Bourdieu's capital is significant to make a better understanding on how social classes can be climbed. Examining his extreme actions in the series to achieve multiple capitals can disclose not only his motivation, but also the importance of entanglement between economic, symbolic, cultural and social capital.

Looking at a similar object, FX's 2017 eight-part series titled *Taboo*. The shows explore on James Delaney return from Africa to England to attend his father's burial. He looks into his father's strange death while attempting to restore his family's pride. During the War of 1812, he returns to London to inherit and rebuild his late father's maritime and distribution enterprise. But, both of the government and his rival want his inheritance at any means, including murder. The series have similar retrospective with *Peaky Blinders* as a dark crime series giving another insight on how corruption in early 19th century England appears to be. Another similar object is TV-series historical drama *Downton Abbey*, set in the same period of time as *Peaky Blinders* in the early 1900s England. The series' story is centred on an aristocratic family that tries to hold on to their class and status because of the challenges they face as a more modern way of thinking comes.

Contrary to the Shelby family, the aristocratic Crawley family was born to the high class with a great amount of power and money. With *Peaky Blinder* we hope to see more lenient ways to gain capitals that will be relatable with modern times as the main character himself can be categorized as a normal working class that works hard to climb the social ladder which we can find some common trait with today's people's characteristics.

‘Pierre Bourdieu created a set of thinking tools that allowed him to explore different sociological phenomena,... These thinking tools, including capital, field, habitus, are some of the best-known constructs developed by the French sociologist’ (Murphy 2015). Habitus is made up of standards, values, and attitudes. It is said to direct an individual's first, unquestioning reaction to something before any conscious actions are taken. It can be produced and controlled by a variety of factors such as the two most influential forces, family and the educational system, followed by the environment and peer groups. While field can be defined as a network of relations. It exists apart from individual will and consciousness, as well as interaction or links between persons. The network could be made up of people or institutions in a specific field. The field is the environment in which habitus and capital interact. Capital, according to Bourdieu, may be split into three types: social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital. All capitals from Bourdieu’s Theory of capital are related; in everyday life one can use their economic capital to build one's social capital. ‘Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form. (Richardson, 1986). During a period of time, a person can collect different capitals and as they collect various capital the person can use a specific capital to gain more power in other capital. In other words, Bourdieu’s use of the term may be viewed as being closer to power.

Many previous studies on *Peaky Blinders* and Social Class such as a study done by Paul Long titled ‘Class, Place and History in the Imaginative Landscapes of Peaky Blinders explores Peaky Blinders in terms of its singular vision of dynamic working-class protagonists and a particular historical moment and place. Focuses on the differences of their working-class status, habits and etiquettes between the Shelby

family as they are of a new wealth compared to others of old money or aristocracy because the Shelby family gain their wealth from mostly illegal business. However, even though the Shelby family have different habits and etiquettes because of their original social class, with the economic, symbolic, cultural and social capital Thomas Shelby have gained it has become apparent that with these capitals they can too be the same as the people in high class status.

With qualitative approaches the analysis was based on, this study will do a narrative and non-narrative analysis by looking at the way the stories were told in the TV-series '*Peaky Blinders*' and trying to have a better understanding of the character Thomas Shelby.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The writer has picked the subject to be further explored in this research after performing some study, as indicated in the study's background. The issue in this study would include:

1. How does Thomas Shelby childhood's affect his present life?
2. How does England at that time support Thomas Shelby's achievement in his present life?
3. How does Thomas Shelby's surroundings affect his present life?

### 1.3 Objective of the Study

After addressing the issues, the writer's main objectives are as follows:

1. To study more on how Thomas Shelby unconsciousness can be affected by his childhood?
2. To analyse further how England as an environment during the inter-war period could support Thomas Shelby's achievement in his present life?
3. To analyse on how the surroundings of Thomas Shelby affect his present life?

### 1.4 Significance of the study

By conducting this research using Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Capital on *Peaky Blinders (2016-2019)* main character Thomas Shelby, the writer hope that with this research that the public are aware on how important it is to utilize capitals on their life, and how to use it the right and wrong way. The issue in this research is that Thomas Shelby is using his capital to grow his business from an illegal booking business to have his own limited company. His escapade of being a low social class member to a high social class member can be interpreted into an example of how to use ~~your~~ social, economic, symbolic, cultural capitals in the right and wrong way to raise in social classes.

## **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

The key terms that were used in this research includes:

### **1. Habitus**

‘The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (e.g. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions’ (Bourdieu 1977)

### **2. Capital**

Capital is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its “incorporated,” embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. (Bourdieu 1986)

### **3. Field**

‘field should be understood as a site of competition and aggression in which an individual or group is required to negotiate, and their ability to maneuver within a particular field will be influenced by habitus and capital.’ (Burke 2016)

### **4. Social Class**

Social class is defined as a person’s or group’s relation to the means of production — that is, whether your relation to factories, corporations, and other businesses is one of ownership and control, or one of worker as dependent on being hired. (Anyon 2011)