

The forms of social capital. Theory and practice in community work

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Introduction

Several scholars have argued for the relevance of the writings of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu for the social professions and their academic endeavors (Garrett, 2007a; 2007b; Fram, 2004; Emirbayer & Williams, 2005), particularly after the release of the widely successful *Weight of the World* (Bourdieu 1999). A core argument is that Bourdieu's writings, albeit large and not easily concretized, is well suited for scholars of social work (and by default, practitioners), in part through overlaps in themes and areas of interest (such as those covered in *Weight of the World*), in part through an underutilized potential in Bourdieu's theories and concepts more broadly.

Another critique, meanwhile, is forwarded in *how* Bourdieu has been applied within the discipline: Bourdieu tend to be applied in a superficial form, for instance in the form of scholars of social work quoting key concepts of Bourdieu, habitus or social capital for instance, without fully accounting for (or understanding) the significance and complexity embedded in said concepts, and, we will add, their inherent co-dependent qualities.

This text is peer-reviewed. It was originally published on page 321-340 in the book Lea, K., Horne, R. (red.)(2021). *Praxeologiske perspektiver. Professorens habitus og kampen for sykepleievitenskap som autonomt fag*. Forlaget Hexis 2021.

Publisert: 03.06.2025

Praxeologi – Et kritisk refleksivt blikk på sosiale praktikker ©2025 Gudmund Ågotnes

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15845/praxeologi.v7.4203>

Consequently, it is argued, the potential of Bourdieu is not realized within the academic branch of social work. Garrett suggests several explanations for such an underutilization, relating both to academic traditions and questions of epistemology and ontology (Garrett, 2007a; 2007b). First, Bourdieu's style of writing can be described as somewhat inaccessible, which, coupled with a general complexity and Bourdieu's tendency to write 'against' peers (without always accounting for doing so), can make familiarization with Bourdieu a daunting task. Second, and contrary to dominant tendencies in the scholarships of social work, Bourdieu did not explicitly address themes relating to ethnicity, race and multiculturalism (perhaps with the exception of his early writings drawing on fieldwork in Algeria), as opposed to the thematizations of class and social stratification. Last, Bourdieu's proclivity of portraying the social actor or agent as somewhat inert (Garrett, 2007b) can, on a fundamental level, create friction against a profession seeking to empower the social agent.

Because of these factors, Bourdieu remains underutilized, perhaps especially concerning the study of and understanding of poverty and marginalization (see for instance Houston, 2002; Smith et al., 2017), often applying economic models ill-fitted to translate research into practice (Fram, 2004). The complex study of poverty, can, it is further argued, benefit from the introduction of Bourdieu's theories and concepts, enabling an increased focus on class and conflict. Two connected arguments are, in other words, proposed; 1) Bourdieu is misused, and 2) Bourdieu is underused.

Moving our attention to community work, which has been described as a branch of social work, a parallel yet similar discipline, or as a separate entity altogether, (see for instance Hutchinson 2010, p. 13; Poople 2015, pp. 1-2; Twelvetrees 2017, pp. 4-6), addressing issues of marginalization, poverty and exclusion, the work of Bourdieu is, perhaps paradoxically, even less prominent (Deflippis, 2001). Community work relies on theories and thinkers from a relatively small pool, primarily Gramsci and Freire, often seasoned with Foucault, while largely leaving Bourdieu unattended. For community work, then, it is not as much a question of misuse as that of non-use. Interestingly, a concept or theory central in Bourdieu's work – *social capital* – is highly widespread in community work (see for instance Hutchinson, 2010, pp. 21-22; Twelvetrees 2017, p. 31; Ronnby, 2009, p. 123; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011, pp. 37-38), as it addresses a central component in the very fabric of community work - how communities and collectives can thrive - albeit without touching on Bourdieu's understanding of it.

In this chapter we will present a critique of how 'social capital' is envisioned by Putnam and others, both with regards to how it is conceptualized (Portes, 1998) and its more hands-on application within community work, where it has gained significant impact for instance regarding housing and community development (Deflippis, 2001 p. 781). It is argued that an understanding of social capital as 'traits of communities' is both logically flawed and ill-equipped at addressing vital areas of interest in social work broadly and community work specifically. In this chapter, it is argued that an adaptation of Bourdieu's understanding of social capital, intrinsically linked to related concepts and theories, and thus to ideas of power and social stratification, would benefit community work in both its academic and practice-oriented endeavors.

In the chapter, a brief introduction of community work and its relation to social work will be given, followed by an equally brief presentation of what can be considered the theoretical foundation of community work. A subsequent presentation of 'social capital', first in the form of Putnam, followed by Bourdieu, will pave way for a discussion of the relevance of the different perspectives within community work. An exhaustive presentation of the theories of Bourdieu is considered beyond the

scope of this chapter, perhaps paradoxically, given the forwarded argument that his concept of social capital is inextricably linked to a wider theoretical framework. The reader of community work is advised to investigate other, more detailed sources on this general topic, in this volume and beyond.

From social work to community work

Social work started at the turn of the 20th century with educational programs in both the United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) at approximately the same time. In Norway, the first educational program started in 1920, being formalized into federal two-year programs in 1950 (Hutchison, 2010: 35). While a distinct and uniting core function was embedded in social work from the very onset – to combat poverty and need – a division between two approaches of social work was early established and continue to characterize social work today: an individualistic and a collectivistic approach. Here, we will primarily address the latter; social work directed at social mechanisms affecting disadvantaged individuals and groups, in contrast to individual ‘case work’.

What can be described as a ‘collectivistic’ approach to or within social work, was famously started through the settlement approach in the UK, later adopted in the US. Here, the professional moved into areas (or specific houses) considered poor or less advantaged, working ‘from within’, so to speak. This collectivistic approach was also predominant in Norway, according to Hutchinson, from the 1920ies, while being overtaken by an individualistic approach as the profession was professionalized towards the 1960ies (2010, p. 35).

In the 60ies and 70ies, another turn, or break to paraphrase Bourdieu (Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron, 1991) occurred: the resurgence of collectivistic approaches, now with the labels ‘community work’ or ‘community development’. According to Twelvetrees, this resurrection should be viewed against the current political landscape, seeing resistance and counter movements against the expansion of capitalism (2017: 20). Movements seeking to alter or combat class structures, and what was perceived as increased division between classes, embossed the zeitgeist of the time, influencing also the growth and form of community work. As such, community work, or at least versions of it, took the form of ‘oppositional work’, intended to work against as opposed to within the framework of societal structures and its bureaucratic functions. The growth of community work in this period is, in other words, connected to increased poverty, or the perception and articulation of ‘poverty’, with emphasis on certain geographical areas, most notably in larger cities. Here, areas deemed vulnerable or impoverished, often with caveats such as ‘ghettos’, were targeted, also in a Norwegian context in the form of local community development programs (*‘områdeløft’*).

Accompanying the growth of community work in the 60ies and 70ies was also a division, similar to that of social work as previously discussed, between versions of it, described by Ledwith as a cataclysmic division between a radical agenda and a pluralist agenda (Ledwith, 2011, p. 17, see also Twelvetrees, 2017, pp. 20-27 for a critique as a radical agenda). A radical agenda represents approaches utilizing community work as an instrument for change, in the attempt of achieving comprehensive transformation of discriminatory societal structures. A pluralist agenda, meanwhile, is described as approaches directed at change at a smaller scale, often on behalf of or in collaboration with authorities. Interestingly, and as a point we will return to, the former rests of theories connected to class and social stratification, while the latter is primarily engaged in methodological theory.

These differing directions or traditions of community work also speaks of its somewhat schizophrenic nature: community work has been described as an approach, a (scientific) discipline, a profession and as an ideology. Without entering an exhaustive discussion on these various interpretations, we can conclude for now that community work contains a complex (and perhaps problematic) entanglement of knowledge and practice; being simultaneously something one does and containing a position on how one should go about 'doing'. This entanglement does not, as we will return to, provide a clear path from theory to practice, that is, from its theoretical basis and its practical manifestation.

Regardless of one's positioning in the wide concept of community work, we can find some common denominators, captured, for instance in this early definition from the 60ies: "The process of facilitating and improving popular participation, and the creation and mobilization of local resources to meet local needs within the context of local, regional, and national development" (Swedner, in Turunen, 2009, p. 43). A core of community work, then, evolves around the facilitation of collective action, somehow improving a less advantageous situation.

Embedded in this core is the believe (or assumption) that resources (and consequently power) is unevenly distributed, and, most importantly, that such a distribution is unwarranted, unnecessary and unfair. Community work contains, in other words, an in-built normative characteristic, fusing an ideological foundation with the practices of the community worker: those in a position of privilege are better equipped to protect their own interest (or are in a structurally advantageous position in which such a protection is a moot point), while those in a less advantageous position do not have the capacity to position themselves differently, or is positioned in such a way that they lack the vantage point of acknowledging their misfortune altogether. They need assistance from the community worker. The parallels to Pierre Bourdieu's theories and epistemology are evident. Still, they remain largely invisible in literature on and about community work.

The theoretical landscape of community work: From Freire, via Gramsci, to Putnam

Paolo Freire, Brazilian academic, politician, pedagogue and public administrator, is widely considered as either contributing with a theoretical and pedagogical foundation for community work, or as heavily inspiring what later developed into community work (see for instance Ledwith, 2011, pp. 53-76, 97-101; Ledwith & Springett 2010, 22, pp. 127-140; Hutchinson 2010, pp. 17-20; Popple, 2015, pp. 79-80; Carroll & Minkler, 2000). Freire remains as relevant today as during the formative years of community work, 24 years after his death and 50 years after the release of his seminal work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2017), particularly within versions of community work considered 'critical' or 'radical'. Before elaborating on Freire, and his standing within community work, we must take a quick detour to his theoretical inspiration, Antonio Gramsci. Based on the notion that dominating ideas and concepts influence and infiltrate our mindsets through society's various institutions, such as the family, schools or the state, those in power seek to advance the notion of 'the natural order of things' (Popple 2015, p. 75-76; Ledwith, 2011, p. 137-39; Ledwith & Springett 2010, p. 160-161). Those in power govern through the consent of the oppressed, in a form of ideological persuasion. The hegemonic order appears as common sense, despite the 'true' interest of most people, and certainly those oppressed. With Gramsci, then, 'the system' is not only systematic and self-regulatory, but also unjust, though appearing as natural and just.

Enter Freire. Writing in a different time and with a different context in mind (addressing illiteracy and poverty in Brazil and Latin-America, in contrast to fascist Italy), Freire described similar patterns or mechanisms leading to exclusion, marginalization and poverty. Leaning on Gramsci, Freire sought to develop a liberating pedagogy (Freire 2017), in which those oppressed could create and utilize the means to be liberated from their unjust oppression, considered in both a materialistic and emotional/ideological sense. Through an exercise in critical conscientization,¹ see also Ledwith 2011: 100; Popple 2015: 79), exercised more or less practically through a critical form of education, this veil of the taken for granted or suppressed can be lifted. With Freire, to paraphrase a complex body of literature, the oppressed can achieve autonomy through the development of critical consciousness. Through autonomy, meanwhile, empowerment can be achieved, again both in a materialistic and ideological sense. Freire appear, to simplify, as Gramsci's more practically oriented heir, by offering the oppressed a counter-hegemonic alternative.

As such, Freire shares a premise not only with Gramsci, but also Marxism and perhaps also Foucault: a) oppression exist as an objective experience, b) oppression is rooted in deep-seated structural mechanisms and are therefore largely intangible, and c) oppression should be countered. The key in understanding Freire's attractiveness to community work lies, we believe, in how this premise is adapted in a conceptual and methodological approach including a teacher or a facilitator: the community worker. Freire suggests a dialectic between 'action and thought', not intellectualism without action, nor activism without reflection, but rather, and readers of this volume might find this term endearing, 'praxis': reflection and action directed and the very structures laying the foundation for the creation of difference. In Freire's 'praxis', the leaders (or teachers) are not mere thinkers, the oppressed not mere activists. In contrast to what Freire terms 'bank education' (in which those who receive education are envisioned as suppositories being filled with wisdom and knowledge by an authority), a liberating pedagogy combined reflection and dialogue between student and teacher.

In addition to what can be described as a practical or perhaps practicalized adaptation of Gramsci, Freire's legacy within community work is perhaps mostly evident in how 'participation' is delineated. Community work builds on the postulate of a wide and multi-layered understanding of 'participation', both in an epistemological sense and as a moral imperative. That is; both regarding what participation 'is' and that participation is 'good': "It is a way of life, a way of seeing the world and a way of being in the world" (Ledwith & Springett 2010: 13), and thus something for more than techniques of getting a subject involved in a matter. This form of philosophy of participation follows Freire, in the sense that it builds on an imperative of justice and equality, while forming a critique of status quo.

The ontological and epistemological optimism that Freire represents has, I argue, been both alluring to and a necessity for community work, having a core object of alleviating the conditions of the oppressed. Still, a warning is raised in central community work literature about a naïve interpretation of participation: discourses on empowerment through increased collaboration and participation are often tokenistic (see Ledwith, 2011, p. 29; Cornwall, 2008; Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1992). These can take the form, to return to Gramsci, of veiled actions, that is actions only counter-hegemonic in perception. Despite these warnings, a resilient core within community work remains both optimistic and loyal to Freire. Through a pedagogy of critical conscientization, reflexivity with and among those

¹ The term *conscientização* refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 2017, p. 9, original emphasis). This is the translator's note on the original Portuguese term, elsewhere translated to 'conscientization'.

marginalized can be raised, thus also facilitating for the identification, exploration and counter of profound reasons for marginalization (Carroll & Minkler, 2000).

However, Freire do not offer the practitioner or scholar of community work with many practical solutions, despite the call for a new pedagogy. Although attempts have been made in transforming Freire into a more practical oriented 'tool-box' (see for instance Ledwith, 2016), the writing of Freire remain somewhat esoteric and non-concrete. A conceptual and epistemological bridge is therefore needed for the community worker, when applying Freire practically. Enter 'social capital'.

Social capital by Putnam

According to Putnam, the term 'social capital' has been 'invented' and applied in different ways and at different times, independently from each other. It has, for instance, been used in the 50ies to explain degree of memberships in leisure activities in American suburbs; in the 60ies to describe the absence of 'neighborliness' in metropolitan areas; in the 70ies in economic analyses of the social inheritance from slavery; in the 80ies by a French sociologist to describe differences in resources and access to resources; and later to explain the significance of both education and networks (Putnam 2000: 19-20).

'Social capital' as a part of the academic toolbox, has presented itself in different forms, in other words. Here we will outline two versions of social capital, that of Putnam and Bourdieu, to be considered at being placed on opposite ends of a spectrum. Several other perspectives and interpretations of social capital could be included, perhaps most notably that of Coleman (1988; 1990) and Loudry (1977). Based on a brief presentation of Putnam's and Bourdieu's understanding of social capital, the consequences of community work's adaptation of Putnam will be discussed, as well as what can be gained by adapting Bourdieu's approach.

Putnam defines social capital as: "By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital – "social capital" refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). For Putnam, then, social capital, in contrast to physical and human capital, concern the degree of connection between people leading to a sense of commitment or obligation. Social capital is a binder. Putnam continues to signify the importance of 'social capital': "In the first place, networks of civic engagement foster study norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67).

Putnam sees the binder of social capital, in other words, as a positive, collective trait, thus making social capital a quality of a community or a society, that is, as something a community can possess more or less of, as opposed to a quality and quantity of and by an agent. Social capital is a benchmark: more social capital, better society. These positive traits of social capital primarily take the form of degree of participation in civic society, for instance through volunteer organization or political involvement, but also less formalized forms of participation, such as leisure activities and - organizations, and is presented as a form of oil in the machinery, making the society thrive.

Two primary forms of social capital are identified by Putnam, bonding and bridging. Bonding refers to networks and 'connectiveness' between equals or those belonging to a similar sphere of society,

while being exclusionary of those outside. Bridging social capital refers to inclusionary bonds in which social distance between groups and associations decreases. The difference between the two forms are described as 'getting by' versus 'getting ahead'. For community work, the notion of bridging social capital has been particularly instrumental (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008, p. 38), alluding to how networks, and by implication mobility, between social layers, can be facilitated.

Putnam famously applies the tools in his analysis of the development of the American society from the 20ies until contemporary times. From the 20ies and 30ies, American society witnessed a gradual increase in general participation in civic society, continuing for decades and including, especially from the 50ies and onwards, increased membership in sports and recreational organizations. General recognition of the public sphere and its significance also rose in this period, gradually developing into attention towards civil rights, concerning gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In sum, according to Putnam, gradually more and more social capital. The 70ies and 80ies were also promising, as the baby boomers were settling down, large in size and in resources. It could therefore be assumed that the level of social capital would continue to expand, but:

For the first two-thirds of the twentieth century a powerful tide bore Americans into ever deeper engagement in the life of their communities, but a few decades ago – silently, without warning – that tide reversed, and we were overtaken by a treacherous rip current. Without at first noticing, we have been pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century (Putnam 2000: 27).

For Putnam, this reversal is important for more than nostalgic reasons: less social capital led to a less functioning society, to ineffectual governance and policy implementation, for instance. The generalized reciprocity – the expectance of return for one's good efforts – is no longer respected, it is every person for himself.

In conclusion, Putnam's social capital has an intrinsic value, but more so than in the simple form of 'good virtue'. The social networks that social capital is indicative of has value in itself, not only the actions that they produce. The value of social capital, then, is a collective one, also contributing to financial growth within a society (see Defilippis 2001 for a critique of the latter part of this argument).² For Putnam, finally, social capital 'works'. It works, when viewed critically, somewhat mysteriously: both as a 'living thing' creating tangible results, and as a point of measurement for that which works. Social capital by Putnam, then, can be said to be both the symptom and the solution. As it can take the form of a solution, for instance by facilitating the growth of social capital by bringing people together, the concept has an immediate relevance for how community work should be put into practice.

Social capital by Bourdieu

Bourdieu, meanwhile, treat 'capital' as a *capacity* to be applied by an agent. Different forms of capital, cultural, social, or symbolic, share the traits of its more commonly referred to variant, economic capital, in the sense that they all are accumulated over time, albeit in different settings

² According to Defilippis (2001), Putnam's argument of how social capital leads to economic growth is both logically flawed (social capital does not, in itself, produce anything), while also being contrary to empirical findings (the economic growth in the US from the 80ies and onwards, for instance).

(family, school system, leisure activities, and so on), and can be applied in different contexts (buying a piece of art with the highest potential of increasing in value, watching a movie considered more aesthetically pleasing than an alternative, getting access to a social club, and so on). A primary objective of Bourdieu, when applying the concept, is to illuminate how social life, and its non-material components, also follow logics of accumulation and exchange (Esmark 2006: 88).

Bourdieu's social capital, therefore, concerns *resources* on an individual level, both in the sense of 'what you have' and 'what you can get': "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group" (Bourdieu 1986: 248). To simplify, social capital is a tool meant for utilization, something that works in the world, or not. Furthermore, Bourdieu's social capital concerns both the form of the quantity and the quality of one's network. It is, in other words, not only about knowing people, but also of knowing the right people.

With Bourdieu, social capital is a form of credit existing in social relations, to be applied, depending on other factors, functioning based on mutual commitment. The social capital of an agent, then, depends on both the size and the qualities of one's network, and how efficiently these can be mobilized: "(...) the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). Social capital is, as such, not only about knowing the right people, but about the ability to utilize one's knowledge of the right people.

However, social capital, while having an instrumental function, is not necessarily instrumentally used, while also being somewhat context specific. How social capital is mobilized will, for instance, differ depending on whether the setting is one's family, a fraternity of businessmen, or a student group at a university. A commonality is how social capital is in constant production, where profit – what's in it for me – lays as a foundation for solidarity within the network.

Interestingly, Bourdieu does not delineate 'his' social capital against Putnam's or others', but rather against what he sees as an unfounded tendency of relying on economic theories and 'economization' in general. Capital, although being exchangeable, contains far more than mere monetary value. The concept of capital contains more than what Bourdieu describes as the coincidental game of change characterizing economic capital, where value is interchangeable independent of other factors. Social capital is, in other words, not up to chance, it is not, as in the American dream, based on equality of opportunity.

Bourdieu's social capital can, as such, perhaps be read as symptomatic for a more general positioning of Bourdieu somewhere between determinism (of which he, of course, have been criticized of being a proponent of) and rationality. Bourdieu's agent is equipped with conditions of possibilities, but these conditions vary. The social world offers: "(...) the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242).

Social capital, by Bourdieu, is therefore not characteristics of communities or societies, but should not be read as characteristics imbedded in individuals either. Social capital becomes the potential of

individuals to mobilize based on one's social relationships (Defilippis, 2001). The potency of these bonds, and the potential reward they can yield, will vary.

Towards diverging models of social capital

The concept of social capital has, despite or perhaps because of these variations, been exceedingly widespread and has been described as one of the premier exports of modern sociology (Portes, 1998). Its inherent ambiguity, however, often leaves the question of what exactly is being addressed unclear. Controversies have followed, according to Portes, in part because of poor academic workmanship when treating the concept (or theory), for instance regarding whether it is applied as a concept or a theory. A game of comparing apples to oranges have ensued, often leaving discussions about the concept non-constructive.

To clarify this clutter, two primary models of social capital can be identified. Social capital as a) the space of possibilities for an individual (or a close-knit group such as a nuclear family) based on the extent and strength of the relationships to others, and b) characteristics of a society, alluding to the collective inclination of being active in matters civic. In the latter, social capital remains an ideal in itself: a good society contains a lot of social capital. Portes argue that these versions are highly incompatible, they are not simply different variants from a shared core to be applied as conceptual tools in different contexts, but rather qualitatively different entities altogether, speaking of different empirical phenomena. As exemplified by Portes, social capital can, conceptually, be both the resources a child can utilize in the context of her family and an explanation for why a larger city or even an entire nation is thriving. It cannot, of course, be both simultaneously.

One's positioning towards these variants has some important implications and rests on some essential premises towards which the proponent of the concept should relate. What is contested is primarily, but not exclusively, a) understanding social capital as attributes of individuals or collectives, b) understanding social capital as an emic strategy (to be used by the agent, or not) or an ethic analytical category (to be used by the academic as an instrument of measurement), and c) whether social capital has the characteristics of a zero-sum game or is to be viewed as infinite.

I argue for the merits of adapting Bourdieu's understanding of social capital within community work, that is: social capital as potential resources to be utilized by individuals or small groups, to be understood as existing in a form of competitive market. The alternative, an understanding of social capital as 'level of civiness' within a given community, is inadequate in several ways. First, this understanding of social capital has its inherent argumentative flaws, as argued by Portes (1998, pp. 18-19). With Putnam, social capital becomes both the cause and effect; both a trait of a society and that which makes a society thrive. Viewed in this way, social capital also takes the form of a truism: a good society has a lot of social capital, therefore social capital is good. This form of logical circularity stems from, according to Portes, the analytical focus on rewards or outputs from belonging to networks and having social ties, discarding the (various forms of) characteristics of networks and their consequent significance on production. Simply belonging to networks, or for the community worker, facilitating networks, does not automatically secure more social capital. Second and relatedly, an understanding of social capital as 'level of civiness' fail to grasp the significance of power in, through and between relationships of people, by - in contrast to Bourdieu - divorcing it from economic capital (Defilippis, 2001, p. 781). Third, an understanding of social capital as 'level of

civiness' within a given community falsely rest on the assumption of communities as 'homogenous spaces', not accounting for diversity and conflict (Ledwith & Springett, 2010, p. 49).

Following Bourdieu's understanding, meanwhile, social capital remains social, but one cannot escape the fact that it is the individual who acquire and utilize the capital. However, the individual, for Bourdieu, does not exist in a vacuum, neither does his social capital. An individual's social capital is dependent on the potential of the form, size and characteristics of relationships with others, and, more importantly, of one's ability to mobilize the resources stemming from such relationships. This ability of mobilization is, again, tied to other forms of capital, such as the economic and cultural capital of one's immediate family, and to the ability of converting between forms of capital. For Bourdieu, social capital is not an entity in-itself, existing outside or beyond the practices of agents.

This leads us to a second important aspect of Bourdieu's notion of social capital highly relevant for community work. Albeit social, it remains a form of capital. Bourdieu's notion of social capital speaks of possibilities and potential trajectories, creating a space in which the agent can navigate. Within this space, social capital has a function as capital, that is as a resource someone has, or not, and that can be utilized in more or less advantageous ways. An implication of this, lost in other versions of social capital, is the relative value of one's social capital: the potency of one's value relates both to one's ability of utilizing it, but also to its relative value compared to the social capital of others. An exclusive club for the elite is productive because it can contain something that others (the majority in this case) does not have access to.

Finally, although existing in a social space or a market, the tools with which one navigate the space differ, leaving the trajectories different in form and quality. As such, social capital with Bourdieu is intrinsically connected to power (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243), power in access and power in possibilities. This is most clearly illustrated, and simultaneously contrasted to Putnam's social capital, with how Bourdieu see the profitability of one's investment in social capital as proportionately increasing given the size of the capital, which again is related to size of total forms of capital of those involved, including both cultural and economic (Bourdieu 1986, p. 250). Those with an advantageous position will have the resources, capability, and interest of increasing their position: they are given a form of head start, and that head start provides further advantages increasing the distance to those behind. With this, social capital is further connected, or perhaps dependent on, not only other forms of capital, but also on forms of stratification such as class, gender and ethnicity, creating limits (as well as opportunities) to the trajectories of individuals.

As such, Bourdieu's social capital is part of a larger arsenal of concepts and theories, not to be broken up and utilized willy-nilly. This larger backdrop speaks, to simplify, about how positions and stratification are reproduced. To further simplify and to draw a large body of literature into the context of community work: a disadvantaged group is not disadvantaged simply because of lack of access to means, say economic or social capital, but rather also lacks access to possibilities of utilizing means, set in a context where both means and tools to utilize means are considered less advantageous or prestigious. Navigating the social world, then, does not mimic an economic game with endless possibilities. The foundation for this inequality is not necessarily easily discovered, nor 'fixed', creating both opportunities and limitations for the community worker.

Concluding remarks: community work and Bourdieu

The largest obstacle in the adaptation of Bourdieu in community work stems from what Garrett have described as not offering a clear-cut direction of getting out or getting up to those at the bottom. The professional is, consequently, not offered directives. For the community worker, the idea of 'upward mobility' is essential: it is, in many ways, the very function of her endeavor. Should, however, the complexity embedded in the works of Bourdieu, accompanied by a windy passage or bridge from theory to practice, imply that he should be discarded altogether? Contrarily, Bourdieu can be read as providing a framework to illuminate the dynamics for oppression, including the many shades of grey, sharing as opposed to contrasting the primary objective of Freire and critical community work. This framework, if you will, does not provide tools or the practical means to combat inequality, but rather an understanding of the underlying mechanisms that must be addressed to achieve what the community workers call for 'radical change'. Addressing the very foundation of difference is, also following Freire, not a detour but rather a necessity. Without accounting for such a foundation, the community worker run the risk of reproducing, well-meaningly but naïvely, forms of social stratification. Social capital, and how we understand it, can be read as both an illustrator of this argument and a point in itself: conceptualizing social capital as a means of increasing networks through which 'better outcomes' is automatically produced, is both too simplistic and too instrumental. Social capital is not to be perceived as a form of social alchemy, in other words, to be applied by the community worker, following 'in Freire's footsteps'.

Rather, we propose viewing Bourdieu, and his concept of social capital, as a bridge between a critical theoretical foundation and a practice directed at a 'radical agenda', not necessarily because of arguments of feasibility or instrumentality – 'bridging social capital between social classes' does sound more effectual – but because Bourdieu, and his concept of social capital, can contribute to meet a complexity woven into the very fabric of society, implying, ultimately, that improving a position is not simply a game of allocating resources, or "(...) something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241).

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