Community Forums: A Unique Approach to Community Service-Learning

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Abstract

The service-learning movement has been criticized for not listening to the voices of community partners. Using Bourdieu's framework that equally values formal and practical knowledge, we evaluated a Manitoba college's service-learning program that focused on an issue of community concern. The program was uniquely designed to prioritize the voice of community organizations over the critical discourse of academic partners. Program structure was analysed and data collected from 24 of the participants using a questionnaire (response rate of 33%). Two variables were constructed, COLLABORATIVE and CRITICAL, to compare how formal and practical knowledge were prioritized in the service-learning program. The difference between the means of these variables obtained significance in a one-tailed t-test at the 0.01 level. Responses to open-ended questions about the event indicated that the program emphasized problem-solving, civic engagement, and the complexity of the issue under discussion. Results indicate the program's unique design successfully prioritized community voices, supporting other researchers' service-learning findings of tension between the academic discourse of rigor and the collaborative discourse of community development.

Key words: service-learning, community voice, community development
                    organizations, Bourdieu

Résumé

De précédentes recherches ont révélé que le nombre d'étudiantes inscrites en informatique, se sentant isolées, ayant une perte de confiance, et étant moins performantes, a diminué. Cet article examine les différences entre les étudiants et les étudiantes de premier cycle dans les programmes d'informatique dans une université de taille moyenne en Ontario. Sur la base des trois niveaux de la fracture numérique (ressources, enseignement et connaissances spécifiques à la culture) selon Kelly

(2008), nous avons étudié les défis de genre distincts pour chaque niveau. Ces recherches ont montré que, tandis que le premier niveau de la fracture numérique est difficilement observable, contrairement au deuxième, le troisième niveau est largement répandu et le résultat est déconcertant.

Mots clés: fracture numérique, études en informatique, enseignement supérieur, égalité des sexes

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Introduction

The service-learning movement in higher education, in which the academic experience of college and university students involves them with community organizations, is becoming increasingly aware of how the voices of community organizations have been marginalized from the design and implementation of partnership programs (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Under current models, community organization priorities of empowerment, capacity building, and community problem solving suffer in favor of the academic partners' pedagogical priorities (Jones, 2003). Although programs claim to have a positive impact on communities, there is little research to back up those claims (Birdsall, 2005; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

In Manitoba, a service-learning program at a private college developed an innovative program intended to give priority to the voices of community organizations over the critical discourse of academics. They created a community forum focused on a pressing social problem and partnered with a community agency currently involved in addressing that problem. Other research, described in the next section, has found that service-learning partnerships between institutions of higher education and community development experience tension derived from their differing approaches. The academic discourse of rigor and quality often conflicts with the collaborative discourse of empowerment and participation. Where service-learning is integrated into the curriculum, academic discourse is characteristically prioritized over collaborative

discourse because students are often judged on the "academic merit" of their work. We

investigated whether this new model successfully established a partnership between an

institution of higher learning and a community agency that prioritized the collaborative

voice of community development over the critical discourse of higher education. To do

so, we studied the organizational model, analyzed the content presented by community

organizations, and asked all attendees—including speakers and organizers—to complete a

questionnaire. We were interested in their level of agreement or disagreement with

statements that indicated the degree to which critical and collaborative types of discourse

had been prevalent in the community forum. We also explored the relationship between

these two types of discourse using Bourdieu's (1990a, 1998) theory of practice. Previous

research has suggested that critical discourse may be prioritized over collaborative

discourse in service-learning partnerships involving institutions of higher education and

community organizations (Stoecker & Tryon, 1999).

Bourdieu's Approach

Bourdieu (1990a, 1998) attempts to uncover the way in which dichotomies that

privilege mind over body in Western thought—dichotomies that pervade higher education

—are actually products of power relations between individuals and groups that neglect

the kind of non-theoretical knowledge implicit in practical skills. According to Bourdieu,

tension emerges as mental work, valued as "better" than physical labor, hierarchically

relates to practical work in a contested relationship that is shared socially through

conversation. Bourdieu hypothesizes a correspondence between symbolic structures and

social structures in a general theory of symbolic power and its relations to economic and

political power (Brubaker, 1985, p. 747). For Bourdieu, higher education is a social

institution that creates and accumulates knowledge as a form of cultural capital and

power that is embedded in a social structure of class-based power and privilege. The type

of knowledge associated with practical social life is similarly embedded in a social

structure of class-based power relations (Brubaker, 1985, p. 748).

Service-learning programs intentionally develop partnerships between social

institutions that are embedded in these class-based power relations. Students within these

programs become consumers of "objectivism" knowledge constructed by institutions of

higher education that is in tension with the "everyday knowledge" constructed by

community organizations. The tension between these two forms of knowledge is rooted

in the class-based relations of domination in that objectivism "denies the real efficacy or

scientific significance of agents' understandings of their own activity, of

phenomenology's 'everyday knowledge'" (Brubaker, 1985, p. 752). The institutional

domination of higher education in this relationship is rooted in the assertion that

objectivism's model has ontological or explanatory primacy "discernible by deep-seeing

theorists but invisible to the agents whose conduct they are held to regulate" (Brubaker,

1985, p. 752).

Service-learning contexts create an opportunity to analyze the tension between

hierarchically related forms of knowledge.   Bourdieu's framework allowed us to take the

knowledge associated with community development seriously, and enabled us to interpret

responses and interactions as a product of power relations between individuals and

groups competing with one another over valued resources such as student labour. Higher

education and community development can be understood as differing fields operating with specific forms of cultural capital in relation to a more general notion of power dynamics in "the field of action." Each group had its own internal struggle for recognition, power, and capital, but each field also had its own specific relationship to the overall power dynamics in the field of action.

The service-learning movement has been criticized for not listening to the voices of community organizations. Utilizing Bourdieu's framework (1990b), we considered ways in which the formal organization of the service-learning forum organized by the college in Manitoba attempted to reverse the traditional power relations between the critical discourse of higher education and the collaborative discourse of community development. Bourdieu emphasizes that a conscious strategy to reverse power dynamics does not affect only the capacity of individuals, but is also an achievement of the collective. Individual behaviour, or *habitus,* exists in relationship to formal structures. For this reason, we analyzed how the forum was organized and the content of formal presentations, in addition to the perceptions of individuals as revealed in survey responses.

Literature Review

Recent research continues to verify that demonstrable intellectual and personal development can occur in students who are involved in service-learning. Service-learning promotes student growth by immersing them in the tensions of class struggle. Despite potential negative effects, Deeley (2010) found that service-learning is overall positively conducive to student transformation. Service-learning has been shown to

strengthen students' self-esteem and provide them with opportunities to take

responsibility in the community and develop more positive attitudes about working with

people from diverse backgrounds.

But, is service-learning similarly conducive to *community* transformation? Since

the 1990s, the service-learning movement has been criticized for exploiting poor

communities as free sources of student education (Eby, 1998), and for reinforcing

negative stereotypes of poor communities as helpless (Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Ward

& Wolf-Wendel, 2000). The little research done on community organizations claims that

they are relatively satisfied (Vernon & Ward, 1999; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Birdsall,

2005), but the research is criticized as relatively superficial and lacking in depth

(Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Cruz and Giles (2000) argue that little research has been done

to substantiate claims that service-learning has positive impacts on communities.

Stoecker and Tryon (2009) criticize current models of service-learning for not

adequately listening to the voices of community organizations and for paying inadequate

attention to community outcomes (or the institutional changes) needed to make the

outcomes useful. Toledano and Lapinid (2010) similarly argue that listening to the

perspective of rural community stakeholders has been neglected in service-learning

pedagogy. Bacon (2002) describes a cultural divide between the cultures of community

development and higher education: Community practitioners value practical knowledge

and see learning as a collective activity; academic faculty, however, are more inclined to

view themselves as experts imparting knowledge to students or to the agencies with

which they partner (Bacon, 2002). Stoecker and Tryon (2009) question the imbalance in this service-learning relationship. They ask:

> Could this be an academic prejudice toward PhD-holding faculty, and an assumption that anyone without an advanced degree running a nonprofit can't have a comparable amount of knowledge about his or her own work? Is that why community organization staff are asked to provide training and education for students without any remuneration for their time? Does that explain why professors still provide little to no training for students before sending them out to the community? And does that attitude bode well for a partnership where knowledge gained through experience with an issue is often more important than just reading about it? (p. 6)

Bell and Carlson (2009) identify "a power dynamic between higher education institutions and community organizations" where "the resource provider controls the resources" and the community organization staff have to work with what they get, making the most of it (p. 34).

Stoecker and Tryon (2009) call for a change of direction in the service-learning movement where community outcomes receive first priority, rather than last, and where service-learning is structured to maximize community impact. Hartnett (2010) suggests that service-learning can be more politically relevant and intellectually enriching if the community service involves problem-based learning.   Bringle and Plater (2008) found that institutions of higher education can have a positive impact on public perceptions of how service-learning programs improve the community by including something as simple as conducting telephone interviews. Geschwind, Ondaatje, and Gray (1997) state that "the community's perception of the campus is key to ensuring the success of service

learning programs" (p. 107).   Communities are often not recognized as having their own

expertise to offer in the service-learning relationship (Jones, 2003), but McCarthy,

Tucker, and Dean (2002) indicate that community partners are important participants in

delineating the goals and objectives of service-learning programs. Despite the apparent

potential for reversing the hierarchal power dynamics evident in service-learning

partnerships between higher education and community organizations, "making service

learning work for communities may be easier said than done" (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009,

p. 2).

The Importance of the Community Organization's Voice

If service-learning partnerships are to be successful, they need to seriously

consider the challenges, pitfalls, and advantages of service-learning from the perspective

of the community (Litzky, Godshalk, & Bongers, 2010). Community organizations

define, perceive, and evaluate service-learning from a significantly different perspective

than institutions of higher learning; how this perspective is valued by those working

within institutions of higher education will affect communication within the service-

learning partnership. For example, Bell and Carlson (2009) describe how community

organization staff

> have a real motivation to teach service learners about how to pursue a cause in a
>
> real community context—getting students out of the classroom and away from
>
> textbooks to see the real world of specific social, environmental, economic, and
>
> educational issues. Some organization staff even believe this to be part of their
>
> mission. (p. 23)

Community organizations' staff describes how institutions of higher education do not

expose students to the world of non-profit management. Service-learning provides

institutions of higher learning with an opportunity to cultivate a "community

competency" in students and exposes students to an alternative organizational model with

its own unique career opportunities (Bell & Carlson, 2009). Community organizations

prioritize serving the community knowing that many students will either "sink or swim"

as they are immersed in valuable experiences they many find overwhelming (Bell &

Carlson, 2009, p. 25). This may, at times, conflict with the academic model that

prioritizes student education over community service. Successful service-learning

programs are those capable of evolving in response to both sides of the partnership so that

projects are structured effectively, the length of service is negotiated more appropriately,

the recruitment and placement of students are conducted respectfully, and the capacity of

agencies are expanded advantageously (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

Methods

We conducted this research at a private college located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in

April 2010. We investigated whether an innovative service-learning program uniquely

designed to prioritize the voice of community organizations over the voice of higher

education succeeded in doing so. Mixed methods allowed for both quantitative and

qualitative data collection and analyses (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Although

quantitative assessment of service-learning has been critiqued for using self-report

measures of college student growth, the questionable validity of measures is rooted in

problems associated with longitudinal attitude change in individuals (Bowman &

Brandenberger, 2010). Since we used quantitative methods to assess the relationship

between the products of power relations at one point in time, the continued use of self-

report questionnaires was justifiable.

The forum model, designed to be an annual event, expanded the service-learning

program beyond the traditional college courses. The first forum took a problem-solving

approach to food insecurity, in response to the 18% rise in food bank use across Canada

in 2009 (Food Banks Canada, 2009). The college sponsored a $200 award for the best

student paper submitted on food insecurity and solicited local high schools to encourage

their students to submit papers on the topic. The award was presented during the forum.

The forum was co-designed in partnership with the largest community practitioner

involved in food insecurity in Winnipeg. Four of the eight people who spoke at the event

were community practitioners. Two food bank users, selected by the forum partner,

shared their stories of food insecurity. Members of other community development

organizations, volunteers, and local churches were invited to attend. One third of the

program was dedicated to interaction between the speakers and attendees. Seventy three

people attended from two area high schools, two universities (faculty), three churches,

five food banks, and three additional community development organizations.

Data Collection

Drawing on the Tailored Design Method (De Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008), we

developed an evaluation questionnaire and asked all forum attendees (including

representatives from community organizations, students, faculty, and organizers) to

answer 17 survey items (see Figure 1).

Please rate and make comments/suggestions on back

1. The complexity of issues surrounding food bank use was well addressed…	1 2 3 4 5
2. The presenter's attitudes were helpful (e.g., informed, attentive, respectful)	1 2 3 4 5
3. I would recommend attending the forum to other service organizations and/or friends in Winnipeg…………………………………………………	1 2 3 4 5
4. I have a greater appreciation for the difficulties faced by food bank *providers* because I came to this forum……………………….. ……………..	1 2 3 4 5
5. I have a greater appreciation for the difficulties faced by food bank *users* because I came to this forum………………………...... ……………………………	1 2 3 4 5
6. The interaction between attendees and panelists was healthy and productive …………………………………………………. …………………..	1 2 3 4 5
7. As a result of this forum, I have a greater appreciation of how mercy and justice are both important to an effective response to food insecurity…	1 2 3 4 5
8. As a result of this experience, my attitude toward getting involved in the community to help address food security has become more positive…..	1 2 3 4 5

Figure 1. Questionnaire

Seventy three questionnaires were given to attendees; twenty four individuals returned the completed questionnaires. We had an acceptable response rate of 33%, n = 24. Eight of the survey items were recorded on a Likert-type scale with values ranging from 1-5 (1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree). Table 1 shows the results of a quantitative analysis (average score) for these 8 survey items.

Table 1

Levels of Agreement on Perceived Attainment of Forum Goals

Issue	Mean	Standard deviation
Complexity of issues well addressed	4.38	0.92
Presenter's attitudes helpful	4.62	0.57
Would recommend future attendance	4.50	0.88
Better appreciation of food bank difficulties	4.12	1.03
Appreciate user difficulties more	4.04	1.12
Community interactions were productive	4.54	0.78
Increased appreciation of values	4.38	0.88
Gained more positive attitude	4.50	0.78

Note. Data associated with the 8 Likert-scale items of the questionnaire, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Qualitative data were extracted from the comments and open-ended survey items

Qualitative data were extracted from nine open-ended survey items to which attendees responded on the evaluation questionnaire. Program design was analyzed in terms of speaker selection and presentation in light of Bourdieu's theoretical framework of power dynamics and competition in the field of action: As host and financial sponsor of the event, to what extent did the representatives of the institution of higher learning share power and recognize the authority of the "everyday practical" knowledge of the community organization representatives? Who was selected to make formal presentations at the forum and how were those selections made? How were these decisions reflective of class dynamics and power relations? We assessed the degree to

which the program design of the forum reflected power sharing or domination in class

relations.

Data Analysis

We conducted secondary analysis of the questionnaires to quantitatively assess the

dynamics between the two pedagogical approaches that were in tension at the forum. In

any secondary analysis of data, the researcher faces the necessity of making do with

surrogate measures for some of the key variables, and that is the situation here. On the

other hand, one might argue that meaningful findings based on surrogate measures are

actually conservative, since they are likely to underestimate the actual strength of the

relationships discovered (Steiner-Aeschliman & Mauss, 1996).

We constructed two variables in this study to represent the critical discourse of

higher education and the collaborative discourse of community development. The

surveys were written with these variables in mind, but the variables were constructed

after the survey was given. Our null hypothesis was that the mean of

COLLABORATIVE would not be significantly higher than the mean of CRITICAL. The

first variable (labeled CRITICAL) was based on the average response to questions (1, 4,

5, & 7; see Figure 1), which asked, respectively, about how well the forum addressed the

complexity of issues surrounding food banks, the difficulties faced by food bank

providers and users, and the effectiveness of value-based responses to food insecurity.

These questions had Likert-type responses ranging from "agree" to "disagree." The

second variable (labeled COLLABORATIVE) was composed of questions (2, 3, 6, & 8,

again with Likert-type categories; see Figure 1) asking, respectively, about how well the

forum facilitated helpful attitudes, fostered civic engagement, and encouraged

collaborative interaction.

For the qualitative portion of the study, we looked for ways in which speakers and

participants socially constructed the nature of reality and thereby sought "answers to

questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin &

Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). This approach guided our efforts to consider whether participants

were active partners in the research process in accordance with Bourdieu's framework

that conceptualizes the double nature of social reality and how objective knowledge often

obscures the way in which it dominates, and is in tension with, practical knowledge.

Table 2 shows some typical (anonymous) qualitative comments associated with the

Critical Discourse Voices of higher education sorted into themes which emphasized

Information, Problem Solving and Complex Solutions. Table 3 shows qualitative

comments associated with the collaborative discourse of Collaborative Discourse Voices

sorted into themes which emphasized Civic Engagement, Attitude, Empowerment, and

Future Involvement.

Table 2

Critical Discourse Voices

Theme	Voices
Information	"If I knew about the open mic opportunity or the ability to ask questions, I could have come more prepared for participation" "I liked the comment of a healthy child, and that education plays a role" "The forum framed the issue for me" "I appreciated the 'unpacking' of the question"

"Email participants a bibliography of resources relating to the topic"

Problem solving   "Talk about solutions beyond identifying the problems!"
"Invite a representative from the Certified General Accountants Association of Manitoba to present the math of (not) making ends meet for the 'at risk' population of the working poor to help us understand the situation"

Complex solutions   "What if constituencies at the table backed the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce's opposition to the payroll tax and, in exchange, the chamber partnered with food banks to encourage member organizations of the Chamber of Commerce to give credit to their Human Resources Personnel for volunteering at a food bank specifically in search of hard workers to employ back at their business? A creative win-win scenario!"

Table 3

Collaborative Discourse Voices

Theme   Voices

Civic engagement   "We need more involvement from the younger generation to bring them into awareness through education"
"All of us need to feel involved"
"This energized me to continue working in this area"

Attitude   "People were respectful and open to the ideas and experience of others"
"Excellent speaker! Well presented!"

Empowerment   "I especially like the importance of power in our lives."
"I hope I can challenge those in my faith community and family to make those personal lifestyle choices that will make a difference if many do it"
"The information received was encouraging and informative"

Future involvement "Address the same or a similar topic next year"
"Talk about homelessness"
"Let's talk about handouts and handups: the balance"
"Let's place a similar emphasis on how to change the sick system"

"I hope I can challenge those in my faith community & family to
make those personal lifestyle choices"

Findings

A one-tailed t-test (t(190) = 2.46, p < .01) supported the contention that attendees

found the forum to be more collaborative than critical in nature. A one-tailed t-test was

used since we hypothesized that the forum, if successful, would result in higher scores on

the COLLABORATIVE variable. If we interpret this finding in light of Bourdieu's

theoretical framework, the forum was successful in privileging the voice of community

organizations over that of higher education. When attendees were asked if they would

like to continue to be involved with the forum when, in the future, it addresses a different

topic, 96% of the respondents answered favorably. Despite the stronger support for

collaborative discourse, qualitative comments suggest that critical thinking was still

fostered by the forum; one attendee enthusiastically presented a complicated idea that

was generated by listening to the mixture of speakers representing business and

community development organizations. Nevertheless, several comments suggested some

frustration over a somewhat muted sense of academic engagement with the complexity of

issues surrounding the increased demand for food bank services. In contrast, qualitative

comments suggested a level of enthusiasm, rather than frustration, around issues of

collaboration or civic engagement.

Table 4

Mean of Scores Assigned to Indicators of Critical and Collaborative Discourses

Variable	Mean	Variance	Sample size
CRITICAL	4.23*	.98	96
COLLABORATIVE	4.54*	.57	96

Note. *p = .01, one-tailed t-test

Several organizational aspects of the forum take on meaning in light of Bourdieu's emphasis on power dynamics, displaying a reverse in the usual power dynamics as observed in service learning contexts. At the forum, the community development voice was dominant over that of higher education despite the fact that the event was hosted and financed by the college. The forum was organized as a partnership between the college and the largest food bank in Winnipeg. Five of the six panelists were chosen by the food bank partner. Only one of the panelists was chosen by the college. Three of the six speakers were practitioners heavily involved in food bank issues; only two of the six speakers were involved in academics—one of whom was a former politician who spoke on how concerned citizens can be politically relevant and effective.

The food bank selected speakers from multiple disciplines (a former legislator, a representative from the chamber of commerce, etc.) to effect a problem-solving approach to increased food bank use. Invitations were distributed in the community to "be a part of the community discussion" and an hour was set aside for interaction between the panel

and members of the community. Although the forum was "free," attendees were asked to "Bring a tin for the bin."

The college paid for attendees' snacks and lunch, and the event collected 98 pounds of food for the food bank. This, too, displayed the dominance of the community development voice over the critical voice of higher education. The forum was a financial cost to the college and a material benefit to the food bank.

The dominance of community development social capital over higher education capital was also evident in the choice of food bank user testimonies. The food bank was asked to provide two food-bank users to share their story during the forum. One of the two food bank users chosen to "tell her story" had been a single parent attending university when her child fell ill. She emphasized that she was forced to use the food bank for the first time in her life only because her student loans became immediately repayable when she dropped out of university to take care of her ill child.   The message was clear: if higher education is truly concerned about addressing problems associated with increased food bank use, it should consider its own contribution to the problem. For Bourdieu, social practices are a product of power relations between individuals and groups who compete with one another over valued resources. In the case of the woman selected to tell her personal food insecurity story at the forum, the valued resources were both higher education and food. If power relations associated with increased food bank use were going to be truly transformed, the voice of higher education would need to listen to the voice of community development.

Conclusion

We used Bourdieu's (1990a, 1990b, 1998) framework of how cognitive life and social practice is subject to the "illusion of concensus" (Brubaker, 1985, p. 748). The systematic unity of practical social life is embedded in class relations. The symbolic production and consumption of culture is contested and produced as a result of competing and cooperating discourses operating in specific fields. The diversity of fields creates a 'disjunction of realms' at the heart of social life (Brubaker, 1985, p. 748). We described how service-learning partnerships frequently result in the critical discourse associated with higher education dominating the collaborative discourse associated with community development. This is due, in part, to the history of a dualistic privileging of formal knowledge over practical knowledge that is pervasive in Western culture. The result is that service-learning partnerships often favor "critical," "student-focused," and "inquiry oriented" approaches over a "problem solving," "results oriented," and "politically relevant" approach. This study has attempted to test whether there are places within an overall service-learning program where the hierarchical relationships inherent in service-learning partnerships can be successfully reversed. In the classroom, where student grades are linked to service-learning, the contractual nature of higher education may require a certain privileging of formal knowledge over practical knowledge. Nevertheless, there may be ways to design an overall service-learning program so that, in the grand scheme of things, mutually satisfying relationships can develop that successfully integrate academic and community development discourses; the classroom

placement of students may be but one part of an overall service-learning partnership and program.

In this study, we took the theoretical notion of listening to the unheard voices of community organizations "out of the laboratory," as it were, and into the field. The effort has been fraught with the usual drawbacks of secondary analysis, particularly the inevitable resort to surrogate measures for key variables. The combination of forum evaluation questions that were used to create the CRITICAL and COLLABORATIVE variables are indirect measures of institutional discourses, at best. Despite our gross key measures, however, we obtained significance. The finding might actually underestimate the cultural reality. Tension during the forum was evident between the "critical" emphasis on understanding the complexities associated with increased food bank use and the "collaborative" emphasis on strategies for solving the problem. Nevertheless, the collaborative discourse associated with community development was perceived by participants to have a greater impact on their appreciation of the issues, when compared with the critical discourse associated with higher education in the context of the forum.

These initial findings raise several questions for future research. How does student participation in a service-learning program that is not part of the required curriculum affect student transformation? Does having a service learning program with a dominant collaborative discourse translate into a program that creates positive changes in the community? Further research needs to be done to determine the extent to which discourse translates into real, relevant, and transformative community support. Future research would benefit by more extensive measures of collaborative and critical

discourses, as well as focus groups. The means by which the forum is assessed is as subject to the tensions of class struggle, as is the forum itself. Quantitative assessment techniques are part of the "objectivist" culture of higher education. More in-depth use of qualitative methods in future research would address this imbalance. The present study suggests that there is a partnership model, described in the analysis offered above, that has modestly reversed the hierarchical relationship that has historically marginalized the voices of community organizations. We have only studied the college forum model; we did not study the college's separate classroom service-learning program which takes the more traditional approach. We believe this study offers evidence of the value of a theoretical framework that offers a new direction in service- learning. This is a model for which scholars have recently advocated (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). It remains a matter of further research to investigate the extent to which the new forum model can be replicated and whether the forum interacts with other aspects of the service-learning program (such as the more traditionally designed classroom service experience)

Perhaps future research might consider a more grounded collaborative approach to assessing service-learning programs so that the assessment tools are as open to Bourdieu's theoretical framework as are the programs under study.   The Participatory Action Research model, the goal of which is to empower research participants, may be a way to do this. Whyte (1989) has demonstrated the value of participatory action research both for advancing scientific knowledge as well as for solving practical problems. Participants collaborate with researchers throughout the process with the goal of producing knowledge that is directly relevant and useful to them. Thus, participant

knowledge is given primacy and they are empowered to use this knowledge to further

research on their own community needs (Marlow, 2011). This would allow the

community to be a partner in assessing the impacts of collaboratively-based learning

goals on the academic institution.

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