

## **Who Is In Charge? – The Hierarchical Segregation Of Volunteers In CSOs.**

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It is a myth, often cultivated in the popular press and policy documents, that volunteering is an inclusive activity that is open to everybody, where everybody can find a niche where they can do what they enjoy. A large body of research, however, shows that volunteering is not only determined by an individual's willingness to volunteer, but is also by an individual's resources (e.g. education, income, networks) and specific life situation (e.g. Erlinghagen 2008; Tang 2006; Wilson 2000). The educational level is one of the factors that appear in most studies as a "consistent predictor of volunteering" (Wilson 2000: 219). Along with other socio-economic variables, income positively correlates with volunteering in most studies (Pearce 1993; Tang 2006). The observed correlation between social capital and civic participation (self-selection versus socialisation) is still being debated (Bekkers 2011; Braun 2007; Putnam 1995; van Ingen/Kalmijn 2010: 505).

However, while a large body of research studies the factors that determine whether a person is likely to volunteer, at all, these studies tell us very little about what that person does as a volunteer. Some volunteer positions involve the authority to make far-reaching decisions concerning many other people and possibly large sums of money, while in other volunteer positions, incumbents only carry out narrow tasks designated to them by others. There are real-life reasons why the segregation of volunteer tasks is an issue that deserves attention: First, the issue is important because of the unequal chance of different social groups to actualise their interests in the voluntary sector and in society at large. If it turns out that volunteers in leadership positions tend to be people who hold a privileged position also in other contexts, this would mean that disadvantaged groups have a weaker chance to argue and take actions for their interests. Second, as social recognition is one of the most important rewards for voluntary work, unequal access to volunteer leadership positions would mean unequal access to experiences that are important for human well-being. The fields of volunteering might be, in terms of hierarchical segregation and mechanism of social inequality, not complementary to but congruent with the fields of paid work.

Research about why particular volunteers end up doing particular volunteer tasks stands at the frontier of research on volunteering. Musick and Wilson (2008) find little support for the idea that race, employment status (full-time, part-time, or retired), or church attendance make a difference to the hierarchical position a volunteer occupies. Volunteer leadership positions are more likely to be held by men, professional and managerial workers, and more highly educated persons. Musick and Wilson (2008) therefore conclude that in important aspects the allocation of volunteer tasks replicates the way jobs are assigned to people in the workplace (cf. Webb/Abzug 2008). The aim of this paper is thus twofold: Firstly, we set out to provide further evidence to what extent the assignment of individuals to particular volunteer tasks mirrors job segregation in paid work. Secondly, we aim to provide a theoretical explanation why this may be the case. To explain the hierarchical segregation of volunteer tasks, we draw on the Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu 1984, 2000 (1973); Bourdieu/Passeron 1970), where individuals are conceptualized as producers of social practices in social space, who follow specific logics of practices. This theory is particularly suited for explaining why volunteering may or may not replicate logics of paid work in particular ways.

The questions are explored on the basis of data from the Austrian 2006 micro-census on volunteering (N=11.657) (Statistik Austria 2008: 120f.). Because of the binary dependent variables, logistic regression models (Pampel 2000) are used to answer the research questions. To explore the patterns of hierarchical segregation of selected subfields of volunteering (e.g. culture and leisure, political engagement, social services, religious engagement) multiple correspondence analysis is used (Blasius 2001; Greenacre 2007; Le Roux/Rouanet 2010). Results show that the voluntary sector partly replicates the hierarchical and educational elite structure of paid work life. This finding has various implications: The elite have not only a huge

amount of resources (capital endowment), they also have the power of designation and hence can influence the perception of the social world with their meanings (Vogt 2005: 157). Unequal probabilities of reaching an executive position in the voluntary field imply that different groups have unequal chances of actualizing their interests in the voluntary sector and, in a broader sense, in civil society. Special programs for more diversity among the ranks of volunteer leaders, to encourage the participation of women and people from less privileged backgrounds in leadership positions, could be a step towards remedying this inequality, and possibly also towards attracting more such volunteers to all levels of volunteer work. We argue that CSOs have a special responsibility to stem against mechanisms of social inequality that may operate inside them.