SELF-REFLEXIVE VOLUNTEERING AS RATIONALIZATION OF THE LIFE-WORLD: FROM MAX WEBER TO JÜRGEN HABERMAS

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the self-reflexive volunteering from the theoretical perspectives of Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas. It is argued that unlike traditional volunteering where the individual is motivated by shared values of the community, the self-reflexive volunteering is dominated by individual’s self-interests. The traditional volunteering has declined due to industrialization and globalization. Although Max Weber describes the declining traditional values in modern society as the process of rationalization, Habermas argues that this is not a rationalization, but the social and political consequences of the domination of purposive rational action in the capitalist economic system. This paper, following Habermas, argues that the self-reflexive volunteering and its ideological formations are interconnected with global capitalism and its institutional developments. The burgeoning purposive rationality and the ensuing legitimation crisis undermined the normative foundation of the social system and the institutional integration. In this context, the self-reflexive volunteering has acquired its cultural “acceptability” in modern society.

Key Words: volunteering, Weber, Habermas, rationalization, globalization, capitalism, ideology
Introduction

Human generosity manifests as “doing good for the wellbeing of others” without expecting any direct favors in return. Among many facets of “generosity,” philanthropy, charity, and volunteering occupy a prominent place in all cultures. Every major religion encourages followers to give for the benefit of others as a way of demonstrating their faith: for example, Christianity emphasizes the act of love or charity to demonstrate one’s faith in God. Islam emphasizes obligatory (zakat) and voluntary (infāq) giving in order to fulfill God’s will. According to Buddhism, giving is a meritorious deed, or good karma, which is a requisite for a happy rebirth. For Buddhists, giving is also the means par excellence to overcome worldly desires, the cause of all human sufferings (Gemelli, 2007; Lohmann, 1997; Burlingame, 1993).

These fundamental religious teachings have been the cornerstone of community values, which guide individuals to fulfill their obligation to others. Volunteering, as an act of generosity, is generally defined as giving one’s labor freely for the benefit of others. Volunteering is often interpreted as a measure of self-sacrifice on the part of the individual for the greater good, which is, in turn, defined as the degree of social integration (Levi-Strauss, 1969; Durkheim, 1951). In this type of volunteering, according to Susan Eckstein (2001:829), it is the group that determines “what is given, when, how, to who and why.”

Although these types of collective-normative values continue to be a significant motivational force in the voluntary and benevolent activity, in recent years, however, several studies have suggested that there is a fundamental shift in volunteering in modern societies. This particular shift has been identified in terms of a number of sociological categories, such as “traditional” vs. “modern,” “collective” vs. “individualistic,” “institutionalized” vs. “internet-based,” “membership-based” vs. “program-based” volunteering. The general theme in these
sociological binary categories is that there has been a systematic departure from collective-normative type of volunteering to self-reflexive and bureaucratically organized type of volunteering in contemporary society (Hustinx, 2001; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Bode, 2003b). An overall social system typifies each type of volunteering: in the collective-normative model, the individual volunteer is a member of a community, whose commitment to volunteering is drawn from the shared moral and social background of the community, while in self-reflexive volunteering the individual’s personal circumstances, economic and social reasoning influence the decision to become a volunteer (Bellah, et al., 1985; Eckstein, 2001). Whereas in the traditional or collective-normative volunteering individuals are encouraged to be “self-sacrificing” and to be motivated by the commitment to specific moral teachings (Wuthnow, 1991; Tropman, 1995), in the modern or self-reflexive volunteering the individualized benefits are openly discussed as reasons, or rewards for volunteering. There is an increasing willingness to report specific personal objectives, or self-interested concerns, as reasons for participating in voluntary activities. In self-reflexive decision-making, the individual decides the appropriate action and the practical validity claims of such action based on discursive deliberations and argument (Habermas, 1975:14-16).

This individualistic orientation in contemporary volunteering has been described by some “as a part of the secularization process” that is taking place in modern society (Salamon, 1994; Salamon and Anheier, 1997). They argue that secularization in volunteering is evident in the scientific and technological domination in the economic and social systems. Volunteering as an integral part of the civil society activity liberates itself from the traditional bounds of “value-oriented conduct,” regulated by the collective normative order, and becomes an important part of the “purposive rational” or market-oriented economic activity. In the competitive social
environment of modern society, volunteering or doing good work for the benefit of others is viewed as an opportunity for rational individuals to “experiment” with their career prospects. In this context, volunteering in modern society is steadily moving away from collective-normative, self-sacrificing and long-term commitment to a “goal-oriented,” self-fulfilling and short-term opportunity, during which individual builds social networks, explores employment potentials, develops interpersonal skills and interests that would eventually lead to a gainful career path in an increasingly competitive global economy. In this context, volunteering is often a stepping-stone for ambitious young people to launch their careers (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Putnam, 200).

Although it is incorrect to assume that the collective-normative orientation to volunteering has completely dissipated in modern society, it is certainly true that the self-reflexive orientation has become the dominant motivational force in contemporary volunteering across the globe. During the last two decades, for example, annual reports on Giving, Volunteering, and Participating in Canada, compiled by Statistics Canada show this growing trend. According to the latest report (2007), Canadians were asked whether a number of possible reasons for volunteering were important to their decision to volunteer for the organization to which they contributed the most hours. Although over 90% agreed that it was important to contribute to their community, the desire to improve personal opportunities in the labor market scored quite high on the list.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Volunteering, Percentage of Volunteers</th>
<th>Age 15 Years and Over, Canada, 2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To make use of personal skills and experience</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>To explore personal strengths</td>
<td>50</td>
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As Table 1 illustrates, of all indicated reasons for becoming volunteers among Canadians, the least important is the commitment to fulfill religious obligations, or what we have described as the collective normative values of the society. This particular trend is evident not only in the industrialized Western societies, but also in non-Western societies, where volunteering is now seen as an opportunity to try out professional and personal skills of individuals and, in the process, create formal and informal social networks that may enable them to secure employment in a rapidly changing market economy. Describing the importance of the potential employment factor as a motive for volunteering, particularly among rural youth, Gill Walt and colleagues argue that in South Asia, despite strong cultural and religious traditions of community involvement in social life, the most pervasive modern driving force in volunteering is the prospect of future employment, or acquiring some marketable employment training as volunteers. They found, for example, in large-scale volunteering programs, such as the Health Volunteer Program in Sri Lanka, “volunteerism is perceived as an entry point to salaried employment.” Volunteers feel that in paid employment, people have power and “patronage positions” over their clients, which do not exist in voluntary work. However, they believe, volunteering can help them to acquire such positions (Walt, Perera and Heggenhougen,
How do we explain this particular trend in contemporary volunteering in modern society? Where does this new moral rationale of reflexive individualism come from? How do we explain this particular trend within the broader context of socio-economic transformations in contemporary society? It is to these questions, the present study will be addressed from the theoretical perspectives of Max Weber and of Jürgen Habermas. The developments in contemporary volunteering, viewed from Weber’s theoretical perspectives, are a part of the structural transformations created by advanced (organized) capitalism, which he describes as the process of rationalization. According to Habermas, however, what Weber defines as the process of rationalization is not a rationalization, but the social and political consequences of the scientific and technological developments in modern society, or the “domination of purposive rational action” in the capitalist economic system. Thus, following Habermas’ reconstructed rationalization theory, I will argue that the structural developments in contemporary volunteering, and their ideological rationales, represent three levels of rationalization, which are inseparably connected to post-global capitalism and its institutional developments: 1) the rationalization of the material world—the economic system; 2) the rationalization of the life-world—worldviews and their meanings as defined by culture and language; 3) communicative action—the social interactions, or symbolic interaction.

The rationalization of the material world, or the continuing expansion of purposive rationality (instrumental and strategic actions) in the productive forces, has challenged the legitimacy of the world-views, and their expressions and practices in the life-world, or the social system. In this case, for example, the legitimacy of collective normative volunteering based on shared norms, which is communicative action (interaction), has been challenged by the
burgeoning free market forces, giving rise to a new form of volunteering based on individualistic orientations embedded in the bureaucratically organized voluntary organizations. This individualistic orientation in contemporary volunteering is consistent with broader systemic rationalization taking place in the neo-liberal global economy. In the context of expanding purposive rationality of the economic system, the ensuing legitimation crisis endangers the normative foundation of the social system and the integration of social institutions. Thus, it is inevitable that the legitimacy of the old normative orders of institutionalized social relations become tenuous, and a new form of legitimacy must be sought. It is in this context that self-reflexive volunteering has acquired its cultural “acceptability” in the contemporary society. In the section below, I will elaborate these theoretical interpretations, followed by an analysis of bureaucratically organized self-reflexive volunteering as a model of public and voluntary sectors cooperation in the post-global capitalist state. This cooperation and its supporting ideological formations construed by such varied terms as “social capital,” “social networks” and “civic engagements,” in Habermas’ analysis, constitute “distorted communication” intended to provide a new form of legitimation. In conclusion, while evaluating briefly the role of Habermas’ critical theory as a critique of ideology, I will argue that the “emancipatory potential” of self-reflexive volunteering could not be realized because the process of “generalized reflection” embedded in organized volunteering is not without depoliticization and domination.

**Max Weber’s Theory of Rationalization and Habermas’ Critiques**

Max Weber suggested that the process of rationalization has penetrated into every aspect of modern society. He described rationality in terms of a wide range of concepts in different social and historical contexts (Albrow, 1990). For example, in rationality as “calculation,” Weber
illustrated the importance of calculability in economic life. Calculability became the defining feature of rational commerce and the development of modern Western capitalism. In rationality as logic, Weber discussed the role of precise and abstract concepts in natural sciences, philosophy, and more importantly, in law. Formal rationality in these disciplines, according to Weber, guarantees clarity, consistency, certainty, coherence and system, which are all attributes of reason (Weber, [1922] 1978: 880-2). It is in rationality as science, that Weber developed his ideas about the development of professions. For Weber, scientific knowledge, both natural and social, has removed humans from irrational foundations (myth and magic). He contended that technical competence and the knowledge of minute details in the materials involved in work are the key to both autonomy and power among professions. The empirical sciences represent the mastery of a seemingly complex world by rational knowledge: “Science today,” argued Weber, “is a ‘vocation’ organized in special disciplines in the service of self clarification and knowledge of interrelated facts. It is not the gift of grace of seers and prophets dispensing sacred values and revelations, nor does it partake of the contemplation of sages and philosophers about the meaning of the universe” (Weber, [1922] 1946:152).

It was this process of rationalization that Weber describes as “purposive rational action” in modern society. In purposive rational action, the individual carefully evaluates all available “means” to an “end,” and chooses the best “means” to achieve the particular “end”: “Action is instrumentally rational (zweckrational) when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed” (Weber, 1978:26). According to Weber, the progressive rationalization of modern society is evident in the institutionalization of purposive rationality in every social, political, and economic activity. To the extent that purposive rationality becomes dominant in modern society, the importance of values and norms in social
actions declines. Thus, the “secularization” and “disenchantment” of worldviews become the dominant trend in modern society. In his famous essay, “Science as a Vocation,” Weber (1946:155) made a penetrating generalization about the future of modern society: “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world.” This was a reiteration of his earlier remarks in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (Weber, 1958:182), that modern society is dominated by specialists and experts, whose attempts to find precise and calculable facts in all social actions through scientific methods have drained the human spirit; human society is lost in the midst of technical and strategic reasoning.

For Habermas, what Weber describes as the “process of rationalization” originating from the purposive rational action of the capitalist economic system is not a rationalization, but rather a specific form of political domination. “By means of the concept of rationalization Weber attempted to grasp the repercussions of the scientific–technical progress on the institutional framework of societies engaged in modernization” (Habermas, 1970a: 90; 1984:41). The key components of this rationality, according to Habermas, such as the choice of correct strategy, the application of appropriate technology, and the establishment of the perfect system for the given situation, progressively separate the entire social system from existing social relations and structures. Moreover, because rationality creates technological control, and thus requires types of action that dominate the purposive rational orientation, what Weber recognizes as rationalization is essentially social control. Therefore, according to Habermas, rationalization creates contradictions similar to those of the institutionalization of domination.

Habermas argues that in advanced industrial capitalist societies, domination tends to lose its exploitative and oppressive features and become “rational” for obvious strategic reasons, and
continue to expand the capacity of the institutional apparatus. The capitalist domination appears rational in that system improves productive forces with the help of science and technology without imposing deliberate burdens on individuals, which is seen as irrational. Furthermore, domination has no implications for social consciousness of the population because the legitimation of domination takes on new characteristics. The constantly expanding and improving productivity and technological exploitation help the economic system to make individuals increasingly comfortable in their everyday lives.

Thus, Habermas argues that it is imperative to recognize first, by means of rationalization, what Weber attempts to explain is the implications of scientific-rational progress for the institutional framework of modern industrial capitalist societies. Therefore, to fully appreciate the nature of this rationality, Habermas proposes to reformulate the process of rationalization. For this purpose, he distinguishes rationalization between “work” and “interaction.” Work is defined as the increasing utilization of instrumental action, or rational choice, or both. This is, in Weber’s definition, purposive rational action. The utilization of instruments—the instrumental rational action—is subjected to technical rules based on empirical knowledge. The empirical knowledge enables individual to rationally organize the work, and predict the outcome, the calculability, and predictability of the empirical world. The rational choice is governed by the knowledge of strategic consideration of given choices to realize the goal. The strategic action is based on the knowledge about values and maxims. Both strategic and instrumental actions are part of the work that involves economic and political activity (Habermas, 1970a:91-2; 1988:46).

Communicative action is defined by Habermas as symbolic interaction governed by established norms and values. These norms and values are learned through socialization, and
facilitated by ordinary language and symbols. To successfully interact with others, individuals must follow these intersubjectively accepted norms and values. Failure to do so results in conflicts and social disintegration. Internalized norms and values enable individual to become fully integrated to society, thereby providing social order and stability in society. They function as a bonding mechanism between individuals and social institutions, and legitimize institutionalized social order.

While a society’s economic and political systems are dominated by purposive rational action, social institutions such as family, kinship, education etc., are primarily based on communicative actions, or moral rules. These social institutions are described by Habermas as “society’s life-world.” In modern advanced capitalist societies, according to Habermas (1987:95-104), the life-world or social institutions are increasingly being dominated by purposive rational actions, and the norms and values of interactions based on traditions are rapidly losing their control over social interactions. The technological superiority of the means of production in capitalist economic system continues to extend its control into new areas of the life-world questioning their legitimacy of inter-subjectively shared cultural traditions. The self-propelling mechanisms of continuing growth in the production forces of capitalism such as technology and strategies are becoming increasingly institutionalized. Habermas argues that “the capitalist mode of production can be comprehended as a mechanism that guarantees the permanent expansion of subsystems of purposive rational action, and thereby overturns the traditionalist superiority of the institutional framework…Capitalism is the first mode of production in world history to institutionalize self-sustaining economic growth” (Habermas, 1970a:96).

Industrial capitalism not only poses a challenge to the existing traditional order of society, but also creates its own solutions. It provides a legitimation of domination, not from the
cultural traditions, but from the base of social labor. The new form of legitimacy comes from market forces where the dominant ideology includes such values as justice, equality, individual rights, freedoms, and opportunities for all, which claim universal validity. This new ideology, which is the core organizing principle of the market forces, provides new legitimacy to political domination. The political system commits itself to protect and promote the new values that originate from the economic base of society. This is the fundamental character of advanced industrial capitalism, which continuously creates new subsystems of purposive rational action, which in turn provides economic legitimation for the political system (Habermas, 1970a:103-5; 1975:1-16). As the purposive rational actions continue to expand into the traditional institutional framework of the life-world, they question the legitimacy of the old order, and provide new ideologies of legitimation compatible with the purposive rationality of the economic system.

The extent to which market based ideologies dominate the communicative actions or inter-subjectivity in modern society, the individuals become aware of, not those collectively determined normative orders, but those principles of equal opportunity, social justice and individual rights under given economic conditions. The individuals’ desire to form social networks and associations come from their determination to realize certain economic and political goals, rather than to uphold deep-rooted and collectively determined social norms.

Although it is incorrect to suggest that the collective normative values have been totally vanquished by self-reflexive ideologies of the market place, there is an emerging pattern of individualistic volunteerism driven by certain economic policies in the market economy. It is, in fact, a form of “creative individualism” that we find in contemporary voluntary activity, in which like-minded individuals come together to form “associations” in order to realize certain political and economic objectives as defined by the legal-rational parameters of the market place. While
responding to economic challenges created by instrumental rational actions, contemporary volunteerism provides individuals with new opportunities to function as “autonomous moral agents,” whose rights and freedoms are guaranteed by the state policies. It is this “creative individualism,” that Robert Putnam has described as the “private face” of social capital. According to Putnam, “Social capital has both an individual and collective aspect—a private face and a public face. First, individuals form connections that benefit our own interests. One pervasive stratagem of ambitious job seekers is ‘networking,’ for most of us get our jobs because of whom we know, not what we know—that is, our social capital, not our human capital” (Putnam, 2000:20).

I will return to this theme of “creative individualism,” and its role in the globalized market economy in the following sections.

**Self-Reflective Volunteering in Post-Global Capitalism**

One of the most superior aspects of modern capitalism, according to Habermas, is its ability to propel itself to new heights, and thereby constituting new institutional frameworks to serve the needs of the economy: “the establishment of an economic mechanism that renders permanent the expansion of subsystems of purposive-rational action, and the creation of an economic legitimation by means of which the political system can be adapted to the new requisites of rationality brought about by these developing subsystems” (Habermas, 1970a:97-8). In this forward march of advanced capitalism, argued Habermas, technology played a pivotal role, which Weber described as instrumental rationality. In this context, modern science assumes an important function. While science (supported by the state) produces technically exploitable knowledge, private capital rapidly transforms this knowledge into technology that maximizes the
productivity of the industrial labor. From the very beginning of this process, the state played a crucial role, both as a facilitator of the interdependency of science and technology, and as a stabilizer of the social system. In providing these two critical services to facilitate the smooth functioning of the economy, the state acquired a new form of legitimacy compatible with the ideology of the market place. In the twentieth century liberal democracies in the West, the state intervention as a stabilizer of the system prevented manifestly dysfunctional outcomes of the advanced capitalism (Habermas, 1975; Giddens, 1981; Thompson, 1988).

The corrective economic and social policies of the state prevented the potential disruptive outcomes in the business cycle, and thereby guaranteed the continuing utilization of private capital. Besides civil and political rights of citizens, the massive welfare state that came about in the early twentieth century created a social safety net as “economic rights” that permanently altered the state role (Offe, 1996:149). Politics is no longer a part of the superstructure, but an integral part of the economy, or the base. In the political structure of the industrial capitalism during the early twentieth century, the citizenship and the nation state were integrated as a mutually interdependent relationships: 1) Citizens collectively participate in creating a democratic state, 2) Citizens are subjects of state’s regulatory mechanisms, and 3) Citizens are sole recipients of state sponsored services. In this particular model of interdependent political and economic relationships between the state and citizens, the most important aspect of internal governance was its sovereign regulations that managed the economy. Specifically, the industrial production and the market were subjected to regulatory mechanisms of individual states. As few nations and industries invested in technological research, they jealously guarded their achievements in technological knowledge (Harris, 1987:116). By regulating market forces and capital, the state generated revenue for national economies, which in turn was invested to support
social safety net. This was the dominant feature of the early twentieth century “organized capitalism,” that effectively managed legitimation crises.

Economic globalization in the late twentieth century significantly restructured this interdependent relationship between the political system and the citizenship as required by the neo-liberal economic policies in the post-global capitalist state. It is argued that liberal democracies in the West are “passing from welfare capitalism, a system centered on the coupling of large manufacturing units and national states to global capitalism, a less organized system dominated by financial and data flows, in which people’s working careers and family biographies are unstable and the capacity of nation states to control their economies is very limited” (Mingione, 2000:16). In other words, the permanent expansion of the capitalist mode of production through subsystems of purposive rational action generates new institutional frameworks that question the legitimacy of the old normative orders, values, and ideologies. “A permanent pressure for adaptation,” argues Habermas (1970:98), “arise from below as soon as the new mode of production becomes fully operative through the institutionalization of a domestic market for goods and labor power and of the capitalist enterprise.” In response to this pressure from the new economic system, or as Habermas calls it “legitimation crisis,” the political system must seek new source of legitimation through changes in the social structures and the political apparatus. The new global economy must be stabilized by creating supportive institutional systems and socially acceptable explanatory forces to integrate the masses to the political system. This was described by Habermas as the pressure coming from “above” to rationalize the institutionalized world-views, or the pressure to secularize the society. It is against this backdrop that we must understand the institutional changes resulting from the neo-liberal economic policies. In the post-global context, the “economic meaning” of the relationship
between state and “citizenship” has been eroded by deregulations and privatization of public services (Habermas, 2001:105-27). The state sponsored welfare programs have been systematically dismantled in order to accommodate the new regulatory mechanisms of global competitiveness. The “sources of social solidarity” created by the nationally enacted systems of welfare programs, according to Habermas, “are drying up” with the signs of deteriorating standard of living.

Under these circumstances, it appears “rational” from the ideological vantage point to involve citizens more actively in organizing and delivering welfare programs, which were previously monopolized by the state. The underline assumption is that competition among individuals without any constraints creates on its own a healthy collaboration and organization, a dense fabric of social networks indispensable for improving one’s own life conditions without undermining the interests of others (Mingione, 2000; Vaillancourt, et al., 2002). Although it is true that, historically, there was a certain degree of partnership between voluntary agencies and the state in the field of social welfare in most European states, the recent development of “organized welfare mix” represents a much more “system-wide coordination” with a high degree of “market like configurations” in the form of management, delivery, and financing (Bode, 2003b). It seems, the transition to a new model of citizens’ involvement in social welfare has been relatively smooth and, for the most part, conflicts free because the dominant ideology of the superiority of the free market system has become a powerful self-fulfilling prophecy. It is believed that society is created by markets and competition, that the universal goals of rational behavior are much more stronger than cultural traditions (Fukuyama, 2002:287-99). The argument is that no one, including the state, should be allowed to maintain a monopoly on the distribution of “public goods” if it could be done efficiently by alternative means. Despite the
fact that the state is still the main provider of care and welfare in most countries, the voluntary sector has become an important ally of the state in delivering public goods (Salamon and Anheier, 1997). There has been a voluntary “associational revolution” around the world in recent years, according to Lester Salamon (1994), who attributes this new upsurge in organized volunteering to burgeoning market economic policies, liberal democratic reforms and the new communication technology, which are all bundled together as “new global economy.” One of the rationales of making the bureaucratically organized voluntary associations partners of the public sector in delivering social programs is that socially innovative voluntary associations would introduce healthy competition to the sector, utilize modern technology and management strategies to maximize the efficiency of the welfare programs (Anheier and Seibel, 1997:128-68; Sokolowski, 1996:259-78).

Evidence shows that citizens feel that, being volunteers, they are acquiring professional expertise, new job skills, and knowledge in specific areas of work, such as criminal justice, health, bookkeeping, computer technology and women’s issues. The sense of “accomplishment” is particularly important to prevent citizens from marginalized (Habermas, 2001:122-3). As Wojciech Sokolowski (1996:274), argues, “volunteering, which involves a more sustained commitment than giving, …requires a more diversified array of inducements that includes not only social ties to voluntary organizations, but also altruistic orientation and the promise of self-fulfillment.” Two-third of Canadians, age 15 and over reported in 2007, that volunteering provided them with interpersonal skills, “such as understanding and motivating people or being better able to handle difficult situations.” Nearly one half (45 percent) believed that they acquired communication skills, while 39 percent believed that they earned organizational and managerial skills. If people believe that they acquire practical skills and knowledge by being
involved in voluntary activity, then it will give further impetus to treat volunteering as a “secular vocation,” rather than a personal sacrifice to a particular normative belief system. The fact of the matter is that people see volunteering as an opportunity to “advance” in this world, rather than to “escape” from it.

Table 2

| Skill Acquired by Volunteering, Percentage of Volunteers Age 15 and Over in Canada, 2007 |
|------|-------|
| Interpersonal Skills | 66 |
| Communication Skills | 45 |
| Organizational Skills | 39 |
| Increased Knowledge | 34 |
| Fundraising Skills | 32 |
| Technical or office skills | 25 |
| Other Skills | 14 |


The rationalization of volunteering is evident in burgeoning partnership between the public sector and the voluntary associations in some European states, where voluntary associations are actively involved in providing services such as health, housing, long-term care and skill training. Helmut Anheier and Siobhan Daly (2005:128) describe this partnership as “corporatism,” in which voluntary associations are “incorporated into the political system,” as providers of social services. According to them, the partnership has resulted in a “new public management approach designed to modernize the welfare states.” Both nationally as well as internationally, the new public management approach is seeking to capitalize on the presumed comparative efficiency advantage of voluntary associations through public private partnerships,
competitive bidding process for funding, and contracting out under the rubric of maximizing the efficiency and transparency of public services. According to Ingo Bode (2003a:192), in Germany, for example, the government “is delegating service provision to these organizations, thus acting as a purchaser. In turn, the organizations receive public protection to realize their own “mission.” Consequently, the corporatism in the field of social services means primarily the collaboration between the welfare state and the voluntary organizations, which has led to joint planning and implementation of programs, the acknowledgement of the voluntary sector’s special professional rationales, and a high rate of public support through financing and voluntary participation.

This newfound partnership between the state and the voluntary sector is not only practically beneficial to each other, but also is the key to legitimize each other’s role in the eyes of the public. The state patronage, for example, increased the social “visibility and financial stability” of the voluntary associations, which in turn “engaged in political advocacy, opinion building, and identifying social needs and shortcomings of the welfare state.” (Bode, 2003a:194). The recognition by the state also helps voluntary associations to expand their activities outside national boundaries. This is particularly important for those voluntary associations, which have denominational affiliations such as Caritas, the Catholic charitable voluntary organization. Caritas is one of the largest welfare associations in Europe, which has extensive national and international networks. As a result, their organized campaigns of services and appeal for financial support have a global reach. As Bode notes, Caritas’s integrated hierarchical structure, which is immensely complex, corresponds to that of the Catholic Church. In 2003, it had 25,000 agencies with hundreds and thousands of paid and voluntary staffs in Germany alone providing a range of welfare services. It controls a multi-million dollar annual national budget, which is
divided into regional and local financing of services.

I have sketched below a “model” of organizational structure that illustrates the impact of rationalization on volunteering. The key organizational features of this model, such as hierarchy of authority, task specialization, and transparency, etc., were drawn from the literature that examine various aspects of organized volunteering in Europe and North America. They highlight the continuing “passive adaptation” of the social system to the purposive rationality of the economic system. There is a new class of “experts” or “technocrats” associated with voluntary organizations. They generally occupy management/executive positions within the organization. The “professional volunteers” operate within a regulated (bureaucratized) sub-system of the economy, which is complementary to public sector, rather than as an autonomous “private people engaged in rational critical debate” in the public sphere (Habermas, 1994:102-7).

Furthermore, the model shows the extent to which the state’s policies have become instrumental in promoting voluntary sector participation in delivering care and welfare. It highlights that the state is no longer concerned with the political issues, but with the social and economic problems such as skill training, public health, childcare, etc., which are all interpreted as “solutions to technical problems.” These technical problems in turn cannot be subject to public discussions because the public is no longer in a position to understand state affairs, which are highly technical in nature. The “new politics” of structured volunteering has resulted in a “depoliticization” of volunteers, that is, a general inability of the average volunteer to play a meaningful role in public affairs. What has happened in this institutional transformation is that the contemporary ideology has effectively separated the society’s self-understanding from communicative actions and from the concepts of symbolic interactions, and replaced them with a complex scientific model (Habermas, 1970a:103-4). As a result, culturally defined self-
understanding of a social life-world has been replaced by the purposive rational actions and adaptive behaviors of the individual. That is, in contemporary society, volunteering has become a “profession” in itself.

Table 3

A Model of Organized Self-Reflexive Volunteering

- **A formal structure** with bureaucratic characteristics such as hierarchical order in the decision making process, executive committees, and paid staff (Bode, 2003a; Offe and Fuchs, 2002),
- **Task specialization**, similar to the division of labor in the economy, leading to efficiency in fundraising, public relations, legal affairs, marketing, procurements, sales, etc., within each organization (Wuthnow, 1998; Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003),
- **Professional expertise** as the criterion for recruiting individual volunteers to maintain a “volunteer pool,” as a reserved army to be called upon when needed (Wilson, 2000; Hall, 2002),
- **Manager Volunteer Services** is a full-time position in major public/private institutions, such as hospitals, community clinics, and long-term care facilities. He/She manages the “volunteer department” that recruits and trains volunteers for the organization (Reed and Selbee, 2000; Brock, with Brook and Elliot, 2005),
- **Financial planning** and the preparation of the annual budget are executive roles, generally handled by paid staff (Bode, 2003b; Meinhard and Foster, 2003),
- **Public relations and marketing** department involved in annual fundraising events, marketing and promotional activities that utilize billboard advertising, telethons, and information technology (Bode, 2003b; Osbore, 1998),
- **Competitive approach** to public funding such as bidding for government contracts by highlighting the efficiency and cost-effectiveness, with such flashy slogans as “doing more with less.” (Halfpenny and Reid, 2002; Osborne, 1998; Quarter, 2000).

Two important outcomes of the transformation of volunteering in modern society can be briefly identified here: 1) The creation of structured self-reflexive volunteering within a sub-system of the economy effectively removed the “moral autonomy” of the voluntary sector as part of the independent public sphere. Accordingly (e.g., Brown and Welch, 2002), the voluntary
sector is no longer regarded as an “independent” voice of the citizens because it has compromised its sovereign status by being an ally of the state, and dependent upon its patronage, 2) The hierarchy of executive officers, managers, and paid workers within the organizational structure of volunteering has undermined the sense of equality in the public sphere. Although voluntary organizations may be open to all citizens, not all volunteers within an organization may have an equal voice. The voice of some members may carry greater weight than of others in the decision making process.

“Social Capital” As Distorted Communication

One of the most important aspects of Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action is the distinction between work and interaction. By separating work from interaction, Habermas attempts to determine the extent to which the social system is dominated by purposive rational action. It is in this context that Habermas incorporates the Freudian analysis of culture and self-reflection as key methodological components in his critical theory. As discussed earlier, by interaction, Habermas means the communicative action, or symbolic interaction regulated by shared norms, which are objectified by ordinary language. For Habermas, the importance of Freudian psychology is that it provides a framework to comprehend the role of culture and of socialization as mechanisms that integrate the social system. Although, for Marx, the process of production determines social relations, in Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, culture and socialization establish the nature of social organization. Freud contended that social relations are influenced by those “repressed instinctual impulses” of individuals that Habermas describes as “interests.” In Knowledge and Human Interests (1971:223), Habermas articulates this relation as follows: “The institutions of social intercourse sanctions only certain motives of action. Other
need dispositions, likewise attached to interpretations in ordinary language, are denied the route to manifest action, whether by the direct power of an interaction partner or the sanction of recognized social norms.” Habermas criticizes Marx for his failure to provide a systematic understanding of “reflexive knowledge” from the point of view of modern science, vis-à-vis the economic system. To fill this notable lacuna, Habermas introduces the Freudian meta-psychology within his critical theory to comprehend the role of “distorted communication” (vezerrte Kommunikation) in modern society. He argues that the concepts of ideology and hegemony play a powerful role in society when they are grasped as forms of distorted communication. Thus, the problems of ideology and hegemony must be understood as instances of distorted communications. According to Habermas, distorted communication provides an effective veil in concealing the negative implications of purposive rationality in modern society. Unlike in Marxian analysis, Freud’s theory has the capacity to unveil this particular developmental process from the dual perspective of work and distorted communication.

Viewed from this dualistic perspective, the effort to encourage citizens to form voluntary organizations by highlighting social benefits is an attempt to depict the disintegration of the old normative orders as “failures” among individuals themselves (or breakdown of interpersonal relations), rather than societal outcomes of the instrumental and strategic actions (purposive rationality) that dominate modern society. In traditional society, citizens came together to build social networks because they shared certain common values. The social bond was strong as there were very little social and economic disparities among individuals within the community, and thus shared normative orders regulated their social interactions, or symbolic interactions (Giddens, 1987:35-60). When economic divisions among citizens deepen, their social and cultural interests take different directions. As Richard Wilkinson argues: “In the modern world it
is necessary to prove that the quality of social relations is strongly affected by the amount of inequality, but the link seemed obvious to many people in previous generations. Some of the early Christian socialists advocated greater equality not, as now, simply on the grounds that it is a fairer sharing-out of goods between people whom we have come to see as self interested consumers, but because they saw it as a crucial step on the road to a greater human harmony and a fuller realization of our inherent sociality” (Wilkinson, 2005:34-5). We know that social relations in modern society have deteriorated because the economic and social interests have become so varied that people see very little in common in terms of shared goals in their lives.

Without addressing the fundamental cause of the declining social connectivity, and instead, treating it as merely an indication of changing values in the modern society, the experts on civil society are encouraging people to form social associations as it would improve their health, interpersonal trust and democratic participation. For Habermas, this is “pseudo-normality.” According to Habermas, the “pseudo-normality is created through systematically distorted communication, where participants do not realize the breakdown of communication. The “pseudo-communication,” argues Habermas, “produces a system of reciprocal misunderstanding which, due to the false assumption of consensus, are not recognized as such” (Habermas, 1970b:205-6). This was an idea originally developed by Freud in his psychoanalytic theory, which he later expanded to incorporate a range of issues in the modern society. Habermas adopted this concept in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, and defines it as systematically distorted communication. He employs this particular analysis to uncover “the hidden pathology, of collective behavior and the entire social system.” Viewed from this perspective, the ongoing effort to recognize the problem of declining social relations in modern society as “technical problems” by the experts on civil society creates a false sense of security that the society can be
“stabilized” by reconstructing interpersonal relations “according to the pattern of self regulated systems of purposive rationality and adaptive behavior. This intention is to be found not only among technocrats of capitalist planning but also among those of bureaucratic socialism” (Habermas, 1970a:117).

By the very definition, the concept of “social capital” is a neo-functionalist construct of a social system, similar to what Durkheim has described as the mechanical solidarity in traditional societies that was defined in terms of such characteristics as high degree of social integration, collective consciousness, and repressive laws. This social system, according to Durkheim, declined with the advent of industrialization and modernization of social organization. Likewise, the concept of social capital refers to “features of social organization,” such as trust, norms of reciprocity and social networks that facilitate the coordinated action among individuals to realize certain economic and political goals. Like the mechanical solidarity, the characteristic features of the social capital such as interpersonal trust “have eroded in modern society” due to burgeoning market forces (Beck, 1992; Anheier and Kendall, 2002:343-62). In a community where people trust each other, there is a natural tendency to interact with one another, and to do things together. From the individual’s perspective, social network means access to people with useful social and political connections that could help to secure employment, political power, or some other personal goals in life. As Putnam describes it, “Networks of community engagement foster sturdy norms of reciprocity: I’ll do this for you now, in expectation that you (or perhaps someone else) will return the favor.” When the individual helps others without expecting a favor immediately, but hoping that someday down the road, someone will return the favor, this type of reciprocity, according to Putnam, is generalized reciprocity. By contrast, when the favor becomes a form of immediate exchange, such as: “I’ll do this for you if you do that for me,” the
reciprocity is *specific* (Putnam, 2000:20-21). In both situations, it is distinctly clear that individual expects a return of favor. Thus, the action is based on conscious self-interest.

At the community level, on the other hand, social connections and norms of reciprocity means a more efficient and well functioning society. A society, in which people trust each other, argues Putnam, there is a high degree of connectivity: “Trustworthiness lubricate social life…Civic engagement and social capital entail mutual obligation and responsibility for action.” In this sense, according to Putnam, social capital generates both “bonding and bridging” consequences for the social organization. The social connectivity, which is a core component of social capital, produces *value* for the individual: “the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have value. Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so too social contacts affects the productivity of individual and social groups” (Putnam, 2000:19). As the connectivity is measured in terms of “participation” in social networks, the participation has an intrinsic value, which is the reward one could earn by being a member of a social group. Although the *manifest function* of a group (i.e., bird watching society or a choral society) may not have any specific economic value, the *latent function* (i.e. social relations generated by such activity), could help individuals to benefit from each other’s contacts in the broader social and economic contexts. According to Putnam, the citizens in a civic community are active participants in all aspects of public life. They have a sense of civic duty, a commitment to collective wellbeing, as opposed to narrow personal interests. Thus, citizens in the civic community are not expected to be “altruists.” Rather, they are expected to pursue “properly understood self-interest, that is, self-interest defined in the context of broader public needs, self-interest that is enlightened rather than myopic, self-interest that is alive to the interests of others” (Putnam, 1993:88).
In essence, what Putnam proposes is to incorporate “rationally” reconstructed civic engagement into modern social systems in place of diminishing normatively regulated communicative behavior. This is purposive rationality, which began with the “enlightenment” (Kant, 1963:3-10). By reconstituting civic organizations according to “technocratic norms” of the purposive rationality, neo-liberal thinkers are promoting the technocratic control of the public sphere. However, according to Habermas, true rationalization process of social interaction, which he calls “generalized reflection,” would go beyond the mere alteration in legitimation. A true rationalization of social norms involves a progressive elimination of repressive social conditions, both at personal as well as institutional levels of society. The reduction of social restrictions, which would increase the chances of stable self-presentsations in everyday social interactions, leads to broader social conditions with the flexible application of norms that facilitate reflection. Social interactions must be free from domination and the distorted communication. The public sphere must be free to debate without restriction about the “suitability and desirability of action-orienting principles and norms in the light of the socio-cultural repercussions of developing subsystems of purposive rational action” (Habermas, 1970a:118-9; 1984:191). Such rationalization, argues Habermas, “does not lead to an increase in technical control over objectified process of nature and society,” as in the case of purposive rationality. Although it may not necessarily bring about better functioning social systems, it would certainly creates conditions for the individuals to achieve greater freedom and self-realization.

Instead, what is happening in modern society is that “experts” are prescribing citizens appropriate social conduct in the public sphere according to the perceived social needs of the economic system. In terms of the functional outcome, the “technocratic domination” of the life-
world is no different from that of the coordinating function of mutually understood norms in the traditional society. The generalized reciprocity in traditional societies was learned through socialization, and enforced by social structures such as kinship, marriage, family, religion, etc., (Gouldner, 1960:161-78). In the modern social system, by contrast, the old normative orders of interactions have been discarded in favor of secular values and empirical science—the process that was described by Weber as the “disenchantment of the world.” A key ideological justification of “rationalization,” we may recall, is that it liberated the individual from the shackles of myths and magic. Traditional authority, which claimed its “legitimate domination on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions,” is considered irrational by the modern values (Weber, 1978:226). Further, rationalization claims to promote communication free of domination, or context-free language. In modern society, the normative orders have been replaced by conditioned behavior designed to meet the needs of an economic system dominated by purposive rational action. The key attributes of social capital, such as norms of reciprocity and trust, are fundamental social values that have been considerably eroded in modern society owing to burgeoning individualism, secularization, and market orientation in economic life. While reconstructing some aspects of the traditional social organization as “civic virtue,” Putnam and others, who promote neo-liberal economic policies, seek to revive community life through voluntary associations patterned after the purposive rational action. What this really means, according to Habermas, is an attempt to perpetuate the “objectively obsolete domination of purposive rational imperatives” by concealing them as socially attractive “invocations” (Habermas, 1970a:85). Unlike in traditional societies, where shared normative behaviors were internalized mainly through socialization and through symbolic interactions (such as religious rituals), in liberal capitalist social formations, the ideology takes a universalistic form, such as
“civic duty,” “obligations,” and the “rights of citizenship” etc., as embodied in the system that appeal to the interests of the masses (Habermas, 1987:90-1).

Thus, Putnam’s interpretation of civic virtue represents an ideological formation in advanced capitalist system, in which the economic and political systems are systematically connected, and class rule is anonymous and depoliticized. When Putnam (1995:65-78) compares the relatively vibrant civic community in the early nineteenth century American society, which was marveled by the visiting French aristocrat, Alexis de Tocqueville, with that of the declining civic engagement among the contemporary Americans, it should be abundantly clear to perceptive readers familiar with Tocqueville’s classic work that Putnam is comparing vastly different social conditions. The key factor that contributed to this apparent decline in the American civic community, if we follow Tocqueville’s analysis, is the declining “equality of conditions.” Almost all researchers on social capital invariably refers to Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, yet they omit this key point that Tocqueville thought was the main reason for strong civic engagements among Americans. In the first paragraph itself, Tocqueville makes this point patently clear: “Among the new objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of conditions among the people. I readily discovered the enormous influence that this primary fact exercises on the whole course of the society. It gives a particular direction to the public opinion; a peculiar tenor to the laws; it imparts new maxims to the governing authorities, and peculiar habits to the governed. I soon perceived that the influence of this fact extends far beyond the political character and the laws of the country, and that it has no less empire over civil society than over the government; it creates opinions, gives birth to new sentiments, founds novel customs, and modifies whatever it does not produce. The more I advanced in the study of American society,
the more I perceive that this equality of conditions is the fundamental fact from which all others seems to be derived, and the central point at which all my observations constantly terminated.” (Tocqueville, 1984:26).

Tocqueville believed that the absence of feudal nobility in the United States was a powerful “equalizer” of social and economic conditions of all people that provided a more or less level playing field for everyone in an emerging new society (Bremner, 1988:40). Moreover, the conditions of equality in the economic sphere of life also had its parallel developments in the political and social spheres of the life-world. Although the community life was, for the most part, imbued by the shared normative values of their faith, it was a “community” that was not inimical to innovative business ideas and mercantile values. As Robert Bremner points out, “Winthrop’s vision of a community united and exalted by religious dedication was not to be realized even in Puritan New England. The mean and despised were not content to remain in the state to which God had assigned them; the powerful showed little disposition to forego opportunities to profit at the expense of the weak; and neither rich nor poor was willing to remain for long under the rule of divinely commissioned magistrates. Competition, individualism, and self-interest proved too strong to be suppressed” (Bremner, 1988:9). Nevertheless, in the eyes of the average citizen, the potential oppressor was not his neighbor, nor fellow citizen, but the unchecked power of the state. Despite the fact that the United States was an emerging industrial capitalist society in the early nineteenth century, the enduring sense of equality, according to Tocqueville, was the main reason for the strong civic community among Americans: “When all the ranks of a community are nearly equal, as all men think and feel in nearly the same manner, each of them may judge in a moment of the sensations of all the others; he castes a rapid glance upon himself, and that is enough. There is no wretchedness into which he cannot readily enter, and a secret instinct reveals
to him its extent. It signifies not that strangers or foes are the sufferers; imagination puts him in their place; something like a personal feeling is mingled with his pity and makes himself suffer while the body of his fellow creature is in torture.” (Tocqueville, 1990:165). Instead of thinking the existence of “horrible” and “cruel” practice of slavery as a contradiction of his thesis, Tocqueville viewed it as a further proof of his thesis that it was inequality which contributed to this insensitivity: “It is easy to perceive that the lot of these unhappy beings inspires their masters with but little compassion and that they look upon slavery not only as an institution which is profitable to them, but as an evil which does not affect them. Thus, the same man who is full of humanity towards his fellow creatures when they are at the same time his equals becomes insensible to their afflictions as soon as that equality ceases. His mildness should therefore be attributed to the equality of conditions rather than to civilization and education.” (Tocqueville, 1990:166).

To appreciate Tocqueville’s thesis, what all we need to look at is how much the “conditions of equality” in contemporary American society has declined, and to what extent the present condition reflects the domination of purposive rational orientation in the overall social system. Industrially advanced America today is also a highly polarized society along class divides. As dozens of studies have shown in recent years, of all the advanced industrial nations, the income inequality is the greatest in the United States (Kawachi and Kennedy, 2002). Since the beginning of 1970s, the U.S. economy registered the highest growth rates of both income earnings and income inequalities. According to Isaac Shapiro and Robert Greenstein (1999), between 1977 and 1999, the average after-tax incomes of the top fifth of the American families grew by 43 percent. By contrast, the average income of the middle fifth of the families grew by a mere 8 percent during the same period. At the bottom, the income of the poor families actually
declined by 9 percent. What is even more astonishing is the dramatic 115 percent increase of income of the top 1 percent in the population, the wealthiest in the country, after adjusting for inflation. According to Ichiro Kawachi and Bruce Kennedy (2002), the income inequality today is at its highest level since the Congressional Budget Office began collecting statistics more than twenty years ago.

The connection between the distribution economic resources and the full participation of citizens in public life has been established by numerous studies in recent years. The overwhelming argument is that “without the economic and material resources needed to fully exercise citizenship rights, citizens are unable to participate fully in public affairs” (Goldberg, 2001:294). In an attempt to explain the link between income inequality and declining social capital, as defined in terms of the interpersonal trust and civic engagement, by using the data from the United States General Social Survey, Kawachi and colleagues (1997:1491-98), showed that in states where income inequalities were higher, more people contended that “others would take advantage of you if they got a chance,” a key survey question used to measure the level of interpersonal trust. They found a strong correlation ($r = .76, p < .05$) between this measure of trust and income inequality. In states where income inequalities are relatively low, only 10 to 15 percent of the population felt they could not trust others, compared to that of 35-40 percent in highly unequal states. (Wilkinson, 2005:41). Likewise, the same study reported a strong inverse correlation ($r = -.46, p<.01$) between income inequality, as measured by the Robin Hood Index, and per capita group membership. What these empirical findings suggest is that as the industrial capitalism grew, so did the economic inequality in society leading to mutual distrust and lack of civic engagement among citizens. Income inequalities—a measure of class polarization—have destroyed the sense of community and belongingness in contemporary American society. If you
do not trust your neighbor, you will not join him for a game of bowling, or get together for beer and pizza. As a “discomfiting bit of evidence of social disengagement,” Putnam found that although more Americans are bowling today, they are doing it solo, not as members of leagues. As trivial as this may sound, the declining bowling leagues in contemporary America, according to Putnam, “illustrates yet another vanishing form of social capital” (1995:65-78).

Conclusion

As a way of conclusion, at this point besides adding further clarifications on key arguments, I wish to briefly emphasize Habermas’s contribution to modern social theory.

Habermas claims that knowledge and interest are inseparable (Habermas, 1971:310-11). In his view, all types of knowledge are related to practice, but only critical theory is intrinsically linked to human emancipation. He argues that critical theory is connected to the interest of humanity in a much more deeper manner than is the case with other forms of knowledge. For him, the particular emancipation associated with critical theory is that critical theory advocates resistance to ideology. Following Max Horkheimer, Habermas argues that critical theory’s commitment to human emancipation does not stop with the questioning of ideology, but goes further to advocate the abolition of human injustices. This happens, according to Habermas, in two ways: by associating critical theory with other endeavors to penetrate the veil of social illusions and, by linking the required effort to self-reflection.

The critique of ideology, as a continuing effort of psychoanalytic theory and historical materialism, according to Habermas, advocates reflection on “ideologically frozen” relations of dependence. All human beings possess emancipatory power of self-reflection, or emancipatory cognitive interest. All sciences with critical orientation can contribute to this particular
knowledge. Critical theory, according to Habermas, undertakes such an endeavor by advancing a critique of capitalist rationalization (the domination of purposive rationality in modern society). This exercise, however, does not follow exactly Marxian theory, and in fact, as we discussed earlier, he is critical of Marx for his limited concerns for the role of technology both as a part of the productive forces and as an ideological formation in modern society. Habermas is concerned about the lack of attention (at least at the time of his writings in the early 1970s) given to culture in modern social theory, which is an important component of the life-world in his theory of communicative action. He argues that our unending desire for pursuing technological achievements in all spheres of life has created a way of thinking, which he describes as “technocratic consciousness,” that functions as an ideology in modern society.

It is this particular theoretical orientation in Habermas’ theory that I find useful for understanding the developments in contemporary volunteering. It could have been possible, from the perspective of critical theory, for the self-reflexive volunteering to promote an emancipatory mass movement as it “liberates” the masses from the binding normative orders of communicative action. However, it failed to realize this goal because the rationalization of volunteering itself became subordinated to other forms of rationalizations within organized volunteering. To realize the potential for liberation, rationalization at the level of institutional framework of social activity, according to critical theory, must be free of all restrictions, dominations, and depoliticizations of the participating masses in order to facilitate a generalized reflection (symbolic interaction). The public must have an unrestricted debate on all aspects of the self-reflexive volunteering and its institutional parameters in the context of developing subsystems of purposive rationality. Such an extended discourse on self-reflexive volunteering at all levels of decision making involving the repoliticized masses could have been the only true rationalization
that is possible, according to critical theory (Habermas, 1973:3). However, what we witness in the contemporary self-reflexive volunteering is the domination of purposive rationality in modern society.

This particular transformation of traditional volunteering is only one aspect of the broader structural changes taking place in the social system due to the rapidly changing scientific and technological productive forces in modern society. The purposive rationality’s claim to universal validity has made the need for change in the institutional system of the life-world a permanent requirement. As a result, there is a constant pressure from both, the economic system (pressure “from below”) as well as from the social system (pressure “from above”) to adopt instrumental and strategic actions, respectively in dealing with problems. The use of instrumental actions increases the efficiency of productive forces that exploit nature and control reality, while strategic actions enable the individual to rely on the analytical knowledge to make correct decisions out of all available choices. For Habermas, this process of transformation in the social system means the domination of the life-world by the purposive rationality, a one-sided selective institutionalization of rationalization that he describes as the “colonization of the life-world.” What Weber recognized as rationalization in economic and political systems represents a peculiar form of domination in advanced capitalist societies carried out by means of ideology, which continuously questions the “legitimacy” of the existing subsystems, so that they will be replaced with new forms of institutional mechanisms to stabilize the society. The normative consensus that traditional volunteering was based on is no longer compatible with the emerging rational and strategic actions in other spheres of the life-world. Thus, the purposive rationality’s claim to universal validity of its concerns must overcome this apparent contradiction resulting in a “legitimation crisis” by replacing the normatively regulated communicative action, i.e.,
traditional volunteering, with the goal-oriented and *self-reflexive* volunteering incorporated into bureaucratic organizations. This particular transformation in the contemporary volunteering corresponds to ideological and institutional changes that took place with regard to traditional charity in the early twentieth century, when the practice of charity was discouraged in favor of organized philanthropy. The traditional charity was considered “irrational” as it encourages “short-term” relief for problems, compared to “scientific philanthropy” aimed at addressing the root causes of human sufferings (Hewa, 1997). Likewise, in this new form of volunteering, the individual is an autonomous moral agent whose decision to participate in volunteering is determined not by “beliefs” but by rationally calculating behavior of “creative” individualism.

Habermas’s analysis of the “late capitalism” began with his interest in the question of legitimacy of a political order. Given the importance of the legitimation process for the political system, Habermas understood that a much more serious analytical work on late capitalism was required as opposed to Weber’s (1978:212) simple interpretation of legitimacy based on popular acceptance. In his *Theory and Practice*, Habermas (1973:195), defines late capitalism as state “regulated capitalism, which is not immune to crises or contradictions: “The separation of the state from society which is typical of the liberal phase of capitalist development has been superseded by a reciprocal interlocking of the two in the stage of organized capitalism.” The crises or the disturbances involve both the economic system and social integration, and that the members of society experience structural alteration critical for the continuing existence and for the collective identity. This essentially means a major structural change both in the self-regulating economic system as well as in the symbolically arranged life-world (Habermas, 1975:3-4). The implementation of the neo-liberal economic policies required considerable “structural adjustments” in the life-world in order to avoid contradictions. As Habermas argued,
“we can speak of the fundamental contradiction of a social formation when, and only when, its organizational principles necessitates that individuals and groups repeatedly confront one another with claims and intention that are, in the long run, incompatible” (Habermas, 1975:27; 1987:78). Because in organized capitalism it is the economic system, that is primarily responsible for social integration, any crisis in the economic system also becomes a crisis in the social system. The structural conditions created by the new global economy compelled the social system to adopt certain changes including the volunteering, which became a rational endeavor. As the political and economic systems are closely interconnected in the organized capitalism, for any economic problem, the political system is blamed. Therefore, it was indispensable for the political system to actively support the organized and self-reflexive volunteering of citizens to increase their opportunities in the labor market, and to create alternative providers of social welfare programs. In this context, as Claus Offe (1984) has argued, the crises in the post-welfare states increasingly become “crises of crisis management.”

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