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Theorising inequality : two-dimensional participatory justice and higher education research

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Published version

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Theorising Inequality: Two-Dimensional Participatory Justice and Higher Education Research

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Abstract: This chapter discusses how Nancy Fraser's theory of two-dimensional participatory justice may be employed in research concerned with inequalities within higher education. The main concepts of Fraser's theory are discussed and evaluated in the light of the critical attention they have attracted. Following that, I demonstrate the empirical application of Fraser's ideas through discussion of extracts of data from a recent small-scale investigation undertaken within a UK-based higher education institution. Finally, I conclude by discussing the strengths of Fraser's concepts with some indications for future research.

Introduction

This chapter offers a critical discussion of how Nancy Fraser's theory of 'two-dimensional participatory justice' may be applied to research concerned with social justice issues within higher education. The chapter will be composed of four principal sections. Firstly, I shall make the case for the need for a critical theory of social justice in relation to higher education by making reference to some inequalities associated with the higher education system with which I am most familiar, that of the United Kingdom. In this section, I shall begin my argument by briefly discussing evidence of social inequalities related to patterns of access to and participation in higher education. Following that, I shall then indicate how these patterns of inequality later become reproduced in post-graduate labour market opportunities and outcomes. In the second section, I shall discuss Fraser's theories and make an argument for their originality and value as tools for research in the area of inequality and injustice. Following this, the chapter will then draw upon a recent empirical study to illustrate how Fraser's concepts have been applied within a UK-based higher education context to examine issues of injustice within higher education. The study was a small-scale qualitative investigation into undergraduates' perceptions of potential future barriers to obtaining post-graduate employment. The data will be used to illustrate how individuals' perceptions of social injustices (and their attendant claims for justice) encompass the economic dimensions of what are normally considered cultural processes and vice-versa. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a review of the strengths of Fraser's theories in relation to higher education

research and with some recommendations for further application of her concepts in research within the sector.

An uphill struggle: higher education, post-graduate employment and social inequalities in the UK

Despite claims for the erosion of class, gender and family as social determinants within contemporary youth transitions (Beck, 1992), there remains considerable evidence that young people's socio-structural locations continue to lead to unequal life chances and outcomes (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). It has long been accepted that education in the United Kingdom plays a key function in the reproduction of socio-structural inequalities, and that such inequalities are manifest from the schools system through to the higher education sector (Archer, Hutchings and Ross, 2003; Reay, 2006). Post-war expansion of the UK's higher education sector and a massive increase in relative levels of participation from around three percent in 1950 (Chitty, 2009: 203) to 43% today (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills [DBIS], 2014) appear to have had only limited success in addressing the social inequalities that have long been associated with the sector. Indeed, there is now a considerable body of research evidence which argues that the shift in higher education in the UK over the last twenty-five years from a relatively homogeneous elite sector to a more diverse and comparatively massified one—this being defined as a 20% threshold (Parry, 2006: 394)—has simply served to maintain old inequalities while creating a complex set of new ones. Put simply, greater diversity has not meant greater equality but has, instead, led to greater institutional hierarchisation and marked patterns of inequality in terms of student access and participation.

The traditionally highly selective universities in the UK—known as the 'Russell Group' and with Oxford and Cambridge at their apex—remain principally the preserve of the socially advantaged, a fact which has at least been acknowledged as a source of concern by the present Coalition government (DBIS, 2011) and by its New Labour predecessor (Cabinet Office, 2009). Of course, it should be acknowledged that recent years have seen a degree of improvement in this situation, with each year between 2011 and 2014 seeing an increase in the proportional numbers of young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds who enter 'high-tariff' institutions (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service [UCAS], 2014). In general, however, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are considerably more

likely to attend a less selective, less prestigious institution (Office For Fair Access [OFFA], 2014). Research has adduced a number of factors that may explain this, although a tendency across many studies has been to view such unequal patterns of participation as a consequence of two distinct but inter-related causes: a cultural misalignment between the socially elite nature of highly selective institutions and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds; and to the effects of uneven distributions of necessary material resources (Archer, Hutchings and Ross, 2003; Ball *et al*, 2002; Reay *et al*. 2001).

As I have indicated in the introduction, inequalities within higher education tend to become reproduced in post-graduate employment outcomes. Social class is a key factor here, with evidence indicating that graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds, or with no previous experience of university, do less well in terms of their future earnings (Furlong and Cartmel, 2005; Pollard, Pearson and Willison, 2004). Of course, social class is not the only factor in play here. Gender is also a key and long-standing dividing line, with evidence to show that female graduates typically earn less than their male counterparts even when they study the same subject at the same university (Purcell, *et al*. 2013). Similarly, 'race' functions as a key axis of labour market inequality, with studies demonstrating that, in general, minority ethnic graduates are more likely to be unemployed than their White counterparts (Race for Opportunity [RfO], 2012: 12). Thus, there is evidence of significant social inequalities within higher education and beyond to the graduate labour market. Social inequalities are centrally a matter of social justice and, as such, they necessitate an adequate theory of social justice. In the next section, I shall discuss a theory which I believe offers strong possibilities within the field of higher education research—Nancy Fraser's theory of 'two-dimensional participatory justice'.

Two-dimensional participatory justice

Nancy Fraser is an American socialist feminist and critical social philosopher of international significance. Her work in developing theories of social justice has attracted wide critical attention from social theorists and philosophers (Lovell, 2007; Olson, 2008). However, despite the attention that Fraser's work has attracted, there is little empirical work that has attempted to apply it within an educational context. This is unfortunate because, as I shall discuss, Fraser's two-dimensional theory of justice has clear applications as a theoretical tool in research which examines issues of inequality and injustice within higher education.

Fraser's theory of two-dimensional justice has been developed through exchange with a wide variety of academic interlocutors and over the course of many different publications. The theory is an attempt to address issues of both cultural injustice and economic injustice where they occur within the same population categories (Fraser, 1995: 74). For Fraser (1995), the attempt to simultaneously address the cultural *and* economic injustices that affect population groups has been a long-standing problematic of both social theory and of social activism that has not been adequately resolved. Indeed, Fraser (1995) calls this difficulty the 'redistribution-recognition dilemma'. The dilemma derives from Fraser's contention that key social categories, in particular, class, 'race' and gender, may be viewed as 'bi-valent' in nature. In this case, 'Bivalent' means that these social categories are products of both a society's economic structure and its cultural status order. Importantly, however, this will not necessarily be in equal degree because Fraser (1995: 74) contends that class, 'race' and gender may be viewed analytically as different kinds of social collectivities that are aligned in different positions along a culture-economy 'conceptual spectrum'. Thus, for heuristic purposes, Fraser (1995: 75) proposes that we see social class as primarily an economic-material entity; viewed as an ideal type collective in this way, class is positioned at the redistributive end of Fraser's spectrum because the injustices that members of a social class will suffer are based in the political economy and derive ultimately from material social relations. Fraser (1995) is very clear, however, that such a conceptualisation is for heuristic purposes only and that in reality economic and cultural injustices are tightly inter-woven. Thus, economic injustices can engender processes of cultural inferiorisation and subjectivation that may then go on to develop an autonomous power of their own (Fraser 1999: 32).

Fraser (1995: 78) asks us to see 'race' and gender through the same analytical lens. In this case, however, 'race' and gender are 'hybrid modes' located in the middle of the conceptual spectrum. Each of these categories has its own particularities but they both embrace material-economic dimensions and cultural-valuational aspects. And what they have principally in common is that they are culturally constructed categories that ultimately depend for their existence upon social actors' belief in them**.** Thus, gender inequalities rest upon deeply ingrained patterns of androcentrism: "the authoritative construction of norms that privilege traits associated with masculinity" and the cultural devaluation of what is coded as 'feminine' (Fraser, 1995: 79). Similarly, 'race' is a category premised upon cultural-valuational processes of domination that serve to minoritise and inferiorise groups perceived to diverge from the

white Eurocentric norm. However, as hybrid modes, 'race' and gender also exhibit some of the aspects of an exploited class (within the sense of the ideal type collectivity described above). For example, 'race' serves to structure the division of paid labour within the capitalist system between lower-status, low-paid employment and higher-status, higher-paid employment. Thus, writing from within the context of the United States (although her argument would also apply to the UK and beyond), Fraser (1995) notes that lower-paid occupations are disproportionately held by people of colour while the reverse holds true with regard to white people and higher paid jobs. In a similar vein, Fraser (1999:31) notes that gender structures the fundamental economic division between paid 'productive' labour and unpaid 'reproductive' and domestic labour.

The motivation behind Fraser's analytical approach, with its division between economic and cultural injustices and the conceptual spectrum of social categories, has been to alert us to what Fraser believes to be the anomalous position of gender and 'race' along the middle of her conceptual spectrum. Fraser (1995: 79-80) argues that the result of this position is that they are subject to two analytically distinct forms of redress: redistribution and recognition which may not be pursued simultaneously because they pull in different directions. Redistributional justice claims often call for the end to economic arrangements that exploit group particularity. Examples would be feminist demands for an end to sexist working practices or campaigns for 'race' equality at work. Taken to its logical conclusion, the ultimate end to such justice claims would be to erase gender and 'race' as culturally distinct social categories because the allocation of social goods would be made without reference to dominant cultural-valuational patterns. In contrast, the logic of claims for recognition justice is usually to valorise group difference within the context of dominant social norms that serve to inferiorise certain groups (Fraser, 1995: 80). Again, Fraser (1995) is clear that she is employing the division between redistribution and recognition as an analytical device and that in reality they each presuppose some conception of the other. Thus, redistributive remedies imply a recognitional claim of 'moral worth' on the part of the claimants while more obviously recognitional claims (for cultural respect etc) may be seen to have clear distributive implications (Fraser, 1995: 73). Nevertheless, Fraser (1995) contends that while there are entwinements between the two forms of justice claim, there are also mutual interferences of the type that I have outlined.

Fraser's answer to the redistribution-recognition dilemma is a two-dimensional theory of justice. This theory is premised upon an acceptance of a conceptual distinction between

redistribution and recognition but also of an inter-relationship between them, and also of a distinction between class (in the sense described above) and status. At the heart of Fraser's analytical distinction between these concepts is her primary distinction between economy and culture. For Fraser (1999: 40), economy and culture are not ontological categories; rather, they are 'social processes and social relations' that have emerged through history as products of the growing division between class (in the narrowly economistic sense) and status (in the Weberian sense) under conditions of advanced capitalist societies. For this reason, "What counts as economic and cultural depends on the type of society in question. So, as well, does the relation between the economic and the cultural" (Fraser, 1999: 40). It follows, therefore, that the same holds true with regard to issues of maldistribution and misrecognition. Because maldistribution and misrecognition, and class and status, are not one and the same thing, "...one cannot read off the economic dimension of domination directly from the cultural, nor the cultural directly from the economic..." Fraser, 1999: 43). This is a very important point since, as we shall see, Fraser's analytical distinction between economy and culture has been a major point of contention with many of her critics.

To address the analytical distinction but close interrelationship between economic and cultural injustices, between maldistribution and misrecognition, "...one needs an approach that can accommodate differentiation, divergence and interaction at every level" (Fraser, 1999: 43). The theory which Fraser proposes is a 'perspectival dualism', following which all social practices are to be regarded as encompassing both economic and cultural dimensions (but not always to equal degrees). Thus, following this approach we may employ the recognition perspective to examine the cultural dimensions of what are typically considered to be economic policies, and use the redistribution perspective to draw attention to the economic dimensions of what are normally considered cultural processes (Fraser 1999: 45). Fraser (1999: 46) argues that perspectival dualism avoids a dichotomisation of culture and economy, and of distribution and recognition, and thus allows us to see how they over-lap each other producing cross-over effects. Moreover, this is not just of academic interest, it also has practical political value since no claim for justice can ever be *just* for redistribution or recognition; rather, virtually any claim for recognition will have redistributive implications and vice versa (Fraser, 1999: 46-47).

In practical terms this translates as a two-dimensional critically normative theory of justice, the core of which is the concept of 'parity of participation'. This is to be fulfilled by three key

requirements: (a) legal equality; (b) distribution of material resources and (c) 'intersubjective equality' (Fraser, 1999: 37). Legal equality refers to legal recognition of rights before the law while distribution of material resources refers to the requirement to ensure all social actors' 'voice' and independence, and this naturally, "...precludes forms and levels of material inequality and economic dependence that impede parity of participation" (Fraser, 1999: 37). Fraser (1999) terms these two requirements the 'objective' preconditions of participatory parity. The third precondition is 'intersubjective' parity which stipulates that "...institutionalised cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem" (Fraser, 1999: 37). Both the objective and the intersubjective preconditions need to be met to ensure that individuals enjoy full participatory parity, and neither alone is sufficient.

Fraser's two-dimensional theory has been critiqued on a number of levels, but principally in terms of (a) its analytical distinction between economy and culture; (b) the forms of political redress Fraser advocates, particularly in relation to the politics of recognition. In this chapter, I will examine and address these two forms of criticism. I will begin considering the first type of critique by reference to a theorist with whom Fraser has been engaged in long-standing debate, Judith Butler. Butler (1998) takes a Marxian view of the economy—culture relationship. She questions what she believes to be Fraser's assumption of a stable distinction between the material and the cultural; for Butler (1998: 36) this is a 'theoretical anachronism'. Taking Fraser's (1995) discussion of sexuality as an ideal type social collectivity rooted in the cultural-valuation order of society as her point of contention, Butler (1998: 40) argues that the control of human sexuality was a fundamental part of the mode of production of the capitalist economy, and thus a "...proper and constitutive feature of political economy". Butler (1998: 40) argues that we cannot understand sexuality and gender without an expansion of the economic sphere to include not just the production of goods but also the *reproduction* of persons. In other words, Butler (1998) believes culture and economy to be inextricably fused and thus questions whether it is possible, even analytically, to distinguish cultural misrecognition from material oppression given the indisociable relationship between the two.

Another critique of Fraser's use of dual analytical categories (though from a very different theoretical standpoint) comes from another long-standing academic interlocutor, Axel Honneth. Honneth (2003) rejects Fraser's economy—culture distinction and prefers to see

social life and its attendant injustices and related claims for justice exclusively through the lens of culture. In line with this perspective, Honneth also rejects Fraser's redistribution—recognition distinction, and instead argues that the normative objectives of critical social theory should be framed solely under the term 'recognition' (2003: 113). For Honneth (2003: 113) this approach does not run the risk, as Fraser's does, of trying to introduce a 'theoretically unbridgeable chasm' between the symbolic and the material. Honneth (2003: 135) argues that Fraser's use of two 'diametrically opposed' classes of justice suggests that experiences of material disadvantage can be described independently of individuals' problems with recognition. This lacks plausibility for Honneth who suggests, instead, that experiences of injustice be conceived along a continuum of forms of 'withheld recognition' (or 'disrespect') whose differences are determined by the qualities or capacities those affected consider to be unjustifiably unrecognised or not respected (2003: 135-6).

The premise on which Honneth's (2003) rejection of Fraser's dualism rests is his view of the development of bourgeois capitalist society. Honneth (2003: 138) sees this to be the result of the differentiation of three spheres of recognition: (a) care, love and affective recognition; (b) legal recognition; (c) a person's achievements as equal citizens under the law—the 'achievement' principle. According to Honneth (2003: 141) the third type of recognition—the 'achievement' (meritocracy) principle—was "...hierarchically organized in an unambiguously ideological way from the start." As a result, he argues that "It would be wrong to speak...of capitalism as a 'norm-free' system of economic processes since material distribution takes place according to certainly contested but nevertheless always temporarily established value principles having to do with respect, with the social esteem of members of society". (2003: 142). Furthermore, Honneth (2003: 151) argues that Fraser has left out one crucial sphere of recognition—the legal sphere. This is important because, as Honneth (2003: 150) suggests, social conflicts around distribution assume a 'double form' because they can occur through legal arguments or a re-evaluation of prevailing definitions of achievement. As a result, "...when they do not take the form of mobilizing social rights, redistribution struggles are definitional conflicts over the legitimacy of the current application of the achievement principle". (2003: 154).

In short, for Honneth (2003: 157) all social struggles are *moral* struggles in that certain recognition principles are at stake. On this view, the division between economy and culture is, at best, a secondary factor as it does no more than designate the respects in which

disrespect is experienced (2003: 157). All social life is rooted in the cultural valuation order of society within Honneth's (2003) schema, and this includes conflicts over the redistribution of material resources, "Here too, cultural interpretations play a constitutive role: what is contested is precisely whether, with regard to the actual division of tasks, the prevailing evaluative schemata for social achievements and contributions are in fact just" (2003: 158).

Honneth and Butler appear to be arguing from very different theoretical positions. Butler (1998) argues from a Marxian view of economy—culture relations. She has a much wider view of what constitutes the economic sphere than Fraser, and essentially sees culture as a by-product of economic relations. In contrast, for Honneth (2003) cultural interpretations play a constitutive role. However, their rejection of an analytical division between economy and culture leads to very similar problems. Both Butler and Honneth are unable to see that in a modern capitalist economy, class and status are not necessarily the same thing, and thus misrecognition and maldistribution are not necessarily the same either. Fraser (2003: 201) argues that Honneth (2003) stretches the concept of recognition too far until it loses all critical power as a term. Fraser (2003: 214) notes that it is doubtful that any society is simply a recognition order, and this is especially true of advanced capitalist societies where market mechanisms give rise to economic class relations that are not simply reflections of status hierarchies but which, instead, are governed by many non-recognition factors (exchange rates etc) which may have unintended consequences. Fraser makes an equally strong point in rebutting Butler's (1998) view of the fused nature of economic and cultural relations. If we follow this view, as Fraser (1998: 144) points out, then acts of misrecognition (such as homophobia) could only be removed by removing the relations of production—in this case, capitalism—into which such acts are hardwired.

Thus, I believe that the criticisms made of Fraser's culture-economy analytical divide are, for the most part, misplaced. However, Fraser's critics may have more traction in their criticism of the form of remedies to injustices that she offers, particularly in relation to issues of recognition justice. Here, then, I shall turn to the second type of critiques, as I have indicated above. Before that, though, it is necessary to examine Fraser's remedies for injustices of distribution and recognition.

In evaluating Fraser's remedies for cultural and economic injustices, it is important to recognise that she has developed her ideas over the years through exchange with her critics

and that, through this process, they have evolved. In a relatively early central exposition of her theory, Fraser (1995: 82) proposes what she terms 'transformative remedies', that is, reforms that address inequalities by restructuring the underlying generative framework of society; these forms of redress are distinguished from affirmative remedies that aim to tackle inequalities but which do not disturb the underlying social framework of injustice. In terms of issues of recognition justice, transformative remedies seek to redress disrespect by deconstructing and problematising existing group identities and thus challenging the identity normativity of dominant groups (Fraser, 1995: 83). In terms of redistribution justice, Fraser (1995: 85) proposes transformative remedies that are universalist. By this, she means universalist social-welfare programmes, progressive tax regimes and macro-economic policies aimed at full employment. Fraser (1995: 86) contends that transformative redistributive remedies will have the effect of blurring class differentiations (in the economistic sense) unlike the affirmative remedies of the liberal welfare state which, by targeting particular social groups (the unemployed etc), have the effect of stigmatising them.

Thus, for issues of both distributive and recognition justice, Fraser (1995: 89) argues for transformative remedies over affirmative ones. Taking the case of gender as a paradigm example, she is critical of the affirmative redistribution remedies of liberal social policies and of liberal feminism, which include (for example) affirmative action programmes to assure women an equal share of jobs. The problem here is that while such programmes may make 'surface reallocations', they do not address the 'deep structures' that have produced gendered disadvantage in the first place. Similarly, Fraser (1995: 89) considers the affirmative recognition strategies of cultural feminism—such as attempts to positively re-value femininity—to be highly problematic because they too do not undermine the deep structures of gendered disadvantage and, additionally, they may often cause (unintended) stigmatisation of women and resentment. Thus, transformative remedies must seek to tackle the deep roots of inequality and disadvantage. To this end, in terms of gender and of a justice of transformative recognition, Fraser (1995: 89-90) argues that a deconstructive feminism aims for "...a culture in which hierarchical gender dichotomies are replaced by networks of multiple intersecting differences that are demassified and shifting...Its utopian image of a culture in whichever new constructions of identity and difference are freely elaborated and then swiftly deconstructed is only possible, after all, on the basis of rough social equality". An analogous situation exists in relation to 'race' where a transformative politics of

recognition aims to destabilise existing racial dichotomies and to address the deep structures of racial injustice (Fraser, 1995: 91).

As I have indicated, Fraser's (1995) transformative remedies have met with some criticism. For example, Phillips (1997: 152) is concerned that, from one perspective, Fraser's (1995) call for a deconstructive approach to recognition justice, and to culturally constructed categorisations such as gender, or 'race', looks like "…an assimilationist project that ultimately expects all barriers and divisions to dissolve". For Phillips (1997: 152), the onus that Fraser places upon a transformation of cultural identities implies a meeting of common values across what are currently quite distinct social groupings which are expected to lose their distinctiveness but then to emerge with a new (non-cultural) identity. Phillips (1997: 152) maintains that this amounts to a cultural politics without the culture whereby culture becomes not simply analytically separate from the economic, it is also made into something insubstantial.

Phillips' (1997) criticisms are certainly pertinent but Fraser's work has developed through critical dialogue. Thus, in a later paper, Fraser (1999) appears to take a slightly different stance with regard to remedies for cultural injustices. Here, Fraser (1999: 38) recommends a 'pragmatic' approach to the question of how processes of cultural inferiorisation—what she terms misrecognition—can be remedied: it depends on the type of misrecognition suffered. Thus, some people may need to be relieved of an excessive socially constructed form of distinctiveness; others may require a previously under-recognised distinctiveness to be acknowledged; some may wish to turn the focus on dominant groups to deconstruct and de-normalise their identities; finally, some may need all or some of these remedies in combination with each other. This would appear to represent a shift, to some degree, from her arguments in the previous paper that I have discussed. Among the four options enumerated by Fraser (1999: 38) within the pragmatic approach, she offers up the possibility of tackling misrecognition by celebrating difference rather than trying to deconstruct it and therefore efface it. The pragmatic approach therefore seems both more nuanced and more flexible than her previous argument for a transformative politics.

To conclude this section, we may identify some problems with Fraser's remedies for injustice, particularly those of the politics of recognition; nevertheless, it is not necessary to accept these remedies *in toto* in order to accept Fraser's economy-culture duality as a viable

analytical framework through which to conceptualise social injustices. How though does this contribute to higher education research? In the next section, I shall illustrate this by drawing upon some data from a recent research project undertaken within a UK higher education institution which employed Fraser's concepts as a theoretical lens to illuminate issues of social justice.

The study

The study from which the data was drawn was a small-scale qualitative investigation into undergraduates' perceptions of possible class and gender-based barriers to obtaining employment within primary-phase teaching in the UK. The study sample was a group of final-year undergraduates on an Education Studies degree at a university in South Wales in the United Kingdom. The students were largely female and could be categorised as working-class in terms of parental occupation. Among the case-study sample, teaching and related employment were the most popular career destinations, and all of the participants interviewed for the study had indicated an intention to become primary school teachers.

For the purposes of space, I shall limit discussion to those aspects of the study which examined student perceptions of possible gender-related barriers. In relation to gender, primary teaching offers a case study of a profession that is both highly sex-segregated and subject to normalised sex-role stereotypes. For example, in England 88% of primary phase teachers are women (General Teaching Council for England [GTC], 2010: 5). The causes of the feminisation of primary teaching are complex and lie in such issues as the value apportioned to children and childcare, and in cultural assumptions that position women as more nurturing and thus better suited to the teaching of young children (Drudy, 2008: 312). Whatever the causes behind the feminisation of the profession, there is a clear perception at official policy levels that men and women teachers embody and perform different roles within the classroom related to masculine and feminine identities (Dermott, 2011). This assumption has been joined by the prevalent concern over boys' underachievement and has led to a call by some politicians for more male teachers to act as 'role models' for boys as a means to improve attainment, a call which has been criticised for its essentialist approach to gender and its disregard of the complex intersectional effects of 'race', class and gender upon school success (Francis and Skelton, 2005; Younger, Warrington and McLellan, 2005). Thus, the focus on gender was considered important as a means to understand the (predominantly

female) students' views on the likely impact upon recruitment procedures of policy-level concerns over the 'lack' of male teachers within primary teaching (Dermott, 2011).

The (In)Justices of Gender

Data gathering for the study took the form of seven focus groups of 34 females and 7 males between 6 October 2012 and 21 February 2013. All extracts used below are representative of general findings. Initial questions revealed that all the participants were well aware of the sex-balance of the primary school workforce in the UK and, based upon their own experiences of primary school, they appeared to have normalised the fact that the sector is female-dominated:

> *The school that my mum went to, they've just had new teaching assistants this year, and two or three of them are male and to me, when she told me about it, I was like 'Ooh!' Ermm, I mean, I shouldn't be like that but I was because I've never met any male teachers.* (Kelly[1])

The female students felt strongly that they would be at a disadvantage because of recruitment practices which aimed to 'redress' this:

> *So with gender we're definitely as a female at a disadvantage 'cos I think there's a big cry out for males at the minute. So I do look at that as a bit of a disadvantage.* ('Sarah')

The perception of preferential treatment for male candidates engendered a general sense of grievance among the female students:

> *In the school I'm helping out at, there was a teaching assistant job. I think there was 500 applicants and in the final six it was all men, 'cos there's not one male teacher in that school. I think it might have been a little bit biased 'cos obviously not having had any one, I think they needed to get a man. So I think, yeah, it can affect the system.* ('Rachel')

When pressed upon the issue of how schools should recruit their staff, both female and male students argued strongly that sex should not be an issue and that candidates should be selected simply upon merit related to qualifications, skills and attributes:

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[1] All names used are pseudonyms

No I don't think it's fair. I think it should be on your qualifications and your experience. Just 'cos they're male doesn't mean they'd be better for the job. Maybe they would do it just to say they've got a male teacher in that foundation, in that setting, but I think it should depend, if they have the same qualifications and experience. I think they should have a fair chance of getting the job but it shouldn't depend on their gender. ('Helen')

Thus, the students are clearly articulating a sense of injustice in relation to a perception of recruitment procedures which favour male over female candidates. We should, of course, acknowledge that the study participants were undergraduates with very limited experience of the field of primary-phase teaching and, therefore, their perceptions need to be viewed in that light. Nevertheless, whatever the accuracy of their perceptions, they were strongly held and thus should be taken seriously as a matter of perceived injustice. But how does Fraser's theory of two-dimensional participatory justice help to explicate their comments in terms of in/justice? Within Fraser's framework, the students are making a claim for what we may term gender-blind distributive justice. Following the logic of this form of justice, gender is effaced as a distinct category and positions are allocated purely on the basis of individual merit. In this respect, gender is viewed as a political-economic category much like class and the form of justice required to redress injustices is the same: to put it 'out of business' as a category through redistributive policies that transform the structured inequalities of the political economy (Fraser, 1995: 78).

As Fraser (1995: 78) notes, however, that is not the complete story: gender is not only a political-economic category but also a product of cultural-valuational differentiation. In this respect, it comes closer to sexuality than to class, and this places it within the sphere of recognition justice. Fraser (1995: 79) goes on to argue that much gender injustice is a product of androcentrism, and this co-exists with a 'cultural sexism' which denigrates things coded as 'feminine' (encompassing, but not limited to, women). Fraser's analytical distinction between culture and economy, and her argument for the ways in which gender straddles distribution and recognition justice, offers us a way to understand further comments made by the students which appear to contradict their previous claims for a gender-blind distribution of jobs. Many participants commented that male teachers were needed as 'role models', particularly for male pupils. For some participants, this was connected to a perceived need to recover the

ideal of males as traditional income-providers in the context of the local area, an economically depressed region of long-term industrial decline:

> *I would look at it as pupils look up to this male that has come into the workforce and has progressed through education 'cos maybe at home they might see a father who's maybe on benefits or you know if you come from an area where males maybe are seen just to get a trades job or something, that's how I see it. It's good for them to see somebody in the workforce.* ('Rachel')

> *Especially when you've got children in a primary school who might come from homes where they don't have a male role model, and to not have one in a school. Like, I think my little brother, he's got a male role model—my dad and my brother.* ('Leanne')

For other students, male teachers' value as role models resided in what was perceived to be their superior sense of classroom control, particularly over male pupils, a factor which was attributed to a more imposing physical presence:

> *Yeah, maybe male teachers can bring something to the classroom maybe female teachers can't like, as we said, authority or something like that. For some reason the children seem to listen to male teachers more than female teachers for whatever reason that is, and for boys are more male role models.* ('Adrian')

> *They're supposed to be more sporty and active, sometimes you hear children in school, there was a supply teacher and it was a male and it was more fun and they got to do this and that.* ('Charlotte')

As Sayer (2005: 4) reminds us, 'lay normativity'—our sense of how we should treat others and how we expect to be treated by them—may frequently be inconsistent and contradictory. The students' comments may be seen in this vein: a claim for gender-blind distributional justice in the allocation of teaching jobs is followed up by a form of recognition justice claim—that male teachers possess certain 'qualities' or 'attributes' by virtue of being men that female teachers do not possess. The corollary to this claim (and the source of its contradiction), is that any claim for a gender-blind distribution of jobs needs immediately to be qualified by an acceptance of a recognition claim in the allocation of jobs that is related to male teachers' 'unique' attributes. In fact, although the students are making a form of recognition claim, from a critical point of view it would be more appropriate to say that their

comments represent a *misrecognition* of gender in that they essentialise what are socially constructed gendered attributes in ways that implicitly de-value female teachers.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has examined the value of Nancy Fraser's theory of two-dimensional participatory justice to research in higher education. In particular, I have drawn upon a selection of data from a recent empirical investigation into undergraduates' perceptions of possible gender-based barriers to employment to illustrate how Fraser's concepts may be applied to better theorise issues of inequality within the field of higher education. Within this chapter, I have argued that Fraser's economy-culture perspectival dualism allows us to tease apart the two different kinds of justice claims—distribution and recognition—and to see how, as Fraser (1999: 46-7) reminds us, redistribution claims will impinge upon recognition claims and vice versa. Thus, the study that I have discussed within this chapter was concerned with factors perceived to affect access to employment and, in that respect, it was clearly concerned with matters of distributional justice. Additionally, however, perspectival dualism allows us to see that the students' claims for a gender-blind distributional justice in the allocation of primary teaching posts would (if actually met in practice) also represent a recognition claim for justice as it would necessitate a challenge to prevailing androcentric evaluative patterns that accord men and women different 'roles' in primary teaching.

Here, then is where I believe that Fraser's perspectival dualism offers an advantage in analysing this data over the two principal competing theoretical perspectives—Butler (1998) and Honneth (2003)—that I have discussed within this article. By accepting an analytical division between economy and culture but acknowledging their mutual inter-relationship, we can see that the economic has no primacy over the cultural, and thus it will not be necessary to show (as against Butler, 1998) that a particular instance of misrecognition leads to maldistribution for it to be considered a legitimate claim for justice. Following this perspective, therefore, the female students' fears of likely employer prejudice related to their sex are a valid claim of injustice *regardless* of the possible distributional implications of such prejudice in terms of future employment opportunities. Similarly, this chapter has discussed the tensions between the students' claims for gender-blind distributional justice in primary teacher recruitment and their more recognitional claims based around gendered concepts of males as 'role models'. Following Honneth's (2003) framework, all distributional claims are

to be viewed through the lens of recognition whereby, since they are rooted in the cultural-valuation order of society, they are ultimately claims for the *esteem* of the claimants' labour. That analytical framework would make it difficult to unpick the contradictions between the two kinds of gender-related justice claims I have discussed within this chapter. This latter point is important because, as Fraser (1999: 38) argues, not all claims for recognition are morally justified; rather, in this case recognition justice requires a 'transformative politics of deconstruction' in which hierarchical gender binaries become destabilised by fluid networks of shifting identities (Fraser, 1995: 89).

In summary, therefore, I find Fraser's concepts useful for thinking with as a way to theorise questions of social inequality and injustice in higher education. As I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, much research within this area has tended to conceptualise inequalities and their attendant injustices in terms of a complex of cultural and material factors, and Fraser's economy-culture perspectival dualism clearly offers a valuable theoretical complement to this approach. To illustrate my point further, I shall conclude this chapter with some brief comments regarding policies to broaden the social base of the higher education student cohort. This is a concern that dates back to the beginnings of the post-1945 expansion of the sector. In the 1950s, this aim found policy expression in increased government expenditure on state scholarships with the purpose of removing financial barriers to participation among working-class young people (Benn and Fieldhouse, 1993). If we jump forward to the very different financial and social landscape of the last two decades or so, policy has now shifted to 'widening participation'. A broadened social composition is to be achieved by stimulating demand from increased numbers of young people who have historically been under-represented within the sector, notably but not exclusively those from working-class backgrounds. Although there have been differences in policy emphasis between the centre-left New Labour administrations of 1997--2010 and the present Coalition government of centre-right Conservatives and centre-left Liberal Democrats, a key policy trope has been the concept of 'access': universities must do more to make themselves more accessible to working-class students by, for example, actively working to recruit more young people from communities with historically low levels of participation in higher education (DBIS, 2011; Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2003).

If we were to take governmental rhetoric in this area at face value, we might say that, in Fraser's terms, this policy approach is underwritten by a concern for both recognition justice

and distribution justice. A claim for recognition justice may be discerned in the concern to break down cultural and symbolic barriers to HE participation among groups which have historically been estranged from the predominantly middle-class culture of higher education. A concern with distribution justice is to be found in the desire to make more young people employable through higher-level learning. This latter aim is a long-standing pillar of post-compulsory education policy in the UK, and it is premised upon the notion that distributional inequities may be addressed by improving individuals' access to advanced-level study which then leads to better paid employment, or as Lauder *et al*. (2012: 2) term it more simply 'learning = earning'. In fact, a more critical view might argue that, while moves to make higher education more accessible to under-represented groups are entirely laudable, attempts to address class-based recognition and distribution injustices through the vehicle of higher education are doomed to, at best, a partial success. This is because, to return once more to Fraser's (1995) distinction between affirmative and transformative remedies, they represent affirmative remedies as they leave intact the 'deep structures' of inequality. Thus, such remedies do not address the fundamentally middle-class culture of much of higher education, or the classed and gendered nature of the graduate labour market, as highlighted in the introduction to this chapter. Moreover, beyond that, they also do nothing to tackle the more deep-seated injustices of education that occur *before* higher education, and which then contribute to the cycle of inequalities within higher education. These are not, of course, original observations in themselves; the disjunctures between governmental rhetoric and reality that I have just described have been widely noted within the literature (Boden and Nedeva, 2010; Christie, 2007. However, as I have, hopefully, indicated in this little vignette of higher education policy, what Fraser's theory of two-dimensional participatory justice brings to this analysis is to place such disjunctures, and the inequalities that they entail, within a potentially powerful critically normative framework of social justice claims and attendant remedies. For this reason, it has the potential for application across the field of higher education research.

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