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The Relevance of Nancy Fraser for Transformative Social Work Education*

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Abstract

This chapter examines the relevance and implications of Nancy Fraser's scholarship (1989-2018) for a transformative social work pedagogy. It presents a range of concepts she has used to explain the crises of injustice in contemporary capitalist societies, as well as available responses. These include needs interpretation, dependency, and gender justice; participatory parity and the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of justice; abnormal justice and transformative practices. The chapter provides an example of transformative social work education, in which Fraser's theory of justice enabled students to articulate multiple experiences of injustice and to explore different ways of resisting them. It argues that Fraser's scholarship provides social workers with an apt language with which to critique the profession's role in perpetuating injustice by, *inter alia*, aligning itself with expert discourses, demonstrating a readiness to embrace reprivatisation, and a longstanding discomfort to engage with oppositional discourses on the needs of service-users. Fraser's attention to the injustices of maldistribution, misrecognition, misrepresentation, misframing, and reprivatisation on the one hand, and her notions of participatory parity and transformative practices on the other, can support students in deliberating on how social work might contribute to advancing justice in a deep, transformative way.

It is a well-established tradition in social work to define itself, *inter alia*, by its commitment to principles of justice. Yet, there appears to be little agreement about the concept of justice itself, and about what practices would most suitably be employed to furthering its ends (Hugman, 2008; Ife, 2008; Solas, 2008a, 2008b). Accordingly, there is little clarity around the kinds of educational content and pedagogical practice required to enable social work students to contribute to advancing just social arrangements and just ways of relating, beyond the

classroom, especially in the face of escalating crises of injustice in which social, cultural, political, and ecological dimensions have been shown increasingly to be intertwined (see Chapters ... in this Volume). Hence, questions arise around *what* should be taught and *how* it is taught. This chapter proposes that the work of political philosopher and critical theorist, Nancy Fraser, holds potential to enrich both *content* (theoretical positions and frameworks) and *process* (how pedagogy and scholarship is enacted in social work) of transformative social work education, aspects of justice which, Fraser's theorising demonstrates, are interlinked.

Following a brief biography (Section I), this chapter traces the development of key concepts in Fraser's work over the past 30 years. It begins with a presentation of Fraser's early scholarship (Section II), which was concerned particularly with the politics of *needs interpretation* and ideologies of *dependency* in contemporary constructions of welfare. This work culminated in Fraser's formulation of *seven principles of gender justice*, upon which she then developed her multidimensional *theory of justice*. Fraser structured this theory around her idea of participatory parity as a central principle and standard of justice. With this, she articulated (in)justices as structural processes spanning the global and local levels of discourse and practice in the economic, cultural and political spheres of social life (see Sections III and IV). Thereafter, the chapter briefly presents Fraser's recent work on the capitalist crisis in the 21st century, which forms the backdrop against which her concepts of abnormal justice and transformative practices are discussed. (Section V). The implications of Fraser's scholarship for social work education are articulated thereafter and discussed with reference to several years of educational research and practice with higher education students, including students of social work (see Section VI). Throughout these sections, examples are used to illustrate how the concepts under discussion illuminate the kinds of injustice to which present-day social work ought to respond. The chapter concludes that Fraser's work can equip social work students with

an integrative framework to make sense of the complex and changing dynamics of injustice that surround and implicate the profession in multiple ways. This can be taught in a manner that encourages them to act upon their understandings and to think creatively about the evolving meanings of social justice and its moral and political implications for their emerging practice.

I. Biography

Nancy Fraser was born in 1947, received her bachelor's degree in 1969 and, in 1980, was awarded her PhD at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Fraser specialises in critical social theory and political philosophy. She is Henry A. and Louise Loeb Professor at the New School for Social Research, a Visiting Research Professor at Dartmouth College and holds an international research chair at the Collège d'études mondiales, Paris. Fraser holds six honorary degrees and was recently awarded the Nessim Habib World Prize, the Havens Centre Lifetime Award for Contribution to Critical Scholarship, and the status of "Chevalier" of the French Legion of Honour. She is also a past President of the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division. Fraser's work has been translated into over 20 languages and was cited twice by the Brazilian Supreme Court, in decisions upholding marriage equality and affirmative action.

Fraser is well respected for her sustained work around the concept of justice, which she developed, over three decades, in relation to global capitalism's developments from World War II to date. Over 30 years, she traced capitalism's relation to diverse struggles for democracy and against domination, including race-, class- and gender-based oppression and imperialism. More recently, her attention has turned to the intersection of economic crisis, ecological crisis

and crisis of social reproduction under conditions of global capitalism in the 21st century. Her work has been published in a series of interconnected essays in the *New Left Review* and *Critical Historical Studies* and as a collection in *Fortunes of Feminism: From state-managed capitalism to neoliberal crisis* (2013). Previous books include *Capitalism: A conversation in critical theory*, with Rahel Jaeggi (2018); *Domination et Anticipation: Pour un renouveau de la critique*, with Luc Boltanski (2014); *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: Nancy Fraser debates her critics* (2014); *Scales of Justice: Reimagining political space for a globalizing world* (2008); *Adding Insult to Injury: Nancy Fraser debates her critics*, edited by Kevin Olson (2008); *Redistribution or Recognition? A political-philosophical exchange* (2003) with Axel Honneth; *Justice Interruptus: Critical reflections on the 'postsocialist' condition* (1997); and *Unruly Practices: Power, discourse, and gender in contemporary social theory* (1989). Her most recent book, entitled *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto* and co-authored with Cinzia Aruzza and Tithi Battacharya, was published by Verso Books in 2019.

In *Fortunes of Feminism*, Fraser (2013) grouped her writings into three phases. The first phase, from 1989 to 1997, involved a radical critique of 'male domination in state-organized capitalist societies' in a postwar era of social democracy (Fraser, 2013, p.1). In the second phase, from 2003 to 2009, Fraser developed an expansive theory of justice, examining how concerns of redistribution were challenged by competing and complementary calls for recognition, as well as considering the relevance of the political dimension of justice for calls for recognition and redistribution to succeed. The third phase (from 2007 onwards) examines the nature and dynamics of capitalist crisis in the contemporary neoliberal era and the implications thereof for emancipatory movements across the world.

II. Needs interpretation, dependency, and Fraser's principles of gender justice

In 1989, Nancy Fraser published a landmark concept, the *politics of needs interpretation* (Fraser, 1989). This concept enabled her to highlight problems with welfare professionals' tendency to construe service-user needs as 'self-evident', rather than socially constructed and structurally determined. Fraser (1989) saw needs interpretation as a contested practice and site of power struggles. To elaborate, she highlighted what she labelled the Juridical-Administrative-Therapeutic nature of the welfare system:

- The *juridical* element referred to service-user's welfare rights and claims;
- *Administrative* decisions determined their entitlement, or not, to benefits and services based on needs interpretation;
- *Therapy* referred to the assumption that mental health and behavioural issues required therapeutic intervention.

Referring to US state organisations, she showed how this system was coded by gender and race with:

An implicitly 'masculine' social insurance subsystem tied to 'primary' labor-force participation and historically geared to (white male) 'breadwinners'; and an implicitly 'feminine' relief subsystem tied to household income and geared to homemaker-mothers and their 'defective' (female-headed) families, originally restricted to white women, but subsequently racialized (Fraser, 1989, p.156).

Fraser argued that together, these historically specific valuations of gender roles, a gendered (and racialised) division of labour, and a gendered (and racialised) understanding of needs,

constitute the underlying assumptions that structure the ways in which the state - and social workers in its employ - continue to determine service-users' needs.

Linked to this is Fraser's (1989) conceptualisation of *the social*, which constitutes the terrain in which social work operates to date. For Fraser (1989), this is a site of discourse about those needs which states consider problematic. Fraser (1989) identified several competing discourses about such 'problematic' needs in the terrain of 'the social': the *needs discourse of experts* provides social workers' *raison d'être*, which is to intervene in 'problematic' situations. Against this, the term *oppositional needs discourse* refers to the efforts by social movements to confront and disrupt hegemonic interpretations of the identities, roles, vices and needs attributed to, for example, racialised people, women, gendered and sexualised minorities, workers, and social service-users. The third discourse is what Fraser (1989) called the *reprivatisation discourse*, and which serves to curtail public welfare spending by shifting responsibility for social service provision to the private and market spheres. These three discourses re-appear in Fraser's interpretation of the roles of social movements under conditions of capitalist crisis.

The concept, *politics of needs interpretation*, remains relevant to date, given that categorising (assessing) and responding to human needs continues to be central to social work practice (Dover & Hunter Randall Joseph, 2008; Towle, 1945). It points to the mechanisms by which social workers are often implicated in the surveillance of, rather than care for, their service-users. It also alerts social workers to the way public discourses on needs often represent the interests of dominant groups, rather than those of the marginalised groups from which most service-users stem. Consequently, service-users risk internalising hegemonic need interpretations even as they are disadvantaged by them. Cruikshank (1999) later highlighted that because they have a vested interest in keeping their jobs, middle-class professionals, such

as social workers, play a willing role in this dynamic, in a way that kept the welfare apparatus intact (see also Bozalek & Lambert, 2008).

In this context, Fraser and Gordon's (1994, 2013) *genealogy of the term dependency* shows that from a concept describing social relations of subordination (such as a child's legal dependence on an adult), the term 'dependency' has become a psychologised label to designate 'deviant and incompetent individuals' (Fraser & Gordon, 2013, p. 108), thereby denoting inherent personality characteristics of certain (stigmatised) persons and groups, such as teenage mothers, and people who engaged in (unacknowledged and devalued) caring work, such as mothers or grandmothers providing the unpaid work of caring for children. Fraser and Gordon's (1994, 2013) genealogy highlights how the idea of *welfare dependency* has provided politicians with a terminology that can be used to legitimise cuts to welfare services, stunt new demands for public welfare expenses, and justify attacks on social security provisions for people who are not economically independent. It also shows that this idea has impacted social work service provision by feeding into distinctions between those considered deserving or undeserving of services and helping to sustain prevailing hierarchies, rather than enabling service providers and users to relate on more equal terms. As such, the notion of welfare dependency continues to undermine social workers' abilities to respond to service-users' *felt* rather than *imposed* definitions of needs.

Fraser and Gordon (2013) noted that such revised understandings of dependency were informed by the ideal of an *ideal human being* as rational, autonomous, economically independent, unencumbered, middle-class, white and male. This ideal person does not exist, since all human beings are dependent on one another and 'independence' is predicated on a range of invisible support over a lifetime. Yet, it continues to bolster social, economic, and cultural hierarchies; with everyone who deviates from this ideal being seen as 'less than' and

is at risk of being pathologised. Fraser's (1994, 2013) seven normative *principles of gender justice*, mounted upon her critique of needs interpretation and welfare dependency, provides social workers with a sound set of guidelines to respond to this flawed notion of independence and its unjust social, political, economic, and cultural outcomes:

1. *Anti-poverty*: addressing social arrangements that leave people's basic needs unmet.
2. *Anti-exploitation*: recognising that people with unmet needs are vulnerable to exploitation. Fraser (2013) argued that support of such groups is their right, not a privilege: 'When receipt of aid is highly stigmatized or discretionary, the anti-exploitation principle is not satisfied' (p. 117).
3. *Addressing income equality*: advocating against unequal pay, based on gender, for similar work, or the devaluation of caring labour and skills.
4. *Leisure-time equality*: recognising that unpaid care work robs carers of leisure time, thus promoting social arrangements that equalise caring work for all involved.
5. *Equality of respect*: promoting social arrangements that prevent the objectification and depreciation of women or trivialise their activities and contributions, such as caring work.
6. *Anti-marginalization*: acknowledging that social policy arrangements should make it possible for women to participate fully, on a par with men, in all aspects of social life, thus advocating, for example, for public child care, elderly care, and the dismantling of 'old boys clubs' and masculinist work cultures.
7. *Anti-androcentrism*: decentring unequal gender norms and masculinist policies, norms, values, and practices: needed are social policies that support both giving and receiving care, with a view to subverting men's life patterns as the norm to which women must assimilate in order to flourish.

Though Fraser (1994, 2013) articulated these principles in relation to the post-industrial welfare state, they are equally relevant to countries in the Global South that have emerged from, or remain invested in, concepts of the developmental state. Sections III and V demonstrate how, globally, neoliberal ideologies, policies, and practices have eroded previous gains won by feminist and other emancipatory movements, suggesting that Fraser's principles for gender justice remain as relevant for contemporary critical social work practice as when they were conceived 25 years ago. As a substantive contribution to the social work curriculum, therefore, Fraser's early scholarship can assist social work students and practitioners in interrogating of many of the often unquestioned assumptions and implicit accusations permeating welfare practice and in explaining the profession's continued implication in some of the gender injustices that prevail in the sector. It can serve, further, to remind social workers of their responsibility to help change, rather than uncritically embrace, an ideology that continuously works to (re-)create conditions that stigmatise, marginalise, and undermine the well-being of much of their service-user base.

III. Redistribution, recognition, and the development of participatory parity as a standard and process of justice

During the second phase of her work, Fraser (2003) developed a *multidimensional, multilevel theory of justice*, which has the potential to highlight injustices that commonly escape public attention, thereby contributing significantly to critical theorising and transformative practices in social work across the globe. To pull together a wide array of social (in)justices in relation to one central norm, Fraser (2003) proposed the principle of *participatory parity*, which she later explained as follows:

The most general meaning of justice is parity of participation. According to this radical-democratic interpretation ... of equal moral worth, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others, as full partners in social interaction (Fraser, 2009a, p. 16).

According to this principle, social arrangements can be considered 'just if, and only if, they permit all the relevant social actors to participate as peers in social life', whereas norms can claim to be 'legitimate if, and only if, they can command the assent of all concerned in fair and open processes of deliberation, in which all can participate as peers' (Fraser, 2007, p. 29). The concept of participatory parity, then, enables at once an analysis both of existing social arrangements and of the norms legitimising them, thereby helping to illuminate their underlying dynamics. Such an analysis provides activists (including, if they so wish, educators, practitioners, and students of social work) with a key prerequisite for addressing their 'root causes' of prevailing injustices (Bozalek & Hochfeld, 2016, p. 201; see also Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2015).

Fraser (1997) began by developing the economic and cultural dimensions of justice, calling this a *two-dimensional approach*. This *perspectival dualism* serves to identify two types of power relations, which, albeit substantially different, are nonetheless 'ineluctably entwined' (McNay, 2008, p. 283). According to this bifocal view, both *redistribution*, located in the economic dimension of contemporary societies, and *recognition*, located in the cultural dimension of social life, are required for participatory parity, with neither being reducible to the other (Fraser, 2000, 2003). Fraser continued to subscribe to the view held by Marxists, socialists, and social democrats that justice is a matter of a just distribution of economic rights, opportunities and resources. Questions of 'how much economic inequality does justice permit',

and ‘how much redistribution is required, and according to which principle of distributive justice’ remained important to her because ‘economic structures that deny [people] the resources they need to interact with others as peers’ constituted important impediments to justice (Fraser, 2009a, pp. 15-16). These, she referred to as *maldistribution*, thus denoting many of the issues to which social workers must respond, such as poverty, hunger, and rampant inequality.

Yet, Fraser (2009a) also shared the understanding, mainstreamed by feminist, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist movements that identity, too, mattered to questions of justice: to ask ‘what constitutes equal respect’ and ‘which kinds of differences merit public recognition, and by what means’ is instructive because ‘institutionalised hierarchies of cultural values that deny [people] the requisite standing ... to interact with others as peers’ constitute equally important ‘obstacles to participatory parity’ as do economic injustices (Fraser, 2009a, pp. 15-16). Fraser (2009a) called these kinds of injustices *misrecognition*, thereby denoting a common dynamic underlying a wide array of discriminatory practices, such as ageism, classism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, racism, and sexism, all of which social workers are expected to challenge (IFSW/IASSW 2014). Importantly, Fraser intended the term to reference a *status subordination*, located at a macro level of society (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 30). In other words, Fraser (in McNay, 2008) never conceived misrecognition:

as a psychological dynamic, but as institutionalised cultural value patterns that have discriminatory effects on the equal standing of social actors. Status subordination takes the concrete forms of juridical discrimination, government policy, professional practice, or sedimented moral and ideological codes (p. 284).

Fraser’s (2009b, 2013) political analysis of post-World War II feminist theorising and practice is instructive of her understanding of injustice as a deep structural process. Adopting a

historical perspective, Fraser (2009b, 2013) traced feminism's post-World War II alignments with other 'New Left' movements (for example, anti-racism, anti-imperialism), and showed that feminist critique pioneered an *intersectional* reading of gender injustice, which regards 'women's subordination' as 'systemic, grounded in the deep structures of society' (Fraser, 2013, pp. 214-215) that cannot be separated from a broader capitalist critique. However, such comprehensive analysis and the activism it informs have been gradually displaced by feminisms' turn to an *identity politics* which prioritises cultural over all other justice concerns. This changing emphasis is best understood in relation to the ascendance, from the early 1970s onwards, of neoliberalism as an ideology and economic policy framework, in that feminism's and other social movements' increasing tendency to foreground cultural critiques began to be impacted by a rising ideology that worked to repress 'all memory of social egalitarianism' (Fraser, 2013, p. 219). Consequently, the idea of (mis)recognition became 'unmoored from the critique of capitalism' (Fraser, 2013, p. 219), with the term *recognition* understood increasingly to signify individual ambitions and interpersonal concerns, while *misrecognition* came to represent merely individual hurts and interpersonal afflictions. In short, matters of recognition were being privatised. This development unfolded alongside similar changes in other domains of social reproduction, where responsibilities for welfare, education, and health were being returned to individuals and families, even as their ability to meet them was being undermined by a deepening and widening neoliberal ordering of societies at a global scale.

Social work's professional discourse, analyses, and practices have been affected profoundly by these individualised and privatised notions of culture and justice. For example, in a predominantly female profession, the personal ambitions of many practitioners and academics may be well-served, at least to the extent that they are able to benefit from a growing consensus that people should not be disadvantaged on account of their identities, instead

requiring positive discrimination and support to overcome historical limitations. Yet, such privatised readings of recognition may also have contributed to the profession's commitment to justice becoming disjointed from equally important concerns for economic maldistributions within and across societies. This slimmed-down politics of recognition fails to illuminate the extent to, and ways in which, the economic and cultural dimensions of justice are entwined. Likewise, these changes in consciousness have resulted in a general failure to appreciate how individual acts of misrecognition within interpersonal relationships are connected inseparably to the broader contextual conditions that enable interpersonal slights and oversights in the first place.

To the extent then that social work has embraced and subscribes to this limited understanding of the requirements of justice and prioritises identity issues over other justice concerns, the profession may not be alert to a much wider range of injustices, instead overlooking the extent to which the multiple forms of discrimination that social workers are to challenge, are in fact structural, macro-level concern. Thus, a failure to consider that economic and cultural injustices are irreducible, yet complementary processes undermines the profession's ability to formulate, let alone act upon, a critique that is appropriate to the complexities of contemporary injustices. Against this, Fraser's concepts of misrecognition and maldistribution can alert social workers to the ways in which structural forms of injustice are woven into people's everyday lives and the political responsibilities to which this gives rise.

IV. Representation, framing, and justice as a multilevel phenomenon

Fraser (2005a, 2005b) began to expand her previous, bifocal conceptualisation into a *trivalent theory of justice*, based on her contention that a third dimension was needed to match the complexities of the injustices brought to the fore by globalisation, and to help devise practices

capable of protecting, widening and deepening justice in their wake (Fraser, 2005a, 2005b, 2009a). She explained that the *political dimension*:

Furnishes the stage on which struggles over distribution and recognition are played out. Establishing criteria of social belonging and thus determining who counts as a member, the political dimension specifies the reach of ... [the] other dimensions. It tells us who is included in, and who is excluded from, the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition. Establishing decision rules, the political dimension likewise sets the procedures for staging and resolving contests in both the economic and the cultural dimensions. It tells us not only who can make claims ... but also how such claims are to be mooted and adjudicated (Fraser, 2009a, p. 17).

Due to her observation that it was as common as it was misleading to conflate the concept of justice with the construct of the nation state, Fraser (2005b, 2009a) asserted that simply adding another dimension to her theory would not suffice. From the emergence of nation states as the dominant means for organising economic, political, social, and cultural life, there was a widely shared consensus that arguments about, and claims for, justice pertained either to relations between citizens, or to their relations with the state to which they 'belonged'. Fraser (2009a) called this the *Keynesian-Westphalian frame* of justice. However, with the global spread of neoliberalism as a political ideology and economic policy framework, it became increasingly obvious that pertinent forms of injustice, whether economic, ecological, social, political, cultural, and/or military, unfold across national boundaries. Thus, Fraser (2005b, 2009a) contended that any conceptualisation of justice that fails to critique the Keynesian-Westphalian frame itself will fall short analytically and cannot adequately inform efforts to protect, widen, and deepen relations of justice. This is important for a profession that has struggled to move beyond the still-dominant conflation of the idea of justice with nation states, as the latter

continue to finance, either directly or indirectly, most social work services provided within their respective realms.

Thus, Fraser (2005a, 2005b) made the additional case for the political dimension of her expanded theory to be conceptualised across three interconnected levels. On the first level, the political, like the economic and cultural dimensions, concerns substantive questions of justice. Describing these as matters of *ordinary-political (mis)representation*, Fraser (2005a, 2005b) contended that such substantive concerns are about the terms of engagement in a given political community. For her, the question was whether these terms ‘accorded’ its members ‘equal voice in public deliberations and fair representation in public decision-making’ (Fraser, 2009a, p. 18). *(Mis)framing*, as a ‘second order’ (in)justice (Fraser 2009a, p. 15), is a matter of scope in that it pertains to ‘the question of who does, and who doesn’t count as [a] subject of justice’ (Hölscher, 2014, p. 23). In other words, framing decisions are about admission criteria and procedures concerning the award or denial of membership and thus constitute an important aspect of what Fraser (2009a) called *the grammar of justice* (p. 21). Examples for this are the layered form of in-/exclusion of non-citizens, from undocumented migrants to permanent residents, in the country in which they reside (Hölscher, 2014), or the financial exclusion of university students unable to raise funds for their study fees or to access bursaries or loans (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012). Fraser (2009a) contended that frame-setting decisions could result in particularly grave injustices by ‘constituting both members and non-members in a single stroke’ (p. 19):

When questions of justice are framed in a way that wrongly excludes some from consideration, the consequence is a special kind of meta-injustice, in which one is denied the chance to press first order [that is, substantive] claims in a given community (Fraser, 2009a, p. 19).

To qualify what she meant by wrongful exclusion, Fraser (2009a) proposed the *all-subjected principle*, which denotes the idea that ‘all those who are subjected to a given governance structure have moral standing in relation to it’ (p. 63). Rather than either asserting or disputing the nation state as the relevant frame for justice, this principle provides guidance for working out who has a substantive claim in relation to whom. If membership and subjection to governance matter in relation to questions of justice, then it follows that the way membership is framed and questions of ordinary-political representation are settled are equally important to a theory of justice. This understanding led to Fraser’s (2009a) articulation of the third level of her expanded model, which concerns matters of process, that is, questions of *meta-political (mis)representation*. The importance of participatory parity as an overarching framework for Fraser’s conceptualisation of justice is evident again at this level, in that Fraser’s (2009a) stated aim was to contribute to a democratisation of global affairs.

The significance of the second and third levels of Fraser’s theory for social work can be illustrated with reference to the specialised field of social work with cross-border migrants (Hölscher, 2014). To date, much of social work discourse continues to accept, at face value, the dominant ideology that cross-border migrants could be divided usefully along the binary of *voluntary* versus *forced* migration. Following Fraser, scholars, practitioners and students of social work would do well to ask questions such as these: What historical and geopolitical dynamics underlie contemporary forms of mass-migration, and who bears responsibility for these? Who should respond when such migrants, enroute to their hoped-for destinations are imprisoned, encamped, enslaved, tortured, and traumatised? Who should bear the costs of responding to their needs for protection and care? What legal standing should such migrants at their various stop-over or destination points? To what extent are these matters of, or matters that exceeded, national sovereignty? Who takes the decisions in relation to any of these

conundrums, and according to what parameters and decision-making rules? Are current decision-making models, rules, and processes enough, and are responses adequately resourced? Similar questions arise in relation to all major and historical lines of injustice, including, but not limited to, colonialism and racism, poverty and exploitation, and patriarchy and gender violence. They point to the importance of social work scholars and practitioners being attentive to how macro-level structures, dynamics, and processes can impact their everyday work, while simultaneously entangling them in global regimes of injustice.

In short, matters of ordinary and meta-political representation and framing are relevant for social work as they impact on the kinds of work that practitioners are called upon and often consent to perform, and on the ways in which this is done. Few would seriously question justice as a value in broad and general terms or argue that gender justice did not matter, that cultural concerns of recognition were unimportant, that poverty constituted an injustice, or that cross-border migrants did not have human rights. However, beyond such broad-brush ideas, there appears to be little consensus on the meaning or scope of justice (Fraser, 2009a). This is where Fraser's *multidimensional, multilevel theory of justice* holds utility for social work education: it can provide students with a conceptual grid to help develop shared understandings of contemporary forms of injustices and their common, underlying dynamics, as well as the kinds of responsibilities the profession holds in relation to them.

V. Crisis of capitalism, abnormal justice, and the call for transformative practices in social work education

Recently, Fraser (2012) turned her attention to the *crisis of capitalism in the 21st century*, which she described as one of great severity and complexity and unprecedented intricacy and brutality, for which we lack a conceptual framework to interpret or resolve it 'in an

emancipatory way’ (p. 4) (see also Fraser, 2016a, 2016b; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018). Importantly, Fraser (2012) noted that this crisis is ‘multidimensional, encompassing not only economy and finance, but also ecology, society, and politics’ (p. 4), and that the *crisis nodes* in these respective spheres are interlinked on a global scale. With this, Fraser aligned her scholarship with that of an increasing number of critical theorists, who have turned their attention to the question of ecological justice and its connection to other dimensions of justice (see also Chapters ... in this Volume).

Fraser (2012) contended that contemporary social struggles unfolding around major crisis nodes in the ecological, economic, and sphere of social reproduction ‘must be analysed as a *triple movement* in which ... struggles for *emancipation* alongside those for *marketisation* and *social protection* ... combine and collide’ (p. 12 emphasis added). According to Fraser (2012), struggles for *emancipation* comprise a diverse set of anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-racist, anti-imperial, de-colonial, and environmentalist movements in regions of both the Global North and South. Struggles for *marketisation* are being waged by forces representing neoliberal interests in governments, international governance structures, and the corporate sector worldwide, among other places. Struggles for *social protection*, finally, are pursued by formations as diverse as social-democratic parties and trade-union movements on the one hand and a range of (re-)emerging nationalist movements on the other, who operate from assumptions that protectionist measures around national boundaries might shield their constituencies from un- and under-employment and buffer existing social security systems against being eroded; that cultural insecurities might be contained by limiting or, better still, reversing the presence of *Others* in their communities; or that the continued extraction of minerals and fossil fuels from the earth around them might advance, rather than undermine, their followers’ interests and well-being (see Fraser, 2012; 2016a, 2016b; Fraser & Jaeggi,

2018). In saying, furthermore, that these three lines of struggle can combine as well as collide, Fraser alerts her readers that simplistic left-right cartographies of the contemporary political space can be shown to be increasingly inadequate. In the case of women, for instance, emancipation continues to require the right to sell labour, thus aligning this interest with some of the demands of free marketeers (see Section III above), yet potentially pitting women against the agendas of social protectionists. Meanwhile, demands for social protection that go together with calls for the subjugation and exclusion of *Others* are anti-emancipatory (see Sections II and IV above), while consent to the continued destruction of the natural environment is apt to strengthen neoliberal and neocolonial agendas (see Fraser, 2012; 2016a, 2016b; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018).

Given this analysis, Fraser's (2009a) observation of a diminishing of consensus concerning both meaning and scope of justice is perhaps unsurprising. Fraser (2009a) referred to this as *abnormal justice*, that is, a historical moment when public debates about justice 'increasingly lack the structured character of normal discourse', instead assuming a progressively 'freewheeling character' (p. 49). In other words, the idea of abnormal justice refers to a situation where there are insufficiently shared normative understandings concerning the issues being deliberated upon. This then makes consensus hard to conceive and difficult to attain. Conditions of abnormal justice can be said to prevail when calls for social protection are made both by movements clamouring for the opening of national boundaries and those demanding the opposite; when struggles for women's emancipation align with economic agendas which serve also to retain poor and racialised women in positions of powerlessness and exploitability; and when fears of economic marginalisation and loss of social protection prompt the consent of communities to the continued exploitation of natural resources at the cost of undermining the sustainability of life itself. When such shared understandings are

lacking, Fraser (2009a) contended, ‘contests over basic premises [of justice] proliferate [and] deviation becomes ... the rule’ (p. 50). The idea of abnormal justice, therefore, alerts social work that contemporary political, economic, social, cultural, and ecological crises need not necessarily lead to emancipatory outcomes generally, or within social work discourse and practices more specifically. However, it does make room for the possibility that, and enable imaginations of how, different social movements might align and combine in myriad ways to advance emancipatory ends. It is the task of social work education to equip students to navigate this increasingly complex terrain.

Thus, incorporating the concept of abnormal justice into social work education could contribute to students developing critical reflexivity around their roles and responsibilities in relation to contemporary expressions and experiences of injustice. This is because it opens possibilities and creates an imperative for activists, including social workers, to try and (re-)inscribe egalitarian values - that is, the principle of participatory parity - into debates on the implications and requirements of justice in a world seemingly spinning out of control. It also brings the transformative potential of Fraser’s multidimensional notion of social justice to the fore: in claiming the right to participate on a par, activists can work to advance a comprehensive notion of justice that attends at once to the question of *what* is at stake, *who* should participate in deliberations about this, and *how* decision-making rules have come into being and may need to be changed to ensure that *all subjected* to the fallout from the unfolding ecological, economic, social and political crises can have a say in resolving them. In other words, social work education needs to meet the requirements of Fraser’s (2003, 2009a, 2013) notion of *transformative practices*, that is, a form of activism directed at changing ‘the deep grammar’ of injustice ‘in a globalising world’ (Fraser, 2009a, pp. 23-24) (see Section IV). Just how can such a notion of *justice as a transformative practice* be shared and explored in a way that is

directly relevant to students' lived experiences and, rather than abstract ideas, is tangible and meaningful within their personal and emerging professional horizons? This is the concern of the chapter's final section.

VI. Transformative practices in social work education: A case study from South Africa

As highlighted in the introduction and Section III, Fraser contended that the concept of justice generally and its central norm of participatory parity specifically denote both substantive and procedural concerns, thereby drawing attention to the content and process of social work education. This understanding guided several years of higher education research and practice in South Africa, including in the field of social work (Bozalek, 2014; Bozalek, Zembylas & Hölscher, forthcoming; Hölscher, 2018; Hölscher & Chiumbu, forthcoming). The research focused, among other things, on 'students' experiences' of 'participatory parity' and how the use of 'transformative pedagogical practices' might make it possible for them to 'participate as equals' in their education (Bozalek, 2014, p. 6). As part of this research, students from 'nine differently placed public universities' (Hölscher, 2018, p. 32) conducted a range of Participatory Learning and Action activities, including drawing their personal life lines and visual representations of their respective communities, and producing photovoice stories (Bozalek, 2011, 2013; Chambers, 2006; Wang, 2006). They presented and discussed these with one another in recorded focus groups. In several instances, students proceeded to analyse their respective artworks and discussions, compiling their findings using Fraser's theory of justice as their framework (see, for example, Hölscher, 2018). One social work student described her experience of the process as follows:

We shared thoughts and experiences as well as ideas ... using the different symbols ... It was the first time I could talk about my experiences and ... I felt ... like ... a rock ... [had] been removed from my shoulders ... I also listened to others' stories which then made me ... feel better ... I used to not [be] proud of who I am ... but ... being in a participatory group is the most amazing feeling because we all feel equal and no one is better than the other.

As students shared and reflected upon forms of injustice they had encountered across their life spans and discussed the different ways in which they had tried and often failed to cope with and resist them, they discovered a similarity of experiences, which signified the structural injustices embedded in South African society. Issues that came to the fore included experiences of poverty as structural violence, sexual exploitation, the dynamics of academic and financial exclusions from higher learning, and the frequent student protests in which most had taken part (Bozalek et al., forthcoming). In addition, the social work students discovered and explored the extent to which they continued to share in the experiences of the communities in which they had grown up and from where many of their future service-users would come (Hölscher & Chiumbu, forthcoming). Furthermore, students were able to use Fraser's concepts to articulate and interpret their experiences within their broader context of South Africa's historical struggle for liberation and emancipation (see, for example, Caluza, 2015). These concepts assisted the students in developing shared understandings of citizenship, their expectations of the university as an institution to which they could belong, and what this meant for them as future social work practitioners (see, for example, Khoza, 2016; Magubane, 2015). Importantly, the methodology prompted social work participants to consider different forms of political action in response to the forms of injustices they had encountered. Activities that students explored and, where feasible, implemented in the wake of their research included: exhibiting their artefacts and

research findings and initiating monthly ‘talking sessions’ between different stakeholders in social work education to address collaboratively concerns around gender violence, poverty and financial exclusion from higher learning (Hölscher, 2018, p. 45); conducting mutual support schemes, writing to the press and relevant government ministers, and organising public protests (Hölscher & Chiumbu, forthcoming). Finally, it has been possible to demonstrate the capacity of the participating students to contribute to critical theorising in social work (Hölscher & Chiumbu, forthcoming).

Within the context of this research project, Nancy Fraser’s concepts and the modes of engagement which they inspired were shown to have transformative potential in terms of how students positioned themselves, related to, perceived, interpreted, understood, and acted upon important injustices in their lives. Participating students experienced what it meant to engage as equals within the contexts they described, overall, as structurally unjust. This, in turn, encouraged them to explore different ways in which they could claim voice and demand recognition of the challenges they faced and contributions they could make as students and future social workers. By situating their personal experiences within South Africa’s historical struggles, the students did not retreat into an identity politics that focused merely on their individual claims as members of ‘black’ or ‘female’ or ‘poor’ constituencies. Instead, they drew links between one another and in relation to their communities of origin and future service-users. They were able to articulate the underlying dynamics, or deep grammar, connecting them. The research pointed to the possibility that to the extent to which students could experience the transformative power of engaging as equals, they might also be open to what would be involved in engaging with future service-users as their equals and explain why they should want to do this.

In all these respects, the research suggests that educational interventions which incorporate the principle participatory parity both in terms of substantive contents and pedagogical style might help enable and inform future social workers' critically-reflexive engagement around the profession's roles in perpetuating prevailing regimes of injustice, their responsibility to resist this, and ways of doing so creatively. None of this suffices, on its own, to resolve the intricacies of contemporary crises of justice. It might, however, contribute to avoiding a social work education that reproduces a depoliticised acceptance of the world as it is, pathologises the vulnerable and poor, and attempts to ameliorate problems in a way that, ultimately, contributes to maintaining the *status quo*. It might, thus, provide social work students with a conceptual and normative compass to navigate an increasingly complex terrain in a manner that may be considered *just*.

VII. Conclusion

This chapter sought to demonstrate the relevance of Nancy Fraser's life-time work on justice for social work education, in terms of content and pedagogical practices. It presented the historical depth and conceptual scope of Fraser's work on justice as a matter of substance and process through her concepts of *needs interpretation*, *dependency*, and *gender justice*; *participatory parity* and the *economic* and *cultural dimensions of justice*; and the *political dimension of justice* as a set of structural processes spanning three interconnected levels; and *abnormal justice* in the context of *capitalist crisis*, as signified by deepening and escalating nodes of injustice. Finally, it explicated Fraser's emphasis on the need for *transformative practices* to change the deep grammar underlying the breadth and depth of contemporary forms of injustice. In this respect, it argued that, overall, its critical and radical traditions notwithstanding, social work has fallen short in its mission to eradicate injustice. It posited that

this is possibly due to its affinity to *expert* discourses, its readiness to embrace *reprivatisation*, and its longstanding discomfort with *oppositional discourses* on the needs of those who use and depend on its services. Further, it argued that the implications for social work education and practice inhere in Fraser's insights on social justice within a complex and rapidly changing world. Fraser invites students to attend to injustices of maldistribution, misrecognition, misframing, misrepresentation, and reprivatisation and their effects on service-users and providers in the Global North and South under conditions of capitalist crisis. Taking the principle of participatory parity seriously means supporting students in finding – and demanding – their own voice so they might articulate and deliberate on their experiences of injustice, their visions of justice, and their ideas on how social work might contribute to advancing justice in a deep, transformative way. Transformative pedagogical practices of this nature facilitate and extend practices of participatory parity *in* the classroom and provide students opportunities to explore and develop the confidence to engage in transformative practices *beyond* it. This would enable future social workers to contribute to emancipatory movements responding to contemporary crises of economic, ecological, social, political, and cultural injustice.

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