

Towards a Realist-Informed Integrated Theory of Justice

by

Adam Patrick Molnar
B.A. with Honours in Sociology and Political Science, Double Major,
York University, 2005

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Sociology

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ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary theoretical and political approaches have sought to integrate both a material politics of redistribution and a cultural politics of recognition into a relational theoretical framework. Such frameworks consider the intersecting ways individuals and groups suffer from over-determining social inequalities that are rooted in the economic, cultural and political orders of society. In this thesis, I identify approaches that seek to explain the intersection between economic, cultural, and political variables as “integrated” theories of justice. At the forefront of integrated approaches that have cut across disciplinary and epistemological divides, I critically engage with Nancy Fraser’s integrated theory of justice (1995, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005). I also examine similar, yet alternative approaches advanced by Jacinda Swanson (2005) and others that have attempted to reconcile the economy/culture/politics relationship. I argue that while integrated theories of social justice provide a correction to previous “reductionist” and “essentializing” theories of social justice, they do not go far enough to capture the over-determining interconnections between economics, politics, culture, and agency. As a result, they are unable to adequately address the complexity of social inequalities. To address this problem in the literature, I re-work integrated theories of social justice that attempt to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide through an integration with a realist meta-theoretical approach. A realist approach offers several theoretical, methodological and political gains for recasting complex theories of social justice.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to several shining lights who have inspired me at different times and in many different ways. Out of all the inevitable unknowns that accompany a move across the country, I never could have expected how many brilliant folks would be concentrated into the same place and time. The graduate student community at UVic has been a truly remarkable find. I would also like to express deep gratitude to my supervisor, Sean Hier. His rousing intellect, academic guidance, and cutting wit is immensely inspiring and motivating. I owe a great deal to his practical and theoretical expressions of social relations and social relationships, which are always grounded in solid guidance and companionship. Thanks also to my committee for their personal and professional attributes that inspire me in many ways beyond the production of this document. Finally, it is unduly necessary that I acknowledge the engaging support from Nicole Lindsay. Her support knows no bounds.

DEDICATION

For Eunice

CHAPTER ONE: TOWARDS A REALIST-INFORMED INTEGRATED THEORY OF JUSTICE

“Give me a place to stand and I will see the world” – Archimedes

Struggles for social justice in the 20th Century are predominantly characterized by two general paradigms. The first paradigm is the social politics of redistribution. The redistribution paradigm explains social injustice primarily in terms of the inequitable distribution of valued material resources (e.g., jobs, capital, education) across social groups and collectives. Here, redistribution claims advocate for equitable resource distribution across society. The second paradigm is the cultural politics of recognition. The recognition paradigm explains social injustice primarily in terms of inequitable patterns of representation, communication and interpretation. Here, recognition claims press for an open society based on acceptance of difference, respect, and mutual recognition. Both paradigms capture important dimensions of social injustice and inform how theoretical frameworks are conceptualized and applied in social research programs. Problematically, however, each paradigm is often treated separately in the literature, thereby limiting a deeper understanding of over-determining configurations of economic and cultural inequality.

On the one hand, research invoking the paradigm of social distribution demonstrates tendencies toward economic reductionism. Injustices in this paradigm are often explained as emerging from processes tied to capitalist accumulation. While several Marxist and neo-marxist positions that theoretically inform this paradigm have moved beyond a purely economic explanation for the continuation of social injustice, they implicitly or explicitly continue to conceptualize cultural processes as epiphenomenal to

other social indicators (i.e., class). On the other hand, research invoking the paradigm of cultural recognition demonstrate tendencies toward essentializing group differences by treating culture as epiphenomenal to other social indicators. Injustices in this paradigm are often explained through lived subjective experiences that serve as a categorical reality that offers analytic significance to social analyses (Hier and Walby 2006: 98). While several culturalist theories have broadened the range of explanatory possibilities beyond the economic base structure, they have tended to rely on a relativism associated with pure social constructionism and agential voluntarism.

Subsequent theoretical and political approaches have sought to integrate both a material politics of redistribution and a cultural politics of recognition into a relational framework that considers the intersecting ways that individuals and groups suffer from over-determining social inequalities that are rooted in the economic, cultural and political orders of society. In this thesis, I identify approaches that seek to explain the intersection between economic, cultural, and political variables as “integrated” theories of justice. At the forefront of integrated approaches that have cut across disciplinary and epistemological divides, I critically engage with Nancy Fraser’s integrated theory of justice (1995, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005). I also examine similar, yet alternative approaches advanced by Jacinda Swanson (2005), Iris Marion-Young (1997) and others that have tried to reconcile the economy/culture/politics relationship in social justice perspectives. While integrated theories of social justice provide a correction to previous “reductionist” and “essentializing” theories of social justice, I argue that they do not go far enough to capture the over-determining interconnections between economics, politics, culture, and agency. One result is that they fail to adequately address the complexity of

social inequalities. That is, Fraser and her critics' arguments (Butler 1997; Smith 2001; Swanson 2005; Young 1997) operate at a broad level of analytic abstraction that provide sensitizing accounts of injustice. They do not, however, examine substantive explanations of causality and contingency in concrete social practice. As a result, Fraser's approach implies that various determinants can be regarded as equivocal.

To address this problem in the literature, I will re-work integrated theories of social justice that attempt to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide. I argue that integrated theories of social justice are compatible with a realist ontology and can be strengthened through an integration with critical realist "meta-theory". Integrated theories of social justice can be reworked in two main ways.

First, as a philosophy of science, critical realism is as much about how we inquire into the social sciences as it is about determining the object of social scientific analysis. I argue that, in order to sharpen our understanding of the complex reality that is comprised of over-determining relationships contributing to instances of oppression, a realist-informed integrated theory of social justice calls for epistemological re-working of already existing theoretical and empirical research methods. Approaching these theories in a scientific way, critical realism is well positioned to provide an explanatory critique of the epistemological frameworks informing contemporary theories of social justice. Critical realism introduces a level of thoroughness and complexity that is missing from many of these theories, a point that does not require the development of new theories of social justice. Rather, a realist approach advances a critical appraisal and clarification of already existing theories, illuminating a valuable direction forward.

Second, developing an epistemological reconstruction of integrated theories of social justice requires the reframing of the ontological foundations of theories of social justice through a critical realist meta-theory. This requires an ontological approach that navigates past questions of knowledge and action in order to identify questions about what the world must be like for our objects of analysis to exist (Bhaskar 1975, 1979). This position asserts that the social world is not reducible to heuristic devices, analytic concepts and praxis-oriented philosophizing. It involves, rather, an understanding of pre-existing material and ideationally structured contexts. Such an approach enhances already existing integrated theories of social justice that are moving toward non-reductionist and non-essentializing ways of understanding, but it is characteristically different in that it points out the more fine-grained details of a structured, overlapping and differentiated totality, a necessary element in the attribution of causality in social scientific inquiry. This approach eschews overly broad analytic categories of culture, economic and race, for example, in favour of understanding a constellation of structures and generative mechanisms that overlap, co-determine and interplay with social practice and the understandings of social agents in concrete social settings.

Advancing a solution to the epistemological shortcomings of contemporary integrated theories of social justice requires their integration with a critical realist meta-theory. This involves both first- and second-order critique. By first-order critique, I mean the development of theoretical concepts and methods that are used to generate new kinds of knowledge through empirical research studies. In this way, first-order critique helps produce first-order knowledge of the social world. By second-order critique, I am referring to a realist critique of already existing epistemological concepts. In this way,

second-order critiques move away from a logic of discovery and towards the reformulation and reconfiguring of existing social justice theories and discourses.

The realist approach advanced in this thesis is twofold. First, I develop aspects of a distinct ontological position that analyzes concrete instances of social inequality as a first-order critique. Secondly, this approach also applies a philosophy of science that reconstructs already existing epistemological theories of social justice as a second-order critique. This dual approach deepens our theoretical descriptions and social scientific explanations, holding profound implications for the relationship between theory, methodology and social policy.

The critical realist approach also directs new lines of social investigation that are currently absent from contemporary integrated theories of social justice. This includes refined understandings of the significance of resituating the social agent and the importance of the dialectical relationship between semiotic and extra-semiotic aspects in analyses of integrated theories of social justice. The remainder of this introduction provides a brief outline of the chapters included in this thesis.

In Chapter Two, I begin by elaborating on the predominant forms of social justice paradigms (i.e., redistribution and recognition) by commenting on their related fundamental theoretical articulations in the literature. I then describe Fraser's integrated social justice framework as one attempt to reconcile the economy/culture divide. This involves an inquiry into how Fraser conceptualizes claims and remedies for redistribution (economics), recognition (culture), and representation (politics), and associated relations and remedies between them. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the historical trajectory of social justice theories, providing a knowledgeable foundation of the

epistemological criticisms before examining some of the more complex ideas associated with critical realism in Chapter Three, and before the development of a more in-depth integrated-analysis of Fraser's framework and critical realism in Chapter Four.

Chapter Three highlights realism's virtues for enhancing theoretical and methodological inquiry into integrated theories of social justice. This chapter discusses the foundational assumptions of critical realism, emphasizing an alternative mode of reasoning that moves beyond social justice theories and analytical approaches discussed in the previous chapter. I introduce and detail the central tenets of critical realism that are relevant for both first- and second-order critique. The five central tenets include dimensions of knowledge (i.e., transitive and intransitive), ontological stratification and emergence, causality, abstraction, analytical dualism and social domains (Archer 1995; Bhaskar 1975, 1979; Danermark et al. 2002; Layder 1997; Sawyer 2005; Sayer 2000).

The first half of Chapter Three deals with realist principles that inform the basic explanatory framework of realism. This includes first-order methods that underpin empirical and conceptual schemas. The second half of the chapter deals with epistemological models and approaches that are also used to augment Fraser and her critics' integrated theories of social justice. This chapter illuminates realist philosophical and ontological arguments that help us reformulate and resolve impasses found in social justice theoretical streams that rely on explanations based solely on an arbitrary attitude to ontology and related epistemological difficulties. Most importantly, however, this chapter lays the groundwork for bringing the most fundamental and powerful premises of a critical realist meta-theory together with Fraser's integrated theory of social justice in order to develop a theoretical analysis that captures the complex interconnections

between economics, culture, politics, and the dialectical relationship between semiotic and extra-semiotic conditions.

In Chapter Four, I critically interrogate the lingering analytical problems in attempts to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide by integrating the insights presented in the previous two chapters. Here, I argue that integrated theories of social justice can be better understood through a stratified ontology, contributing to a restoration of the abstract-concrete relationship in integrated theories of social justice. The main points of criticism I advance include the problems associated with using overly broad analytic categories such as “economics” and “race”, as well as the problems associated with “flat ontologizing.” I also raise questions about the specificity, explanatory power, and relationships between the concepts used in integrated theories of social justice. A realist “analytical domain approach” assumes importance at this point. Close attention to analytical domains helps to sort the concentration of many determinations, allowing us to better understand a non-reductionist and non-essentializing approach to instances of social (in)justice. Finally, I introduce a realist alternative that emerges from several of the central tenets of realism introduced in Chapter Two. Here, I integrate the most fruitful insights from two realist positions: realism and racism and cultural political economy that re-organizes the conceptual articulations of the economy/culture divide. The implications of this epistemological reconstruction propels critical analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter Five deals with a distinctively realist approach to Fraser’s latest attempt to conceptualize the importance of political representation in the contemporary theories of social (in)justice. Building on common realist arguments in previous chapters, the

focus of this chapter is on the relationship between semiotic and extra-semiotic processes that are implicated in processes of political (mis)representation. In this chapter, I show how Fraser's approach to theorizing the processes of political representation presents a weak notion of the structure-agency relationship and is limited in its ability to provide a fuller understanding of how processes of representation become selected and retained within political economic structures. Specifically, attention to how political representations become selected and retained within particular institutional configurations broadens our understandings of how social processes emerge within analytical domains that are implicit in the economy/culture/politics divide. The notion of political representation advanced in this chapter moves away from an argument concerning various ideal-typical 'forms' of political representation, towards an understanding of the social dynamics that are implicated within processes of representation. Here, I argue that by failing to take account of the structure-agency relationship, social justice theorists will often to run into the problem that their concepts are over-extended and fail to adequately describe the multiple ontological connections that are implicated in the reproduction of social injustices.

Based on analyses in the first five chapters, I conclude in the final chapter that the dominant formations of contemporary theories of social justice are of limited use for capturing the complex interconnections between economics, culture, politics, and agency as they relate to other semiotic and extra-semiotic materialities. I readily acknowledge that addressing complex ontological connections of causality is not an explicit part of Fraser's project; however, moving from an understanding of Fraser's integrated theory of social justice as a sensitizing framework to understanding how we might consider

causality in complexly over-determined social processes has beneficial implications for analytical paradigms of social justice. Augmenting contemporary integrated theories of social justice with realist insights presents a powerful first-order approach to theorizing such complex interconnections between economics, culture, and politics as they relate to human agency and the dialectical relation between semiosis and extra-semiotic materialities. Moreover, as a philosophy of science that stands outside of dominant social theories, it also offers critical potential for a second-order epistemological reconstruction of contemporary theories of social justice. The implications of realism's prioritization of ontological questions directs new lines of political and social investigation that are currently absent from several contemporary integrated theories of social justice.

CHAPTER TWO: RECASTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

In this chapter, I conceptualize the redistribution and recognition paradigms of social (in)justice in terms of a more general economic/cultural divide that runs through social justice theory. I also provide a brief overview of the economy/culture divide in social justice theory to provide a historical framework for introducing more contemporary approaches to reconcile the economy/culture divide. I introduce Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice, which attempts to reinterpret and reconcile the historical imprint left on the economy/culture/politics divide by previous economic and cultural interpretations of social injustice. Fraser's approach offers a fuller understanding of the irreducibility of competing theoretical and political positions in the social justice literature.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish an understanding of the historical emergence of the economy/culture divide for analysis subsequent chapters, where I will explain how reconciliation attempts have yet to fully capture the complexity of the connections between economics, culture, politics and agency as they relate to other semiotic¹ and political economic materialities. Put differently, social justice theorists rely on overly broad analytic assertions that prioritize certain dimensions of social injustice to the exclusion of others, resulting in ambiguity about the social processes involved in relationships between economics, culture and political representation.

¹ Following Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2004: 23) and Jessop (2004: 161), I take semiosis to refer to the entirety of all aspects involved in the "intersubjective production of meaning" (Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2004: 23).

THEORIES OF JUSTICE: ECONOMY, CULTURE, POLITICS

According to Nancy Fraser (1995, 1998, 2000, 2003), claims for social justice in the 20th Century took two primary forms: the social politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition. Although both orientations capture important dimensions of social injustices, Fraser argues that by the late 20th century claims for cultural recognition were displacing claims for material redistribution as the primary remedy for injustices. For Fraser, however, the decoupling of socio-economic and cultural politics is a mistake: fuller understandings of social injustices and their unique configurations of economic and cultural inequality require detailed and nuanced empirical investigation.

From this perspective, Fraser advances redistribution, recognition and representation as folk paradigms of justice that characterize struggles for social justice in contemporary society. These paradigms each express a distinct perspective on social justice that, in their ideal-typical forms, can be applied to the context of any social movement (Fraser 2003: 12). In this way, Fraser's ideal-typical paradigms express unique orientations that inform social justice movements of today. I shall deal with each redistribution and recognition, respectively.

For most of the 20th Century, the socio-economic perspective of material redistribution predominated in social justice scholarship. The redistribution paradigm emerges from the philosophical articulations of the liberal, anglo-american tradition (see John Rawls 1971 and Ronald Dworkin 1977). Fraser notes that this tradition sought to synthesize traditional liberal emphasis on individual liberty with an egalitarian conception of social democracy (Fraser 2003: 10). The result was a new conception of justice that legitimated socio-economic redistribution (Fraser 2003: 10).

Bracketing the philosophical articulations of the paradigm of redistribution, Fraser reconfigures her analysis to consider redistribution differently, as an ideal-typical political paradigm. Re-considered as a folk paradigm of justice, the redistribution approach locates the roots of social inequality in the political-economic structure of society. The central injustices of this paradigm involve unjust distribution of valued material resources and socio-economic disparities. Examples of inequalities in this paradigm include capitalist exploitation, economic marginalization, and material deprivation (Fraser 2003: 13). Accordingly, the paradigm of redistribution encompasses social movements situated around class-centred issues, socialism, social democracy, and New Deal liberalism. However, the redistribution paradigm also extends to include strands of feminism and anti-racism pursuing social change programs that centre around socioeconomic transformation or reform as the key remedy for gender or racial injustice. The key difference here is that the redistribution paradigm must extend beyond its conventional articulation with class politics to address the broad connections of contemporary social injustices.

By contrast, a second paradigm of social justice, the “politics of recognition”, emerged to displace claims for egalitarian redistribution (Fraser 2003: 7-8). The recognition paradigm derives from philosophical positions that emphasize neo-Hegelian articulations of the phenomenology of consciousness (see Axel Honneth 1996 and Charles Taylor 1992). This position emphasizes equitable forms of intersubjective recognition, resulting in a conception of justice that promotes self-realization and equal moral worth among beings.

Bracketing philosophical expressions of the paradigm of recognition, Fraser again, re-considers the political reference of the recognition paradigm as a folk paradigm of justice. In its ideal-typical form, the recognition approach situates injustices in cultural terms. Here, social injustice is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication, and for example, include cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect through cultural misrepresentations (Fraser 2003: 13). Accordingly, the paradigm of recognition encompasses social movements situated around movements seeking to revalue unfairly represented identities. This includes, cultural feminists, gay identity politics, as well as more anti-essentialist movements such as queer politics and critical race politics (Fraser 2003: 12). The primary difference from conventional understandings is that recognition politics must extend beyond traditional notions of identity politics if it is to address the interrelated connections of contemporary social injustices.

By conceptualizing redistribution and recognition paradigms of injustice as folk paradigms, Fraser is able to assert that each perspective represents a distinct position that cannot be reduced to its specific political manifestation. Furthermore, this facilitates a deeper understanding of how traditionally distinct philosophical and political orientations have been falsely cast as anti-thetical. For Fraser, the economy/culture divide is not irreconcilable.

Fraser advances an integrative approach that cuts across disciplinary and theoretical boundaries, showing how each paradigm can be reconciled and integrated into a practical political schema. Agreeing that the period of traditional economic Marxism as a grand narrative of social movements in contemporary capitalism is over, Fraser argues

that social theorists must fully embrace the rise of a new post-marxian field of critical theory that includes poststructuralist theories of discourse, critical theories of race and ethnicity, as well as theories of feminism. This, however, does not mean that insights of Marxism no longer hold a central place in this new post-marxian field of critical theorizing (Fraser 1998a). One of Fraser's primary theoretical objectives is to place the post-structuralist discursive project in relation to macro-sociological structural theorizing of political economy and institutions. Incorporating a place for Marxism in contemporary critical theory is not just important theoretically, it solidifies the vital relationship between theory and practice that is a core component of Fraser's project (Fraser 1998a).

FRASER'S INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Reflecting on this counter-productive disjuncture in the New Left of the 1970s, Fraser launched a critical theoretical project that aimed to reclaim "the best elements of socialist politics...and [integrate] them with the best elements of the politics of the 'new social movements'" (Fraser 1998b: 149). In her attempt to reconcile the economy/culture/(politics) divide, Fraser originally advanced a dual-perspective conceptual framework of "Redistribution and Recognition", and more recently adding a third alliterative dimension, "Representation".

Fraser's dualist model of redistribution and recognition implies two distinctive analytical positions for addressing configurations of social (in)justice. The redistribution paradigm focuses on socio-economic injustices that are rooted in the economic structure

of society. Such socio-economic injustices include capitalist exploitation, economic marginalization and economic deprivation (Fraser 2003: 13). Alternatively, the recognition paradigm focuses on cultural injustices located in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication. Examples of cultural injustices include cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect (Fraser 2003: 13). Fraser's project seeks to integrate redistribution and recognition in a non-additive way, where each analytical position is irreducible to the other.

Fraser's integrated theory of redistribution and recognition foregrounds ideal-typical positions of social groups who are affected by distinct but overlapping forms of wealth disparities, status inequalities and barriers to political participation in contemporary society. This approach involves an economy/culture continuum that conceptualizes remedies of different forms of injustice as involving either redistribution or economic restructuring, cultural recognition or symbolic change. On one end of the continuum are groups who are seeking economic redistribution, such as the working class. On the other are groups who are seeking cultural recognition, such as ethnic groups or gays and lesbians. Central to Fraser's argument are groups who might be positioned in the middle of the continuum. Here, groups who experience some form of ethnic or gender subordination are also likely to be over-determined by economic injustice. Most oppressed groups are doubly affected by cultural injustice and economic injustice, the resultant effects of maldistribution or misrecognition. Remedies for cultural and economic injustice are therefore considered to be compatible, helping us recognize how oppression assumes over-determining economic, cultural and political variables. A central problem that Fraser points out, however, is that the social politics of redistribution

and the cultural politics of recognition have contradictory claims when it comes to political remedies.

In this context, Fraser introduces two approaches to remedying injustice that cut across the redistribution—recognition divide: ‘affirmation’ and ‘transformation’, respectively. Affirmative remedies to justice are aimed at “correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them” (Fraser 1995: 82). In contrast, transformative remedies are aimed at “correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework” (Fraser 1995: 82). The key distinction between the two for Fraser, is that affirmative processes address “end-state outcomes”, where transformative remedies address “processes that produce them” (Fraser 1995: 82).

The complexities of the affirmative—transformative distinction are most pronounced when they are applied to bi-valent groups who suffer from combinations of economic and cultural injustice, as positioned in the middle of the previously discussed continuum. A brief example considers racial groups that pursue either affirmative or transformative remedies. Firstly, affirmative action is associated with both affirmative recognition and affirmative processes of redistribution. The problem here is that affirmative approaches leave intact the deep structures that generate racial disadvantage while also emphasizing racial differentiation. The two affirmative approaches work at a cross-roads to simultaneously stigmatize racial groups while also reproducing a surface reallocation of the processes of capital. The political upshot is an accentuation of group differences and a reiteration of capitalist processes.

Alternatively, combining transformative redistribution with transformative recognition leads to a different result. For Fraser, transformative redistribution to address racial injustice through the deep structures of the economy includes some political form of “anti-racist democratic socialism” (Fraser 1995: 91). Co-extensively, transformative recognition to address racial injustice in cultural contexts includes a transgressive politics of anti-racism aimed at deconstructing racial dichotomies. The two transformative approaches are compatible, combined in a solution that emphasizes “socio-economic politics of socialist anti-racism” with the “cultural politics of deconstructive anti-racism” (Fraser 1995: 91). The political upshot here is the blurring of group boundaries and a deep restructuring of the capitalist mode of production.

To integrate a conceptual model that makes the best of both the social politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition, Fraser has more recently added a third dimension: political representation (2005). Where struggles for redistribution and recognition involve, “socialism in the economy and deconstruction in the culture” (Fraser 1995: 91), Fraser’s political dimension addresses the distinct political processes implicit in struggles for redistribution and recognition. Here, claims to political misrepresentation are related to structures of public contestation and social arrangements of inclusion/exclusion that structure the field where struggles for maldistribution and misrecognition are pursued. Representational justice requires access to political representation in the political system. Without proper political representation, claim-makers have little recourse to address injustice. Simply put, there is no redistribution or recognition without representation (Fraser 2005: 86).

The addition of this distinctly political dimension to Fraser's conceptual model can be understood as an extension of her normative concept of "participatory parity". For Fraser, participatory parity is the over-arching universal monistic-normative principle that orders the multiple claims to economic and cultural injustices under one basic problem. The notion of participatory parity presupposes the moral worth of all beings (Fraser 2003: 44) and takes as its base premise the equal participation of all adults in the political process. Analytically, the norm of participatory parity is couched at the level of actually existing discursive political structures and processes. That is, the practical application of participatory parity relies on a democratic and dialogical process of public debate that permits every member of society to freely engage and deliberate on political issues with one another.

Fraser's integrated model facilitates a deeper understanding of how previously one-sided accounts of the economy/culture/(politics) divide perpetuate limited explanations of instances of social injustice. In this analytic context, Fraser's integrated model of social justice necessitates reconfiguring the relationships between class, gender, and race/ethnicity. For Fraser, the socially constructed nature of gender, race and class means they are "entirely on par with one another" (Fraser 1998a) as contingent cultural processes that function "relatively autonomous vis-à-vis- social structure" (Fraser 1998a). At face value, this theoretical shift avoids common forms of class, gender and racial essentialism. The intersectionality — or over-determination — between class, gender and race-ethnicity means that no single social movement that centres around the primacy of each of these variables can be fully understood through a single reductionist lens. This approach also has the benefit of avoiding tendencies toward reductionist and

essentializing arguments while reintroducing the significance of economic injustice. However, in spite of these sensitivities, Fraser displays a tendency to reify identity categories even as her theory questions identity politics (Merck 2007: 52).

CONCLUSION

Fraser's conceptual schema presents an important model for critiquing essentializing and reductionist theorizing. Its reliance on ideal-typical constellations provide a clear and coherent model for developing practical sociological research programs that account for intervening aspects of economic, cultural and political processes in a non-additive approach. Although Fraser's multi-dimensional approach exemplifies the most prevalent attempts in social theory to enact a single interlocking reality to reconcile the economy/culture divide, certain limitations do remain. To flesh out the limitations of Fraser's approach, I continue in the following chapter to introduce critical realism as a recent development in the philosophy of social science that works to augment Fraser and other integrated theories of social justice.

CHAPTER THREE: A REALIST ALTERNATIVE

“There are two sorts of curiosity — the momentary and the permanent. The momentary is concerned with the odd appearance on the surface of things. The permanent is attracted by the amazing and consecutive life that flows on beneath the surface of things.” —Robert Lynd

Realism locates its epistemological roots in a merger of scientific naturalism and transcendental realism: a combination known as *critical naturalism*. Critical naturalists argue that the study of society can follow a similar approach to that of the natural sciences; however, contra positivism the methods of analysis must be adjusted to account for the specific qualities of social processes. In this way, realism offers a *social scientific* approach that also upholds the transcendental argument of the mind-independence of reality. The “critical” of critical realism indicates a distinction between a naturalist approach and one that is directed toward explanatory critique of social processes.

Critical realists explore ontological (what exists in reality), epistemological (how we come to know reality through our concepts, theories, etc.) and methodological components of already existing theoretical and empirical explanations. The task of realist meta-theoretical arguments in the context of social and political theory lies in “establishing the mode of essence of those causal mechanisms that are social in nature (social ontology), how it is possible that we can have knowledge of them (epistemology), and that the techniques, procedures and processes are that we should deploy in order to produce said knowledge (methodology)” (Lopez 2003: 77). On these grounds, realism does not stand to replace theories of social justice, but rather, offers the potential to reformulate contemporary substantive theories of political and social justice by drawing attention to how levels of reality and causal mechanisms are implicit in many of our

common theoretical frameworks and systemic concepts. In this way, realism, as a philosophy of science or meta-theoretical framework, can be used as an under labourer to read and reformulate already existing substantive or descriptive theoretical positions in the social sciences (Layder 1990: 19; Joseph 2002a: 24-26; Sayer 1992: 4-5).

A distinctly realist position prioritizes aspects of ontology over epistemology. What this means is that realists are primarily concerned with what exists. Realists begin inquiry by asking questions like, “what must be the case so that science can be possible?” (Bhaskar 1979). Another, more specific way to ask this question is, “what are the conditions under which social processes such as racism emerge and become possible?” By prioritizing ontological questions, social scientists define the properties and powers of the object before arriving at an explanation of its relationality with other objects. For example, while realism is able to work with many of the descriptive and substantive insights from political economy and the cultural turn, it differs from substantive and descriptive theories by offering a philosophical position to prioritize a depth ontology that augments many postmodern, Marxist, and previously developed integrated theories of social justice.² This entails a progressive movement from ontological to epistemological questions, providing a welcome reconfiguration of the abstract-concrete relationship in critical social theory.

In this thesis, I use realism to introduce greater complexity into approaches already seeking to reconfigure the economy/culture/politics relationship. However, using the specifics of a realist approach shows how theoretical-method, questions of ontology, and the over-determination of semiotic and extra-semiotic processes work to develop

² For a discussion on ‘Post-modern and realist encounters’, see Andrew Sayer (2000: 29-104). Similarly, for a discussion on the relationship between critical realism and Marxism, see Brown, Fleetwood and Roberts’ “The marriage of critical realism and marxism: happy, unhappy, or on the rocks?” (2002: 1-22).

complex understandings of the economy/culture divide in integrated theories of social justice. The remainder of this chapter introduces central tenets of a realist meta-theoretical approach in two main parts. The first half deals mostly with first-order concerns of a realist prioritization of ontology and associated theoretical-methods. In this first section, I begin by introducing a definitive realist ontological position that separates a notion of reality with our knowledge of it. I also present a realist position of stratified reality and the related implications for developing a distinct understanding of causality and abstraction.

The second half introduces epistemological and methodological models that figure prominently in second-order critique. Specifically, this includes a realist Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA) and an analytical model that directs attention toward particular social domains. The purpose of this chapter is to form a basis for critique when examining attempts that have sought to recast theories of social justice.

DIMENSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE: TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE

Roy Bhaskar (1979) emphasizes a distinctive realist ontological standpoint that separates the independence of reality from our knowledge of it. This involves a separation of what Bhaskar calls the “intransitive” and “transitive” dimensions of knowledge. The intransitive dimension of knowledge refers to objects of science, or the ontological dimension of knowledge. By contrast, the transitive dimension refers to the

knowledge we have of the intransitive, or the epistemic dimension of knowledge.³

According to Roy Bhaskar's definition,

Intransitive objects of knowledge are in general invariant to our knowledge of them; they are real things and structures, mechanisms and processes, events and possibilities of the world; and for the most part they are quite independent of us ... They are the intransitive, science-dependent, objects of scientific discovery and investigation. (Bhaskar 1975: 22)

The existence of social inequalities within social and political domains doesn't necessarily rely on our conceptual knowledge of their existence. They exist "beyond the minds of actors" and are objects open for discovery.

By contrast, the transitive dimension refers to our knowledge of the world and is "actively embodied in a set of theories which form a kind of raw material for scientific practice" (Joseph 2002: 4). As an epistemic dimension, the transitive assumes the form of theories, discourses, ideas, models, methods and facts (Bhaskar 1979; Sayer 2000). In this sense, the intransitive dimension is a prerequisite condition for coming to understand the transitive dimension.

Theories, discourses and doctrines of the transitive dimension can be treated as objects of study themselves. As a theoretical discourse then, the economy/culture divide exists as a transitive object. Here, the economy/culture divide, as a referent in the social world is subject to epistemological revision. Critical realism, as a philosophy of science, therefore functions to analyze both the transitive dimension (in the form of already existing social scientific theories and claims surrounding social justice and inequality) and the intransitive dimension (of deep generative mechanisms and structures of the real).

³ In developing the distinction between epistemology and ontology, Bhaskar cites the significance of a primary act of 'referential detachment' in the beginnings of human geo-history (Hartwig 2007: 263-64).

At this point, it is important to point out that a subsequent shift in the transitive domain does not necessarily mean that the intransitive dimension also changes. Andrew Sayer (2000) captures this point, stating that “there is no reason to believe that the shift from a flat earth theory to a round earth theory was accompanied by a change in the shape of the earth itself” (p. 11). As such, our referents are always open to rival theories and competing revisions. It is upon this basis that critical realism, as a philosophy of science, is able to critique, revise and embolden already existing social scientific theories.

The distinction between the transitive and intransitive dimension highlights the fact that we must not conflate reality with our knowledge of it. This is what Bhaskar calls the “epistemic fallacy” (Bhaskar 1979). In other words, assumptions that the world corresponds strictly to our perceptions of it are misleading and lead to a “flat empiricism” in which objects and events are treated as though they have no causal powers, relatively enduring structures⁴, or unobservable characteristics. Critical realists, therefore, not only distinguish between the transitive and intransitive dimension, but adhere to the notion of a stratified reality, the subject of the following section.

THREE DIMENSIONS OF REALITY / ONTOLOGICAL STRATIFICATION

Realism begins with the transcendental notion that the world exists independently of our knowledge of it. That is, social reality is irreducible to any form of human activity and exists independently of the minds of social actors. By extension, realists assert that

⁴ I define structure in line with Sayer’s (2002) explanation that: “ ‘Structure’ suggests a set of internally related elements whose causal powers, when combined, are emergent from those of their constituents” (14). This does not mean that all structures exist supra-individually, or at macro and meso levels. Structures can also exist intra-personally within cognitive and reflexive processes (Archer 2003).

social objects are relational and adhere to a *stratified reality*. In this way, social phenomena are both relational and *emergent*, where events surface out of the complex relationship between discursive and material relations (Frauley 2007: 620). This complex reality is comprised of three main levels or domains of reality: the real, the actual, and the empirical.

The real is the realm of objects with structures and causal powers pre-disposing them to function in certain ways. Realists first identify social objects in the deep structures of the real to determine what causal liabilities, powers, and structures they exhibit. This enquiry identifies both the necessity and potentiality of particular relations of objects, given their internal and contingent nature. The lower level of the real serves as a precondition for the emergence of social processes at higher levels. Objects in the domain of the real can be triggered (actualized), blocked (lay dormant), or modified (actualized) when they form a relation with other social objects (Frauley 2007: 620).

The second realm, the actual, refers to the distinct order of reality where objects interact together, their powers activated, or blocked, or their potentialities realized. When powers are exercised, the effects are included in the domain of the actual. Objects in the actual emerge from contingent and necessary relations of objects from the real. The interaction and actualization of causal powers at the level of the actual cannot be entirely explained by reduction to the domain of the real. In the event of actualization, it is entirely possible that certain powers may be left unexercised, blocked, or impugned (Frauley 2007: 620). In short, the actual is the realm of objects in which the tendencies or potentialities of powers can be activated or lay dormant depending on their necessary and/or contingent positions in particular structures.

Finally, the empirical domain consists of the level of events subject to sensory experience. As the realm of observation and experience, the empirical domain relies on the orders of the real and the actual, but might also have causal implications for the lower levels of reality. Sayer maintains that “in distinguishing the real, the actual, and the empirical, critical realism proposes a stratified or ‘level’ ontology in contrast to other ontologies which have ‘flat’ ontologies populated by either the actual, or the empirical, or a conflation of the two” (Sayer 2000: 12). The key difference here is that critical realists are preoccupied with identifying the causal powers and generative mechanisms that exist below, and give rise to, the readily observable surface of events. In this way, “realists hold there to be unobservable features of social life that can be known to some degree and must be revealed in order to plausibly explain the emergence, reproduction and transformation of empirically apprehendable social phenomena” (Frauley 2007: 620). The unobservable aspects of power, for example, can be inferred to exist from their effects, such as class conflict and gender and racial discrimination (Frauley 2007: 620). Thomas Brante (2001) states that this irreductive ontology adheres to the actual praxis of modern social science which involves a division of labour on the basis of different types of structures, causal mechanisms, and observations (p. 176).

REALISM AND CAUSALITY

A modified notion of causation is one of the most prominent features of a realist’s emphasis on stratified ontology. Refuting the traditional Humean (empiricist) notion of a “constant conjunction of events” (Bhaskar 1989: 9-11) that understands causation based

on successive regularities of events, critical realism focuses on the interaction of objects in the level of the real and actual to explain causality at the empirical level. Realism moves beyond explaining the process of causality in empiricist terms. It does so not by examining how many times an event occurs (Humean constant conjunction of events as a regularity that ascribes to putative social laws); but rather, through the identification and explanation of casual mechanisms. Essentially, this means that non-observable entities and related causal mechanisms inform observable events.

The subsequent (first-order) task is to discover how causal mechanisms work. This involves ascertaining if, and under what conditions, the causal mechanisms of objects have been activated (Sayer 2000). For Sayer, “there is more to the world, then, than patterns of events. It has ontological depth: events arise from the workings of mechanisms which derive from the structures of objects, and they take place within geo-historical contexts” (Sayer 2000: 15).

In conjunction with the relationality of objects in deeper levels of reality, causality should be understood in a broader manner than observable empirical regularities. Practically speaking, causality should be understood as *tendencies*. Because of the relational nature of social objects, causalities can counteract one another. Subsequently, effects can either be actualized or impugned, yielding corresponding implications for whether these effects are manifested in empirically observable forms.

This also means that the same mechanism is able to produce a range of different outcomes when we consider the significance of various spatio-temporal contexts. This point has led to much debate in the social sciences regarding the attribution of causal as emerging from the economic, cultural or political domain. In the social totality, where

there are several different layers of social objects interacting and co-determining each other, obvious difficulties will arise when attributing causality.

The notion of causality as tendency is significant for untangling the complex connections between the economy/culture divide. As we shall see, theories, concepts, and categorizations that are based on empirical associations (event regularities) rather than through a depth ontology fail to account for whether relationships that perpetuate inequality are contingent or necessary for the perpetuation of injustice. The practical political consequences of such a position will be made clear in the following chapter (Sayer 2000b: 707-710).

ABSTRACTION

A realist method of abstraction is central for understanding complex relations in the social world. Without proper abstractions, social science runs the risk of operating upon the basis of false ideologies and mistaken concepts, impeding the potential clarity of our epistemological positions, all the while legitimizing the results as “science”. Abstraction is a realist methods use to isolate and identify underlying generative mechanisms that emerge through connections between the real, the actual and the empirical. More simply, abstraction refers to how we divide up and make sense of our object of study. Processes of abstraction are the necessary means by which concepts are generated in the social sciences. Since concrete social processes consist of diverse and complex intersectionality of various phenomena, abstraction becomes a necessary and important part of making sense of our social world.

Danermark *et al.* provide a preliminary definition of abstraction as:

something which is formed when we – albeit in thought – separate or isolate one particular aspect of a concrete object or phenomenon; and what we abstract from is all the other aspects processed by concrete phenomena. Abstraction is necessary, because the domain of the actual – events of the world – makes up such a tremendously diversified and heterogeneous dimension of reality. (Danermark et al. 2000: 42-43)

In a complex and open social system, it is not possible to isolate and control variables in the same way as natural science experiments carried out in closed laboratory environments. This means that social processes must be abstracted from concrete complexes in open systems. Once the critical realist has carefully abstracted the various components of the relational structures of objects and explored their contingent or necessary relations, he or she returns back to the concrete social setting in a process of retrodution (see Danermark et al. 2000: 96-106).

Alternatively, the concrete is complex and over-determining as a configuration of several necessary relationships, but the actual form of any combination of social objects is contingent and is only realizable through empirical research (Sayer 1998: 127). For Sayer, “*its form cannot be assumed to have already been ‘taken up’ into the theoretical framework in the same way that the nature of the abstract can*” (Sayer 1998: 127, emphasis in original). This is because abstractions allow us to isolate certain mechanisms that exist in the concrete and confer their significance in the course of the emergence of events.

Abstractions highlight the structures of empirical conjunctures by separating between what can go together and what must go together (Sayer 2000a: 710). This, as we

shall see, is particularly well suited for sorting out the complex and messy over-determining relationships between the economy/culture dualism as part of a realist counterfactual approach.

COUNTERFACTUAL VS. ASSOCIATIONAL QUESTIONS

Counterfactual questions work to make implicit the necessary relationships of social objects by distinguishing between what merely *is* the case and what *must* be the case in any concrete-complex (Sayer 2000: 16). More specifically, counterfactual questions ask, “whether the association is contingent (i.e. neither necessary nor impossible), or whether it exists necessarily, in virtue of the nature of the objects so related” (Sayer 1992, 2000a: 710).

By contrast, associational thinking is a mode of analysis that attributes priority to empirical regularities “according to their pervasiveness rather than according to their necessity, and which is resistant to abstraction in social science” (Sayer 2000a: 708). Where associational thinking is concerned with what might be associated or related to some other thing, counterfactual thinking avoids the problem of accidental associations by asking if such associations could exist otherwise. Capitalism and patriarchy, for example, overlap and co-determine as social structures, but this does not automatically imply that each cannot exist in the absence of the other (Sayer 2000a: 709).

A realist understanding of causality depends on a prioritization of ontology and an emphasis on counterfactual thinking. For example, the researcher needs to have a clear ontological understanding of the detailed properties of the social objects under study in

order to conduct good abstractions to ascertain whether a relationship is necessary or contingent. Simply stated, realist-type counterfactual questions avoid attributing causality through associations based on the pervasiveness or regularity of events. A few examples of counterfactual questions provided by Andrew Sayer (2000) are:

1. What does the existence of this object/practice presuppose? What are its preconditions, e.g. what does the use of money presuppose (trust, a state, etc.)?
2. Can/could object A, e.g. capitalism, exist without B, e.g. patriarchy?
3. What is it *about* this object which enables it to do certain things: e.g. what is it about professional associations that makes them able to bid up the salaries of their members? Is it their specialized knowledge, their restrictions on entry into the profession or their domination by men? (Sayer 2000: 16-7)

These questions get at the ontological properties and relations between objects. Rather than focusing on the positivist and phenomenological questions to *how* we should go about studying our object, counterfactual questions assume a logic of discovery to assist social research.

Tony Lawson's development of "contrastive explanation" (Lawson 1997: 204-9) is another useful realist method, in which variations in social contexts can be captured by comparing two similar situations or processes. Definitive or opposing features of an object can point the researcher toward other possible causal tendencies or mechanisms. This realist method might not seem like anything new beyond a traditional comparative political science approach, but when it is supplemented with a series of counterfactual considerations this approach becomes a valuable research tool.

In what follows, I move away from a realist oriented “first-order” approach characterized by its prioritization of ontology and theoretical-method that characterizes how we conceptualize, theorize and abstract. On this basis, the second half of this chapter introduces analytical and methodological models that assist in the epistemological reconstruction of social justice theories attempting to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide.

ANALYTICAL DUALISM & THE TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL OF SOCIAL ACTION (TMSA)

A second, realist analytical separation rests on a systematic distinction between structure and agency. This distinction refers to the analytical separation between “parts” (structures) and “people” (agency). Based on John Lockwood’s (1964) analytical distinction between social integration and system integration, this analysis rests on an implicit understanding of a stratified ontology to present theorists and researchers with a powerful explanatory schema. The analytical separation between parts and people acknowledges the different properties held by each side of the analytic distinction as irreducible and emergent. The broad ranging component parts of structure and agency are themselves internally stratified and their functions are governed through temporally differentiated processes of causal powers, generative mechanisms and emergent properties.

This distinction is important for understanding one of the central features of the critical realist position: Bhaskar’s (1979) Transformational Model of Social Activity (TMSA) (see also Bhaskar 1989: 34-35; Collier 1994: 141-51; Joseph 2002a: 9-10). The

TMSA insists that social structures temporally/historically presuppose and are socio-culturally elaborated through human action. That is, social structures are a necessary pre-existing condition for and also exist as the reproduced outcome of human action. Joseph (2002a) cites Bhaskar's *Dialectic* at length:

Society is both the ever-present *condition* (material cause) and the continually reproduced *outcome* of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is conscious *production*, and (normally unconscious) *reproduction* of the conditions of production, that is society. (Bhaskar 1989: 34-5 in Joseph 2002a: 9)

A realist conception of social structuration, explained through the TMSA, insists on the notion that social structures endure as a product of human activity. The social properties of these structures are not static, however. Structural ensembles enable or constrain human activity through their emergence, but their enabling or constraining features are affected through both the material conditions of their existence as well as the causal powers of human activity (see Archer 2007). In this way, Archer maintains that the realist “is committed to maintaining that the causal power of social forms is mediated through agency” (Archer 1995: 195). This is a central aspect for examining processes of political (mis)representation that have recently been added to the economy/culture dualism in contemporary theories of social justice. Specifically, a realist approach to semiotic conditions and processes that affect the selection and retention of certain discourses that either reproduce or transform a given social order is a powerful explanatory supplement. By extension, this analysis contributes toward a deeper understanding of how different agents might work to transform hegemonic power structures, through the formation of their own hegemonic blocs, projects and alliances (Joseph 2002a: 10).

SOCIAL DOMAIN APPROACH

Adequate theory-building in the context of the economy/culture divide must be directed toward specific levels where over-determining relationships between the various sorts of social injustice occur. The stratified nature of reality means that generative mechanisms overlap and co-determine across various levels of reality. This stratified reality creates the conditions for securing reproduction or transformation of social structures through human activity. Enhancing the explanatory power of the economy/culture divide requires a focus on particular levels of analysis to conduct abstractions and sort necessary and contingent relations in order to assist in the attribution of causality.

Derek Layder's (1997) and Thomas Brante's (2001) analytical separation of the social world into several overlapping and contingent social domains is a primary resource in this regard. First, Derek Layder (1997) advances an analytical model that accounts for the foundational elements of the structure-agency relationship. One of the practical benefits of this model is its temporal and social account of the distancing of *social relations* (material and cultural conditions for existence; collective groups) from *social relationships* (individual interactive accounts of human activity). Attention to level-specific components of social processes directs our focus toward respective mechanisms that work to support or counteract one another at each level. When supplemented with the TMSA, our explanations of the reproduction or transformation of inequitable or egalitarian social structures are also emboldened.

Thomas Brante (2001) follows a somewhat different approach. While Brante also organizes an analytical distinction between various domains, his analytical model deals

with the specific areas of interest around which sociologists cluster. The purpose is to delineate the relatively autonomous mechanisms internal to each level of analysis as well as to examine the relative connectedness of various levels through interacting generative mechanisms that lead to the reproduction or transformation of overlapping and co-determining social structures.

In what follows, I will advance an analytical model that integrates the best aspects of Thomas Brante's (2001) "Level Sociology" approach with Derek Layder's (1997; 2003) "Social Domains" approach to develop an interactive model that directs analysis toward social processes occurring within and between the levels of a stratified reality. I will later discuss how this alternative analytic model can be integrated with Fraser's integrated theory of social justice to produce a more detailed, complex explanatory approach to the economy/culture divide than the one advanced by Fraser and many of her contemporaries.

The first domain advanced by Derek Layder, *psychobiography*, refers to the internal aspects of individual actors, such as, "personal feelings, attitudes, and predispositions" (Layder in Carter 2007: 44). In the psychobiographical domain, theories and concepts that elucidate the internal reflexive aspects of human thought are the object of analysis. Theories of the "social self", common in traditional sociology (see Mead, Eriksson etc), provide important explanatory frameworks for analysis of social inequalities influenced through this domain. This domain expands to include theories of identity formation (see postmodernism), notions of socio-biological relationships (see Carrie Hull 2006), and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus. The most powerful

realist explanatory purchase on the “psychobiographical” or “individual” level includes Margaret Archer’s (2007) study on reflexivity and its relation to social mobility.

The second domain refers to the domain of *situated activity*, or the inter-individual level. This level is characterized by social actors’ face-to-face interactions and is guided by the experiences that have traditionally been elaborated in sociology through the symbolic interactionist paradigm. Subsequently, this approach has been appropriated by ethnomethodologists and institutional ethnography. The objects of analysis at this level include the rules and routinized procedures that shape the social aspects of everyday human interaction.

Each of the above domains emphasizes that human activity is embedded in and is constantly being shaped by more structural aspects of the social world. To avoid reductionist tendencies in analyses of social inequalities, social inquiry should emphasize that agency driven processes are not reducible to purely agential processes. By contrast then, the final two domains move away from ideas about semiosis and human agency towards an understanding of structural contexts. In what follows, an understanding of the embeddedness of face-to-face interaction at the inter-individual level within broader extra-semiotic structural contexts leads us to shift our focus from agency toward structure when introducing remaining analytical domains.

The third domain, *social settings*, refers to the social contexts and institutional settings that frame social activities and particular social practices. This domain includes the physical and social contexts of government agencies, workplaces, religious facilities, bureaucratic environments, and their rule-guided activities and routines of action. Organizational management studies and organizational sociology are clear research

trends that characterize this domain. The “social setting” domain can be further supplemented with an analytical examination of relations *between* institutional settings.

Brante (2001) identifies this as a further “inter-institutional” level that

describe[s] and on a broad level distinguish[es] institutional orders from the perspective of the societal order...[including those] between the economic, political and ideological structures as they are analyzed by the concepts of the mode of production and social formation, or between state, market and civil society... (179).

The fourth and final domain, *contextual resources*, refers specifically to the “anterior distributions of material and cultural capital that social actors inherit as a consequence of being born in a particular place at a particular time” (Carter 2007: 47). Contextual resources assume their character mostly through systemic reproduction of material and institutional contexts. They are the deep structures that underpin the more discursive and agential projects characterized in the previous levels. While important for any analysis of social inequality, they are also often disregarded because of their distance from people’s phenomenological experiences. The deep structures of the social setting, institutional orders, and inter-institutional relationships are all also underpinned by antecedent material and cultural capital that assumes the form of contextual resources. This level establishes the preconditions for human activity as structural constraints and enablements that, while distant from an individual’s experiences, shape and constrain the reflexive projects and face-to-face interactions of human activity (Layder 1997).

In this thesis, I argue that redirecting our focus toward analytical domains in Layder and Brante’s models, accompanied with emphasis on an emergentist ontology, allows for a reconfiguring the economy/culture dualism in a non-reductionist way. On each level, mechanisms might work to support or block racial and/or economic injustice

at other levels. By using this analytical framework, we are better able to focus our analysis toward social processes that perpetuate social injustices on one level of reality, but are still affected by other levels.

CONCLUSION

Following Brante (2001) and the realist emphasis on first-order discovery of the intransitive dimension laid out in the first half of this chapter, the ultimate goal of sociology is “to identify social structures harbouring causal mechanisms that generate empirically observable effects” (178). Therefore, the collective practical goal of members of the sociological discipline is to ontologically map out respective mechanisms and structures of interest in order to sort the necessary and contingent features of particular social phenomena.⁵ A coextensive approach for social researchers seeking to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide should involve not just an ontological mapping of particular mechanisms that contribute to processes of oppression, but also an

⁵ This, however, raises some difficulties. Much writing on realism has been characterized in philosophical terms and as a result, its penetration into the social sciences is a comparatively recent development. This leaves a crucial gap in the literature for those interested in examples of empirical research. As a result, the realist potential for empirical research has yet to be fully realized, however, there are some recent attempts to advance distinct realist methods (see, for example, Carter 2000; Pawson and Tilley 1997). I anticipate this is why many of the examples used in realist explanations tend to be from the natural sciences. This difficulty is further accentuated since what we are able to ‘take up’ in our theoretical frameworks in a concrete sense are limited. This makes it difficult to provide concrete examples of generative mechanisms that are dependent on spatial-temporal fixes. Indeed different generative mechanisms can be implicated in the same, or similar events at the empirical level. As a result, providing concrete examples of generative mechanisms without having conducted a realist empirical approach is problematic for generating clear examples. This is not an avoidance strategy, however, this point simply acknowledges the complexities of knowledge production that traverses the transitive/intransitive dimensions. Most importantly, it emphasizes the necessity for developing more realist grounded empirical research programs.

approach that critiques, explains and contributes to the transformation of oppressive structures.

This latter aspect necessarily involves a restructuring of the abstract-concrete relationship in already existing social justice theories seeking to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide. Turning the distinct meta-theoretical assumptions discussed in this chapter toward epistemological positions that attempt to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide in social justice theory realism is able to epistemologically re-work the frameworks that, to a limited extent, capture the complex features of the relationship between economics, culture and political representation.

The critical interrogation of integrated theories of justice I conduct in Chapter Four and Five does not rely on the entirety of the realist “nuts and bolts” explanation presented in this Chapter. This Chapter provides a broad explanatory framework from which to advance critique. As such, I have aimed to provide the reader with the basic necessities for introducing more specific manifestations of contemporary realist debates, that, despite their distinctiveness from the content of this Chapter, operate out of the basic realist framework advanced here.

CHAPTER FOUR: RECONFIGURING ANALYTICAL THEORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

In Chapter Two, I discussed the problematic analytical disjuncture between the social politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition. I also discussed attempts to reconcile it through an integrated approach advanced by Nancy Fraser. However, in addressing the theoretical chasm between the politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition, lingering analytical problems remain in conceptualizations of the economy/culture/politics divide.

In what follows, I argue that Fraser's conceptual model relies on overly broad analytic assertions that limits its full explanatory potential. I explore how turning the distinctly realist considerations discussed in Chapter Three toward existing theories of social justice works to augment previous approaches that have sought to reconcile the economy/culture divide. In this chapter, I deal mostly with resolving the economy/culture divide Fraser originally addressed in her two-dimensional paradigm, before covering the third 'political' dimension in Chapter Five.

The argument in this chapter is presented in four main parts. First, I critically interrogate how theoretical-methods of contemporary integrated theories of social justice present an arbitrary attitude to ontology, resulting in analytic confusions that tend to hide more than they reveal about concrete instances of social injustice. Second, I critically examine the implications of a realist differentiation between associational vs. counterfactual thinking in integrated approaches to social justice. Third, to illustrate a problematic application of concepts in Fraser's integrated theory of social justice, I examine a notion of race to reveal further difficulties associated with ideal-typical

conceptualizations. This establishes the basis for the fourth and final part of this chapter, where, I introduce an integrated realist alternative that reconfigures previous epistemological constructions of the economy/culture divide. The basis of this integrated realist approach that moves beyond the realist “nuts and bolts” presented in Chapter 3 also re-appears to engage with political (mis)representation in Chapter Five.

IMPLICATIONS OF FRASER’S IDEAL-TYPICAL CONCEPTUAL SCHEMA

Discussing Fraser’s self-described role as a critical theorist allows us to look more closely at the development and implications of her ideal-typical conceptual schema. For Fraser, occupying a position as a critical theorist involves two distinct and related perspectives. First, Fraser advances a retroactive critique of counter-productive thinking on the left (*zeitdiagnose*), which was characterized by the problematic separation of the material politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition, (i.e., the economy/culture divide). Second, Fraser works to make explicit what is currently implicit in many “actually existing” contemporary social movement struggles (Nash & Bell 2007: 74).

These components characterize Fraser’s intention to write for two communities. She addresses fellow academics through engaging in a critical process that exposes the ideological shortcomings of mainstream theoretical approaches, while at the same time providing new social movements with practical systematic political expression. For Fraser, “what united these enterprises was an overarching ethos in which theoretical

clarity and political confidence seemed to go hand in hand” (Fraser, qtd. In Nash & Bell 2007: 73).

Through each of these joint aspects of the double hermeneutic underpinning Fraser’s work, she offers a practical theoretical-realpolitik that speaks from an academic as well as a new social movement participant perspective. This, in part, explains Fraser’s intent to craft an accessible political strategy in common lay language that foregrounds the practical political issues and claims of contemporary social movements engaging in collective action. While this might be an effective approach for developing an accessible analytical and political model for social movements, juxtaposing ideal-types in the form of the economy/culture divide makes it theoretically difficult to analyse the complex levels of reality that are subsumed under Fraser’s categories. As Hier and Walby (2006) have pointed out, presenting generalized accounts of the social world in competing analytical paradigms often perpetuates an “either/or” approach in social research investigating social and racial injustices.

This critique is indicative of a wider trend in the production of knowledge, especially for those ‘doing’ social theory. Common disregard of questions about how we theorize, conceptualize, or conduct abstractions means that epistemological constructs tend to be reproduced with varied referential ascriptions. This is the crux of Ulrich Beck’s (2003) argument that ‘zombie concepts’ tend to be reproduced in theoretical and empirical studies without due reflection of their ontological properties, resulting in impaired and obfuscating explanations of society.

In this regard, discussing theoretical method is not a common or particularly seductive argument in light of the sexiness of the cultural turn. However, it allows for a

deeper understanding of the implications of our conceptualizations in the social sciences, and more specifically, Fraser's conceptual schema. The problem for Fraser, and ideal-typical categorizations in general, is that ideal types ignore an understanding of analytical dualism (structure-agency relationship), as well as various mechanisms functioning within analytical domains that we saw in Layder's methodological model.

However, the most extensive realist dealings with the methodological concept of the ideal type has been advanced by Andrew Sayer. Sayer (1992) addresses the difficulties inherent in the use of ideal types, due to an "arbitrary attitude to ontology" (p. 237-238) that limits their explanatory value as methodological constructs. The problem for Fraser's ideal-typical conceptualizations is that the methodology ignores overlapping and co-determining structures of reality, leading it towards an analytical confusion that makes it difficult to attribute priority to one particular categorical selection over another relative to its discursive, material and spatial context. For example, appropriating the broad ideal-typical generalizations of economy/culture/politics presents a voluntarist notion of human agency, and forecloses the significance of analytical inquiries into participatory imparity at an inter-individual, or even inter-institutional level.

Methodologically, the use of ideal types obscures any analysis of what produced them or how to scientifically or theoretically assess them. For Sayer, "the arbitrary freezing of contingent patterns, regardless of the structures that produce them, inevitably obscures whatever significances the differences may have, i.e. whether they are unimportant differences in contingent relations or mis-specifications of structural differences" (Danermark et al 2000: 49; Sayer 1992: 238). These differences could include unimportant contingent relations or "mis-specifications of structural differences"

(Sayer 1992: 238). The only thing social analysts might be able to say about different configurations of social injustice in Fraser's model is that, indeed, they will be different. Unfortunately, this neither allows for an examination of "who is doing what to whom" nor does it account for the multiple semiotic and extra-semiotic conditions that comprise complex contexts in instances of oppression.

The realist argument might seem to be a harsh levelling of the uses of ideal types, however it is important to keep in mind that the original purpose of the application of ideal types — as developed by Max Weber, and presumably implied by Fraser — is their application as a conceptual shorthand that assists social scientists in developing an analysis of reality and real causal connections (Weber 1959, Van Bruun 2007: 214-18, Callinicos 2008: 157). As Weber contextualizes it himself, "In order to understand the real causal connections, *we construct unreal ones*" (Weber qtd. in Bruun 2007: 216, emphasis in original). Clearly the function of the ideal type retains its value in that it establishes a conceptual entry point for furthering analysis of its relational context, intrinsic structures, and causal determinations.

The arbitrary attitude to ontology in Fraser's ideal-types, however, can be temporarily suspended in the context of her discussions surrounding political remedies. Recall that, for Fraser, affirmative remedies for social injustice are aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes by affirming group status or entitlements without disturbing the deep structural causes that produce them. Transformative remedies, on the other hand, address the underlying generative framework that produce inequalities. Fraser's insinuation of 'deep structural causes' presents a clear affinity with the critical realist project. Similarities between Fraser's two-pronged approach to political remedies and a

realist emphasis on the TMSA and a stratified reality strengthens possibilities for deep theoretical harmony.

Affirmative remedies can be equated with a realist conception of the reproduction of social processes. Similarly, Fraser's insinuation that transformative remedies restructure the "underlying generative framework" (Fraser 1995: 820) expresses notions of a realist ontology where generative mechanisms are responsible for the emergence of social inequalities. Unfortunately, however, Fraser does not elaborate on the ontological conditions of her affirmative/transformative remedies. However, I conclude that Fraser's theory is operating with an implicit notion of the real, thereby expressing a deep compatibility with a realist approach (see also Joseph 2002 and Carroll 2006: 19-20). While Fraser's integrated approach to social injustice might be considered as entirely compatible with a realist position, greater analytical scrutiny is needed in her framework if we are to account for the complex conditions under which injustices emerge.

RECONFIGURING THE CRITICS

Related to ideal-types, many critics of Fraser's model have also positioned arguments on the grounds that her culture/economy dualism remains too abstract and ambiguous by proposing two categories alone (Young 1997: 152-3; Smith 2001: 116-121; Swanson 2005: 91; Butler 1997). Swanson, like Young (1997), specifically argues that because it subsumes multiple forms of oppression, Fraser's economy/culture continuum fails to highlight potential tensions and compatibilities across the terrain of economic and cultural struggles (Swanson 2005: 91). In response to this shortcoming, Swanson

advocates “the multiplication of analytic categories and concrete empirical investigations of the numerous conditions of existence (located throughout society) of any unjust practice.” (Swanson 2005: 98).

Swanson supplements Fraser’s analytic concepts by disaggregating them into separate analytical categories for distinct forms of oppression (see also Young 1997: 152-53 and Butler 1997). In this way, the multiplication of categories of oppression is expected to do the same work as the overlap of the economy/culture divide advanced by Fraser. And, like ideal types, this is a theoretical exercise that tends to develop explanation of concrete human activity and social relations through a disaggregation of purely descriptive categories based on an arbitrary attitude to ontology.

This time however the major impediment to developing explanations of social injustice concerns the appropriation of causation. This is because Swanson’s argument rests in an empiricist framework. Recall that the empiricist, or Humean, approach exhibits an arbitrary attitude toward a stratified ontology that fails to consider the underlying causal mechanisms of concrete complexes of social injustice. The implication of this position is that categories are created based on a notion of associations at the surface of event regularity, when in actuality each of the processes located in Swanson’s disaggregation emerge from a deep and complex over-determined reality.

Let me elaborate on how emphasis on a regularity model in theories of social justice impinges on the vital task of conceptualization. Borrowing from Resnick and Wolff’s (1989) framework, Swanson advances three separate analytical sub-categories that break down Fraser’s economy/culture dualism. These sub-categories involve an heuristic categorization of particular social practices subsumed under three headings:

economic processes, political processes, and cultural processes (Swanson 2005: 92; Resnick and Wolff 1989: 19-22). For example, economic processes involve “the production and distribution of the means of production and consumption for communities of human beings” and include processes like “commodity exchange, borrowing/lending, saving money, class processes, etc.” (Swanson 2005: 95). Cultural processes “designate ‘the diverse ways in which human beings produce meanings for their existence’ (Resnick and Wolff 1989: 19-22), such as the creation and promotion of values, theories, knowledge’s, discourses, etc.” (Swanson 2005: 92). Finally, “political processes indicate ‘the design and regulation of power and authority in such communities’ (Resnick and Wolff 1989: 19-22), such as structures of command, the ordering of social behaviour (rule-making and enforcing), property ownership, etc.” (Swanson 2005: 92).

The point of this categorical disaggregation is to avoid tilting explanations to one side of the economy/culture divide (Swanson 2005: 92), a tendency in the literature that Hier and Walby (2006) have also pointed out. However, for Swanson, “no social practice/relationship much less sphere or realm of society, determines or exercises a special affectivity on any of the others or *is ontologically more important*” (Swanson 2005: 95, italics mine). While Swanson is correct to advance a notion of the economy/culture/political divide that sees social practices as, in Marx’s words, a “unity of diverse aspects”, her disavowal of ontological connections (Swanson 2005: 107), or as a realist would say, the disavowal of how different levels of reality are connected through generative mechanisms, is disconcerting and reminiscent of many previous reductionist cultural theoretical positions. If one chooses to ignore ontological connections between economic structures, human activity and discourses, for example, this position represents

a tendency to slip into various reductionisms, relativism and/or pure social constructionism. Swanson's position further replicates the mysteriously agent-free idealtypical epistemological problem in Fraser's approach, wherein concepts and categories adhere to an arbitrary ontology, obscuring the concrete configurations of social objects. Instead, identifying the generative mechanisms implicated in concrete complexes of social injustice should be the basis for our epistemological constructs. As Nancy Cartwright (1983: 10 qtd. in Brante 2001: 174) explains, "If only laws of association are admitted, the length of the shadow can as well explain the height of the flagpole as the reverse."

To be fair, Swanson does indicate the importance of conducting empirical investigations that examine the conditions of unjust social practices. This sounds reminiscent of a realist position that emphasizes a complex social totality. However, Swanson offers little insight beyond advancing an analytical concept that directs researchers toward uncovering "hegemonic formations" (Swanson 2005: 107). I agree with Swanson that particular historical hegemonic configurations are primary sites for empirical investigation, however, by advancing an arbitrary attitude to ontology, it is unclear that the problem of reproducing first-order empiricist claims in our categories and research projects will be resolved. In a prescient realist analysis of hegemony, Jonathan Joseph (2002) highlights how this analytic confusion often leads to one-sided accounts of hegemony, understanding hegemonic practices on the basis of political relations, or simply as relations between dominant and subordinate groups (p. 15). A realist approach, centring Bhaskar's TMSA, theorizes hegemonic practices through a more developed theoretical lens, positing social injustices in structural and agential terms, as either being

reproduced or transformed (Joseph 2002: 229-230). Also central is a reconceptualised notion of causality, where injustices are said to emerge from complex configurations of the real, actual and empirical domains. A realist approach seeks to establish a qualitative nature of social objects and relations that perpetuate causal mechanisms that impede ‘participatory parity’, in Fraser’s terms.

A second issue that arises in Swanson’s attempt to recast social justice theory reproduces the more problematic postmodern positions of the cultural turn. This involves Swanson’s argument against conceptualizing social relations and institutions as “structures”. Swanson argues that using a language of structures “amounts to treating them as given, intractable, [and] that which must be accommodated” (Swanson 2005: 107). This is primarily a political problem for Swanson in that she understands the language of social structures to “curtail the possibilities for human action and intervention and thus for different social relations...obscur[ing] the need for concrete empirical investigations of the complex and multiple processes overdetermining unjust practices” (Swanson 2005: 105).

Normatively speaking, a language of social analysis relying on metaphors of “structures” and “systems” does not necessarily involve the belief that structures are intractable (see also Giddens 1984). Furthermore, employing terms like structures, a central aspect of the realist/critical naturalist position, is not *necessarily* politically debilitating.⁶ Swanson’s position is reminiscent of the backlash of student protests of May 1968, where a familiar slogan written on the walls of Paris was “structures do not walk the streets” (Zizek 2008). In fact, the structural inequalities that operate “behind the

⁶ It does, however, raise significant concerns regarding the communicative relevance of knowledge production in broader semiotic contexts, particularly the relation between scientism and lay communicative interaction (see Sayer 1992: 12-44).

backs of actors” did make it down to the streets. If social analysts were to dispose of ontological connections and the language of social structures, they would disarm themselves of some of their most powerful tools and forfeit a form of social critique that considers the overdetermination of a broad range of relatively enduring social processes (Lopez and Scott 2000; Sealey and Carter 2004; Sayer 1992). Swanson’s disaggregation of economic, political and cultural domains does narrow the focus of categories or groupings in analyses of various forms of oppression, but like Fraser, her theory would benefit from an analysis of the necessary and contingent relations inherent in concrete social processes of injustice. Sorting what *is* the case from what *must* be the case is a valuable addition to any social scientific analysis of economy/culture, redistribution/recognition dualisms.

RECASTING SOCIAL JUSTICE THEORIES: ASSOCIATIONAL V. COUNTERFACTUAL THINKING

Andrew Sayer (2000) provides a convincing realist model concerning theoretical abstraction and problems of associational versus counterfactual thinking that can be applied to reconcile the economy/culture dualism in over-determining theories of social justice. Recall that associational thinking is a mode of analysis that provides explanations based on the pervasiveness of empirical regularities rather than on their necessity. The implications of Sayer’s argument are that theories developing concepts based on empirical associations (event regularities) rather than relying on a depth ontology to abstract from concrete complexes fail to adequately consider whether some relationships that perpetuate inequality are contingent or necessary for the perpetuation of injustice. By

contrast, counterfactual thinking addresses this concern by asking whether an association is contingent or whether it is necessary in the context of two (or more) related social objects. This position allows us to identify structural inequalities across spatial and temporal boundaries, yielding immediate political consequences. For example, the capitalist exploitation of labour, rooted in the appropriation of surplus value is a necessary relationship for the reproduction of capital. Because this relationship is internal and necessary, it is reproduced across various regional contexts. Cultural contingencies that ensure the reproduction of structural-economic inequalities are also able to be contrasted with greater vigour (Sayer 2000b: 707-710). The practical political consequences of a realist emphasis on counterfactual analysis presents gains for the emergence and articulation of broad and dispersed counter-hegemonic blocs.

The relationship between patriarchy and the capitalist market further illustrates this point on associational thinking. Associational thinkers would point to the pervasive relationship between capitalism and patriarchy as evidence that capitalism is always gendered. By contrast, counterfactual thinkers would acknowledge the common relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, but extend the analysis by asking whether capitalism is unavoidably patriarchal. This is a necessary part of a realist (post)empirical approach that relies on a process of abstraction across various social domains (relative to the object of study), as discussed in Chapter Three. The political implications of this approach contribute significant insights toward isolating and developing political strategy for transforming necessary relationships that contribute to various configurations of material maldistribution and cultural misrecognition.⁷

⁷ For a discussion on the political implications of realist counterfactual thinking, see “Concrete Utopianism” in Hartwig (2007: 74)

“RACE” AS A PROBLEMATIC CONCEPT FOR RECASTING THEORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

A further conceptual issue arises with the use of ideal-typical categories and folk paradigms. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, Fraser’s position on recasting the economy/culture equilibrium to deal with over-determining instances of oppression involves reconfiguring the relationships between class, gender, and race/ethnicity so that they are “on par with one another” (Fraser 1998a). This is also a popular position with many intersectionality methodologies (see Collins 1990). While Fraser and intersectionality scholars are correct to point out that cultural processes involving notions of race and gender are contingent, socially constructed processes that interact with material social structures, they are often hampered by a problematic analytical application of a concept of “race” that presents a weakened notion of a stratified reality, making it difficult to sort out the complexities of instances of social and racial injustice.

For Fraser specifically, recall that race retains a status as a two-dimensional division that is co-determined by status and class. In cases of class injustice or maldistribution, “race organizes structural divisions between menial and non-menial paid jobs, on the one hand, and between exploitable and ‘superfluous’ labour power, on the other” (Fraser 2003: 22). While the idea that “race organizes structural divisions” might be a common language to see in newspapers and politics, as a social scientific description of a process of social (in)justice, it forfeits a more detailed social scientific analysis of the various conditions that make racial injustice possible.

In this way, a realist position also raises doubts about the analytic credibility of a concept of “race” in the social sciences (Carter 2000: 10-25).⁸ The above discussion of Fraser’s intentions to practically reconfigure “class”, “race”, and “gender” so that they are entirely “on par with one another” (Fraser 1998a) retains a problematic use of the concept of race, whose referent is indeterminate and therefore questionable as an analytic concept. By attributing agential powers to concepts such as race, social theorists rely on an impoverished notion of human agency, making it difficult to untangle the complexities of over-determining notions of social injustice. This has been also common practice in many postmodern “race as discourse” approaches (Carter 2000: 37-54).

Alternatively, for realists, the primary ontological reference point for systemic concepts such as social class, bureaucracy and gender is “the reproduced social relations (and the powers and practices which underpin them) that form the settings and context in which social behaviours are enacted” (Layder 1988: 88 in Carter 2007: 41). This is an important point for reconciling the economy/culture divide, or enhancing similar theories that seek to establish relationships between economic, political and cultural processes. A continual reliance on ideal types that are given the capabilities to “organize structures”, limits any deeper explanation of the various levels, mechanisms, and contexts of reality that should necessarily involve a strong notion of human agency. In simple political terms, this involves an explanation of the conditions under which “someone is doing something to someone else”. A realist approach helps us begin to account for the interplay of mechanisms and levels of reality that sharpen our understanding of the

⁸ This position is persuasively identified by Robert Miles (1993: 40-43) and Miles and Brown (2003) and incorporated into a realist approach by Carter (2000). Other theorists that have also specified the distinct semiotic character of race include Hall (1992); Gilroy (1993). I would like to emphasize that this criticism is not a distinctly realist one, however it merely expresses a position that some of the best researchers are already engaging in.

specific conditions under which radicalized immigrants, for example, might suffer unequally high levels of un- and under-employment.

If race is not a structuring principle then, a deeper explanation of this process is required. A realist begins addressing this analytical confusion by directing focus on stratified ontology and emergence. In the context of the economy/culture divide there are two main kinds of emergent properties of social objects. First, are structurally emergent properties (SEPs). SEPs are determined by their primary dependence on material resources, and are an outcome of resource-to-resource relations. Second, are culturally emergent properties (CEPs). CEPs are determined by their reliance on cultural, semiotic, and ideational resources. They are analytically understood as an outcome of rule to rule relations (Carter 2000: 93).

SEPs include class relations due to the fact that economic relations are primarily responsible for material distribution of valued resources. On the other hand, semiotic or discursive ideas about race are situated as CEPs because of their primary dependence on cultural resources. If left analytically separate, the epiphenomenal forms of economic and cultural reductionism are reproduced. However, each has a different set of irreducible properties and possesses generative causal powers that produce certain social effects as structural conditions (SEPs) and cultural conditions (CEPs), respectively. A further key feature is that SEPs and CEPs are defined as anterior to social action. They exist as a contextual resource that constrains or enables action in any given social context. Here, social actors might only have partial knowledge of the anterior distribution of SEPs and CEPs. The point is that SEPs and CEPs condition and modify the capacities of agency in certain ways.

Realist don't seek to reconfigure the economy/culture divide by re-arranging intersecting social indicators (much akin to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic), but by a different way altogether. A realist alternative approach involves examining the contingent relations between class relations (primarily determined through wealth distribution), and ideas about race (as CEPs) with exclusionary practices that are driven by the causal powers of human agency.

In contrast to the agent-free ideal-typical constructions of Fraser's theory, emphasis on human agency and exclusionary practices is prioritized. First, social agents are conditioned through SEPs and CEPs, that is, they are reflexively mediated and modify the capacities of social actors. Second, the situated activity of social actors also conditions social actors to exert causal powers based on the defining contextual features of their semiotic elaboration. Defining exclusionary practices involves identifying the conditions under which agents become individually or collectively effectual to maintain or transform discrimination. Put another way, exclusionary practices or mechanisms of discrimination (e.g. immigration policy) are based on actors 'taking up' and acting upon the anterior distribution of SEPs (income distribution) and CEPs 'ideas about race'. The anterior distribution of income distribution and cultural ideas constrain and enable causal powers of agents, producing social effects that may or may not manifest in exclusionary practices (Carter 2000: 93).

An explanation of how SEPs and CEPs condition social actors who engage in exclusionary practices is divergent from the epistemological positions of Fraser and Swanson in that it relies on emergence and a stratified reality to explain how social effects are produced. It also relies on an account of human agency to make exclusionary

practices causally effectual a central part of any explanation of social injustice. It is on this basis, that the economy/culture divide should be reconfigured and expressed in realist terms of emergent structural and cultural properties that, in their necessary and contingently relations and contingently acted upon by social actors, emerge to produce certain social effects. This effectively addresses the mysteriously agent-free epistemological constructions in contemporary integrated theories of social justice.

In the context of this analysis, critical realist models such as those advanced by Derek Layder (1997) and Thomas Brante (2001) help us provide a more concrete explanation of how different social domains are implicated in analyses of social injustice. On each analytical level, mechanisms might work to support social injustices at other levels. Thus, critical realism emphasizes a non-reductionist perspective (see Danermark et al 2002). However, by ascribing to a stratified reality, realist explanations avoid the problems associated with ideal-typical juxtapositional analyses of the overly broad systemic terms such as “economic”, “culture”, and “race” that are often recycled to reconcile the economy/culture divide. Instead, a realist response highlights how different emergent properties are operating at different levels of reality are relevant for a broad, yet focused, understanding of instances of injustice. This implies that injustices emerge and are reproduced through a culmination of semiotic and extra-semiotic mechanisms across various levels of reality, a point that is reemphasized in the discussion in Chapter Five on political (mis)representation.

This realist framework is also sensitive to context, allowing us to reach conclusions based on the relevance of spatial considerations in first-order investigations. This avoids the problem of “context stripping”, which is common in many positivist and

empiricist research programs and leads to over-generalized conclusions. It also prevents the slide into pure social constructionism or relativism often found in postmodern and poststructuralist positions.

In this way, one of the greatest benefits of the social domain model is its emphasis on a clear view of agency-structure relationship. Bob Carter's (2007) discussion of the term *institutional racism* elaborates on the significance of social domains for integrated theories of social justice. Carter points out that institutions, "as structures of roles, practices, and procedures, cannot be intentional since structured social relations do not possess the property of intentionality any more than they possess the property of reflexivity that would enable them to hold ideas about race" (Carter 2007: 46). A clear distinction between agential (social relationships) and structural (social relations) properties helps to untangle the complex interplay between semiotic and extra-semiotic processes.

There are other aspects, however, where realism is limited in its supplementation to Fraser's theory of justice. As a philosophy of science, realism offers relatively little by way of an application of moral and political ascriptions. The emancipatory argument for realists is situated in providing more clear ontological accounts through explanatory critique, resulting in ideological demystification (see Bhaskar 1979). However, Layder's realist analytical model is still a useful tool for developing Fraser's moral and normative commitments. For Fraser, recall that the monistic-normative principle of "participatory parity" serves a dual purpose: equal participation must be fulfilled *between* as well as *within* groups (Fraser 2001: 34). The social domain model facilitates the normative principle of participatory parity by more clearly identifying targets for social change that

facilitate equal participation across various agential and structural realms. For example, a realist emphasis on how structural aspects, such as cultural or material capital, involve institutional constraints or enablements highlights the ontological connection to how distribution and allocation of economic, political, and cultural resources are implicated in participatory parity. Alternatively, focusing on the social locus of situated activity, participatory parity can be facilitated by targeting political strategy that introduces measures to regulate human behaviour associated with face-to-face manifestations of participatory parity.

In the remainder of this chapter, I continue to respond to a lack of attention to stratified reality in theoretical approaches attempting to reconcile the economy/culture/politics divide. Specifically, I attempt to develop two divergent, but compatible realist approaches into a realist alternative, thereby reconfiguring a more nuanced idea of the economy/culture relationship. This will highlight the theoretical complexities of social injustice beyond a notion of categorical descriptions of culture (recognition), economy (redistribution), or politics (representation).

A realist alternative provides a clear conceptual canvas for arranging the various concepts that assist our explanations of the over-determination of social injustice. An adequate integrated theory of social justice must account for the relationship between structure and agency, as well as what parts of reality are reflected in the concepts social theorists use and whether they are practically adequate for the specific purposes of explanatory critique. Specifically, by discarding the concept of race for a notion of SEPs (class relations) and CEPs (ideas about race), we clear the way for a distinctively realist

research approach that examines the contingent relations between the traditional economy/culture divide.

I have chosen to deal specifically with Robert Carter's realist approach to racism and Bob Jessop's approach to cultural political economy; however, as we shall see, the meta-theoretical propositions of realism can accommodate a variety of substantive content associated with social justice. This is not to ignore the significance of gender or queer issues for social justice theory; rather, it is meant to address one more way in which integrated theories of social justice benefit from a realist perspective.⁹ The purpose of this engagement is to begin to provide some meta-theoretical coherence to already existing integrated theories of justice. By developing our ontological understandings through an alternative realist meta-theoretical approach, we are better able to understand the complexities of social injustices. More specifically however, I am trying to find a starting point in the realist field that theorizes the over-determining relationship between different ideas expressed as CEPs and their contingent articulation in political economic institutional configurations. This also works, in a general sense, to situate two divergent realist streams into one conceptual framework.

The positions introduced below are not to be understood as entirely new or unique insights in social science. As such, they should not be considered as end-points for developing positions on social justice. Furthermore, some of the examples presented below of realist research gain their strengths by offering the most complete approaches to researching the social sciences. In one way, they are examples of what the best

⁹ See Carrie Hull (2005); Caroline New (2003); and Jessop (2004a).

researchers are doing anyway, not simply because they are explicitly ‘realist’ in their elaborations.

INTEGRATING A REALIST ALTERNATIVE

Robert Carter (Carter 2000, 2003, 2007) is at the forefront of developing a characteristically realist position on racism. Carter presents a realist alternative view of culture, agency and ideas of race that provide useful gains for understanding the complexities of instances of racial injustice. Although this section focuses less on methodology, Carter has made it a central part of his position to relay the practical methodological implications of a distinct realist position (see Carter 2003: 149-160; Carter 2000: 91-96 139-157; and Carter 2007: 45-46).

Concurrently, another realist informed post-disciplinary approach, called “Cultural Political Economy” (CPE) (Jessop 2004, Jessop and Oosterlynck 2007, Jessop and Sum 2006), seeks to explore the constitutive functions of semiosis in economic and political activities, institutions, and the broader social order. Making a point to incorporate the “cultural turn” seriously, CPE directs attention toward how ideas and discourses become institutionalized. CPE differs from Carter’s position in that it foregrounds the most discerning substantive insights from Marxist explanations of the political economy as well as insights from the cultural turn. It does not explicitly focus on questions of racism and racialization; however, its insights on how specific discourses emerge and are retained in the political economy are valuable for developing a more complex understanding of the institutionalization of racial injustice. Selecting the strong

points of each of these realist positions provides further gains for navigating the economy/culture/politics divide.

BEYOND THE ECONOMY/CULTURE DIVIDE: A REALIST APPROACH

The “realism and racism” approach argues that *ideas about race* hold a distinct position external to human agents and discriminatory social practice.¹⁰ Over time, ideas about race escape the minds of individual social actors and become products of the larger “cultural system” (Carter 2007: 43). By “cultural system” Carter relies on a definition provided by fellow realist, Margaret Archer, referring to “all intelligibilia, that is to say any item which has the dispositional capacity of being understood by someone” (Archer 1988: xvi qtd. in Carter 2007: 43). Thus, ideas about race are understood to originate from sociocultural interaction, and over time, they assume a relative autonomy as objective items in the cultural system. This is precisely where social theorists are able to examine how they reflect back on social actors as a cultural resource that is taken up to mobilize individuals and collective groups (Carter 2000: 85-87).¹¹

On this theoretical basis, Carter argues that ideas about race also assume a relatively autonomous relationship with other ideas, assuming compatible or contradictory relations with each other. For example, ideas about race can be connected to notions of immigration, indigenous communities and civil rights (Carter 2007: 43). Re-emphasizing the importance of agency in this depiction of reality, ideas about race rely

¹⁰ This could just as easily be, “ideas about gender” or “ideas about homosexuality”, however Carter is at the forefront of this type of analysis. As such, I have chosen to develop his argument on racism specifically.

¹¹ Carter appropriates fellow realist, Margaret Archer’s “Morphogenetic Cycle” as a methodological model to explain the temporal sociocultural elaboration of ideas about race (see Archer 1995).

on human activity to be socially enacted (Carter 2007: 44). This is crucially important as it prioritizes the need to account for human agency at the level of “face-to-face” interaction for reconciling the economy/culture divide, a level that Fraser chooses to ignore. When placed in context, Carter has proven how important an account of agency is for explanations centering around “institutional racism” (Carter 2007: 47-48)

Central to the purpose of reconciling the economy/culture divide, it is helpful to examine the actual *content* of different ideas about race and their compatible or contradictory relations to other ideas in the cultural. The implications of this are to understand how compatible ideas about culture and ideas about economics become over-determined as CEPs. Of course, this is a significant analytical gain prior to an examination of its contingent articulation with SEPs. In this way, theorists can better identify how compatible connections between ideas about race, as semiotic processes, work to reproduce or transform exploitative capitalist formations.

Similarly, advocates of Cultural Political Economy advance a similar position to that of Carter’s notion of ideas about race, the difference being that Cultural Political Economy considers, rather, the significance of “ideas about economics”. This allows us to elaborate on the explanatory potential of this argument.

Cultural Political Economy involves the theoretical integration of institutional political economy with the cultural turn (Jessop 2004: 160). One key concept of CPE is the “economic imaginary” (Jessop 2004: 162) which is similar to Carter’s notion of “ideas about race,” since it serves as a cultural resource (CEP) that gets taken up and acted upon by social agents.¹² Economic imaginaries function to select and define

¹² For a similar position to Carter’s “ideas about race” and Jessop’s “economic imaginaries” see Fairclough’s notion of “orders of discourse” (Fairclough 1992). I take “semiotic order” to refer to “a specific

ordered ideas about economic activity. They act as a semiotic frame that helps human agents interpret and understand economic events and their contexts. This way, economic imaginaries “are discursively constituted and materially reproduced on many sites and scales, in different spatial-temporal contexts, and over various spatio-temporal horizons” (Jessop 2004: 162).

An integrated realist-type approach for developing a more complex notion of the economy/culture divide in the context of theories of social injustice would examine the ways in which ideas about race or ethnicity intersect with economic imaginaries in political economies (Jessop 2004: 160). As previously mentioned, ideational choices are often logically connected to similar propositions. This allows social theorists to critique not just the intersection of economic imaginaries and ideas about race or ethnicity, but also the relational *content* of connections between ideas about race and economic imaginaries.

For example, an examination of the effects of the relationality of “race as ideas” and “economic imaginaries” as they are selectively recruited and retained in institutional dynamics offers a more detailed approach, helping theorists to analyze how ideas about race intersect with economic imaginaries in reproducing racial and economic inequalities. Specifically, this involves examining how ideas about ethnicity or race, among others that exist in the cultural system, condition social action to become selected and institutionalized, “thereby com[ing] to co-constitute economic subjectivities, interests, activities, organizations, institutions, [and] structural ensembles” (Jessop and Oosterlynck 2007: 2). Again, a clear notion of human agency renders the economy/culture divide less

configuration of genres, discourses and styles, which constitutes the semiotic moment of a network of social practices” (Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer 2004: 34).

cumbersome and ambiguous and re-situates the missing link in Fraser and Swanson's integrated theories.

This realist integration is an improvement to both the essentializing forms of Marxian economic reductionism and other forms of cultural discursive or phenomenological reductionism. It also moves beyond a juxtapositional analysis of ideal-typical categories of recognition, redistribution and representation that remain overly ambiguous by failing to show how various levels of reality, particularly how the causal power of human forms are conditioned (not determined) and implicated in exclusionary practices across many sites and scales. A realist alternative argues for the importance of examining both the interconnected content of CEPs as race ideas and economic imaginaries as well as their contingent relations with the broader social relations under which they become institutionalized and activated by agents.

In the following chapter, I build on this argument. I argue that by understanding how ideas about ethnicity and economic imaginaries are selected and retained in particular institutional dynamics, theorists are better equipped to bridge the economy/culture divide and foreground the "complex co-constitutive relationship among ideas, power and institutions" (Jessop and Sum 2006: 95). This explanatory gain is significant for critically interrogating Fraser's addition of a third political dimension to her redistribution-recognition pairing. Explaining how misrepresentations become selected, retained, and reinforced through discursive, material and processes of human activity social justice theorists provide fuller accounts for why some (mis)representations come to be reproduced more than others.

CHAPTER FIVE: TOWARDS A COMPLEX THEORY OF POLITICAL (MIS)REPRESENTATION

In the previous chapter, I explored the limitations of explanatory frameworks that have attempted to reconcile a problematic analytical disjuncture between the social politics of redistribution and the cultural politics of recognition. Specifically, I discussed how ideal-types and empiricist positions tend to hide more than they reveal about the complexities of social (in)justices. I also highlighted realist insights that contribute towards greater meta-theoretical coherence in explanations of a non-reductionist conceptualization of social (in)justices. Above all, I argue realism helps to reconfigure a more nuanced idea of the economy/culture relationship that initiates a deeper explanation of the complex connections of economics and culture with semiotic representations and the dialectic with institutional configurations.

In this chapter, I argue that a realist consideration of the structure-agency relationship reveals the complex connections between the economy/culture/politics divide. This chapter builds on the integrated insights of CPE and Carter's realism and racism approach developed in the previous chapter by placing it in the context of Fraser's recent addition of a third paradigm of political representation. In what follows, I provide a brief descriptive review of the central components comprising Fraser's recent addition of political representation to her recognition-redistribution couplet. I argue that Fraser's approach to political (mis)representation, because of its reliance on ideal types, implicitly involves a conflation of the structure-agency relationship in its analyses of political (mis)representation. This conflation limits understanding of the complex connections between economics, culture and politics, particularly if these categories are taken up in

social research programs. Redressing this conflation allows researchers to move beyond generalized *forms* of political representation toward a deeper understanding of the complex semiotic-material *dynamics* that are implicated in processes of political misrepresentation.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO FRASER'S POLITICAL MIS-REPRESENTATION

According to Fraser (2005), justice claims in contemporary societies assume a double character. The first character involves traditional claims of redistribution and recognition that, Fraser argues, are now becoming incapable of addressing more pressing claims to justice in a globalizing age. This has given rise to the second character of contemporary claims to social (in)justices. The second character addresses the limited conceptual resources of the two-dimensional model of redistribution-recognition by targeting the “meta-issue” of the frame. Once the question of the frame itself becomes subject to contestation, Fraser argues, a revision of the redistribution-recognition couplet is needed. In actuality, this point has probably always existed beyond our abstractions. However, a new political dimension of *representation* now exists alongside the economic dimensions of redistribution and the cultural dimension of recognition (Fraser 2005: 73).

The political dimension specifically focuses on the representational field where struggles for redistribution and recognition take place. Here, the hegemonic grammar of the political frame sets the boundaries for who is included, or excluded, from those entitled to redistribution of valued material resources and/or equal recognition. Simply put, no claim for justice can avoid the question of representation or the political frame.

For Fraser, then, the political dimension of representation is implicit in all claims for redistribution and recognition.

Given that representation is the core component of the political dimension, Fraser identifies the primary political injustice in this third dimension as *misrepresentation* (Fraser 2005: 76). Misrepresentation occurs when political boundaries and/or decision rules impede the radical-democratic process of participatory parity, thereby preventing people the opportunity to participate equally as peers in the resolution of first-order (recognition-redistributive) claims to injustice.

Two main levels of misrepresentation extend from Fraser's third dimension of political representation: *ordinary-political representation* and a *boundary-setting* aspect of political relations. The first, *ordinary-political representation*, refers to how political decisions function to wrongly deny access to equitable political representation to groups within the social system, limiting full and equal participation to some members of the community. Here, Fraser identifies the relative qualities of how differing electoral systems might unjustly exclude minorities from participatory parity. In injustices of ordinary-political representation, the source of inequality rests on intraframe representation. An example of intraframe representation includes an analysis of whether rules and public/government policies might exclude aboriginal claims. Problems of intraframe misrepresentation exist in conjunction with first-order injustices, cultural based misrecognition and maldistribution, that further limit parity for claims making by aboriginals within, or outside of, the political system. Subsequently, political remedies to intraframe misrepresentation involve widening the political frame to include those denied participatory parity. Reconfiguring the political frame opens the possibility that first

order claims to redistribution and recognition can be remedied. Such remedies commonly exist within the sphere of ordinary-political justice, that is, the frame is most often tied to, and pursued within, the nation-state framework.

The second level of political misrepresentation is the *boundary-setting* aspect. This injustice refers to how political boundaries establish who is (un)fairly included and excluded from equal participation in political debates. Fraser roots the boundary-setting aspect of misrepresentation as a result of *misframing*. Again, for Fraser, every question of social justice and political decision-making is held to the consequence of frame-setting (Fraser 2005: 80). For example, when access is denied to groups outside the system, limiting groups of people entry to the social system (e.g. asylum seekers), the source of inequality is based on the boundary setting practices of state framing through border security practices and policies.

In both scenarios, justice claims involving social movements and government structures, rooted in political misrepresentation, structure the conditions under which cultural and material claims can be pursued. The emergence of political frames are influenced through government, media, civil society, and social movements, widening or narrowing the boundaries under which groups of people can make legitimate and politically recognizable claims to resolve misrecognition and maldistribution injustices. The broad and variegated character of the political frame explodes traditional understandings of pursuing social justice claims solely within the nation-state framework. This presents a pressing need for a new politics that addresses social injustices in a globalizing context. Fraser clearly states, “struggles against maldistribution and misrecognition cannot proceed, let alone succeed, unless they are joined with struggles

against misframing” (Fraser 2005: 78). For Fraser, this is the key political problem of our age: How can we integrate struggles against maldistribution, misrecognition, and misrepresentation within a *post-Westphalian* frame?

Remedies for political (mis)framing, then, include two familiar approaches that also cut across the redistribution-recognition divide: these are the affirmative and the transformative. An *affirmative* politics of framing challenges the boundaries of existing representational frames, while also accepting the hegemonic grammar of the nation-state as the basis for pursuing such claims. The key assumption here is that claims-makers assume that the territorial state is the appropriate unit for presenting and resolving social injustices. By contrast, a *transformative* politics of framing challenges the state-territorial principle as an inadequate basis for determining who is included and excluded in social justice claims. Proponents of the transformative approach argue that the “political grammar is out of sync with the structural causes of many injustices in the globalizing world, which are not territorial in character” (Fraser 2005: 81). The key assumption here is that the gerrymandering of political space affects representative claims, working to insulate extra and non-territorial state powers from accountability to perpetrating injustices. For Fraser, the transformative politics of framing works to change the deep grammar of frame setting, to “overcome injustices of misframing by changing not just the boundaries of the ‘who’ of justice, but also the mode of their constitution, hence the way in which they are drawn” (Fraser 2005: 82). Therefore, struggles for justice in a globalizing world are most certainly stunted if they do not simultaneously include struggles that seek to institutionalize participatory-parity at the meta-political level (Fraser 2005: 85; see also Carroll and Hackett 2006).

Fraser's addition of a third dimension of political representation presents a valuable step forward for evaluating claims for justice in a globalizing context. The generality of Fraser's concepts, however, conceals the complex particularities that are implicated in processes of political (mis)representation. Stated otherwise, Fraser's analytic concepts involve an implicit conflation of discursive and extra-discursive conditions in processes of political representation. This makes it difficult to untangle the complex ontological properties implicit in redistribution, recognition and its relationship with political (mis)representation. More specifically, however, the addition of a third political dimension largely ignores the complex co-constitutive relationship between CEPs as ideas, power, and SEPs as resource-to-resource relations, all core aspects included in processes of political (mis)representation. More simply, we could argue that analytical gains emerge through an epistemological restructuring of Fraser's third dimension of political misrepresentation along the lines of the structure-agency distinction.

One of the central arguments of this thesis concerning theoretical-method, that is, not just the concepts, but the techniques of theorizing, carries over into the critical evaluation of Fraser's analysis of political representation. To recall, Fraser's juxtapositional approach through ideal-typical constructs assumes an arbitrary attitude to ontology that limits the explanatory potential of theories of social justice. I argue that ideal types are unable to account for the overlapping and co-determining structures that comprise a complex social and material world. As such, they represent incomplete accounts of the social world, remaining overly ambiguous and limiting deeper explanations of the relationships between economics, culture and politics.

In what follows, I provide a more detailed interrogation of Fraser's third dimension of political representation. The purpose is to establish the groundwork for advancing theoretical and methodological gains from a realist alternative. To begin, recall, that for Fraser, the political injustice of (mis)representation is rooted in misframing. Here, every question of social justice and political decision-making is held to the consequence of frame setting (Fraser 2005: 77). In this way, the political dimension of representation is implicit in all claims for redistribution and recognition; Fraser explicitly argues that, they [political frames] are "inextricably interwoven with them" (Fraser 2005: 75). Unfortunately, this is all the explanation Fraser offers on the ontological connections between what is conceptually arranged as the economic, cultural and political. It is remarkably unclear exactly *how* Fraser perceives these connections, rendering the addition of a third category of political representation unstable if it is not further unpacked. Again, this is not the fault of Fraser. It is clear Fraser's analysis presents a different set of theoretical and political purposes, however, this is not a point of arrival. It is a point of departure for deeper analysis and explanation along the lines of scientific realism.

A realist alternative would begin with the methodological application of analytical dualism, separating what might be considered agential and structural properties, that rest implicit Fraser's analytic concepts. This allows us to move away from generalizing ideal-typical forms of political representation to a fuller understanding of the ontological connections that structure the conditions under which political (mis)representations are socially elaborated.

First, Fraser argues, justice claims are rooted in the grammar of the political frame that sets the boundaries for who is included and excluded. This presents a praxis-oriented approach to philosophizing. Theoretically, it gets at a particular expression of social processes, however, in doing so, it conflates agential and structural properties. Considering the agential or semiotic properties of frame-setting, we might consider “frames” in the same way we consider CEPs. In this way, frames are structured through cultural and ideational resources and rely on human activity to be socially effectual. Simply stated, the concept of the frame implicitly emphasizes agential and semiotic processes. In the very same concept, however, Fraser moves beyond agential and cultural notions of “frame setting” to emphasize more structural aspects of political misrepresentation. Here, we might infer that the SEPs of political (mis)representation in Fraser’s framework include the “decision rule aspect”, since “representation involves the procedures that structure processes of contestation” (Fraser 2005: 75). These processes are, in part, defined by their primary dependence on material resources and are often the outcome of resource-to-resource relations (Carter 2000: 93). Political misrepresentation embedded in, and structured through, social settings and institutional dynamics. For example, ideas about aboriginal self-determination are embedded in, and structured through the roles, rules and contextual resources of the Canadian court system. The ontological properties that are implicated in “frame setting” and the “decision rule aspect” involve a complex interplay of agency and structure. Without filtering the political paradigm of misrepresentation through a realist analytical dualism, we are left with little idea about precisely what to theoretically examine, or politically challenge,

when it comes to remedying political misrepresentation. It is possible that resulting confusions will also manifest in empirical research paradigms.

The problem here, however, is that Fraser reproduces an analytic approach that overlooks the different ways and functioning of *how* political (mis)representation occurs. Fraser expresses an interest in evaluating the various praxis-based *forms* of political misrepresentation at the cost of overlooking the importance of social *dynamics* of political representation. As a result, Fraser's explanation tends to hide more than it reveals about the distinctive ontological characteristics and mutually influential relations between structure and agency that are implicated in either the social reproduction or transformation of processes of political (mis)representation. Alternatively, by examining the complex dynamics of political misrepresentation through a realist framework, social theorists can avoid the misunderstanding that expects ideal-types to drive research programs.

The significance of a realist case for separating the "parts" from the "people" in Fraser's political (mis)representation is further amplified when we consider the implicit causal priority that Fraser has accorded to this third political dimension. Indeed, Fraser expresses a strong sense of determinacy implicit in the political dimension when she argues, "no redistribution or recognition without representation" (Fraser 2005: 79). Granting determinacy to issues of misrepresentation, and framing in general requires, that contemporary integrated theories of social justice advance a set of theoretical and conceptual materials that are better suited to fillet out the complex aspects of political (mis)representation. Such an approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how misframing structures conditions for claims-making.

The following section advances a realist influenced CPE approach to understanding processes of political (mis)representation. A CPE realist position emphasizes a dialectical approach that seeks to integrate extra-discursive aspects of material conditions with discursive aspects of (mis)representation. Discourses are a vital aspect of a rich social ontology. As such, it is crucial to my purposes to develop how discursive representations interact with non-discursive social structures and causal mechanisms in the context of Fraser's third political dimension of political (mis)representation. By examining the relationship between these three aspects (discursive political representations, non-discursive structures, causal mechanisms), I hope to contribute toward a more nuanced view of political representation than has previously existed in much political and social analysis on the subject. Although the aim of the rest of this chapter is not to settle at a final perspective of the agential and structural aspects of political representation, I hope to develop a starting point for theorizing and researching the relationship between the embedded nature of discourse in the structured nature of material reality as it relates to political (mis)representation specifically, as well as within the epistemological assumptions of the economy/culture/politics divide in social justice theories.

TOWARDS A REALIST APPROACH TO POLITICAL (MIS)REPRESENTATION

A realist position understands the complex connections of political representation by advancing an analytical dualism of the agency and structure relationship. Recall that this refers to a separation between the "parts" and the "people" (Lockwood 1964; Archer

1995). Both sides of this distinction are irreducible to one another and represent different sets of emergent properties and powers (Archer 1998). In this context, building on the discussion of an integrated realist alternative introduced in the previous chapter, the complexities of the economy/culture/politics relationship are rendered less opaque. The discussion in the previous chapter on how economic imaginaries and ideas about race might be expressed within a co-constitutive semiotic relationship reveals how cultural representations, as semiotic orders or CEPs, are always already implicated in economic and political processes. This realist position analytically separates the discursive from the non-discursive (CEPs from SEPs), looking at how semiotic orders, both as ideas about race and economic imaginaries (CEPs), become over-determined and co-constituted in structural configurations.

An explanation of exactly *how* frames become selected, retained, and reproduced in particular institutional configurations further develops explanations of political (mis)representation in contemporary integrated theories of social justice. This moves beyond an explanation of political representation in ideal-typical forms expressed in generalizing praxis-based and conflationary terms. Instead, a realist approach reveals how political representations are comprised of agential and structural processes through their dynamic interconnection with political and economic structures.

A critical realist approach to the economy/culture/politics relationship is rooted in analytical dualism and the TMSA to develop an understanding of how political (mis)representations work to either reproduce or transform social structures (economic or social relations) as they relate to social injustices. Recall that for Fraser political remedies to intraframe misrepresentation involve widening the political frame to include

those denied participatory parity. Therefore, analyses of social justice theories should consider how social structures within which misrepresentation occurs either limit or frame its meaning in certain ways, and what impact all of these factors might have on the social reproduction or transformation of structural inequalities that present further obstacles to participatory parity.

In order to address these questions, a realist approach would argue that processes of political (mis)representations have both semiotic (CEP) and extra-semiotic (SEP) features – that is, they exist in mutually reinforcing discursive and institutional/material forms. The key difference here from Carter’s approach to CEPs and SEPs is that Jessop provides explanation of the ways that particular CEPs become institutionalized. To build on Carter’s explanation, Jessop (2004) identifies four mechanisms (164) that ensure mutual reinforcement between semiotics and political economic structures. I have integrated them with the analytic model presented by Layder (1997) to develop a more clear explanation of a realist approach to political (mis)representation. These processes include:

(1) *Selection of particular discourses for interpreting, legitimizing or representing social phenomena*; (i.e., frame-setting limits the range of possible combinations of semiosis and semiotic practices in a given order. Here, material factors also operate through institutionalized power relations, path-dependency, and structurally-inscribed selectivity).

(2) *Retention of certain resonant discourses through organizational routines, rules and strategies, and state projects*; (i.e., how frames co-constitute political economic

structures. This includes how frames are included in the domain of psychobiography (habitus) and enacted through face-to-face interactions in the domain of situated activity. This contributes to the larger material social settings that involve the retention of particular resonant frames into organizational routines, policy development, as well as rules and/or hegemonic visions).

(3) *Reinforcement of discourses and their associated practices through elaboration, selective strengthening of appropriate genres, and elimination of less appropriate alternatives*; (i.e., frames (ideas about race or economic imaginaries) are logically connected to other frames. Certain material social settings also privilege certain dominant sites of political frames in specific organizational or institutional orders. For example, state border security checkpoints privilege political frames that are informed by ideas about terrorism. Furthermore, distributions of material and cultural capital, or contextual resources, are also significant for the strengthening and reproduction of particular hegemonic frames).

(4) *Selective recruitment, inculcation and retention of social agents “whose predispositions fit maximally with ... the preceding requirements”* (p. 164). This last point also feeds into the analytical domain of psychobiography and face-to-face interaction. It explains how hegemonic frames are reproduced through social relationships in specific social contexts.

Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2004) argue that, if all of the semiotic features listed above are present and operational, social structuration will be of a reproductive nature – that is, discourses not resonant with the existing social order will be weeded out in favour of a more narrow set of hegemonic discourses. In the context of Fraser's dimension of political (mis)representation, the semiotic conditions listed above provide a more detailed explanation of how semiotic features (e.g., CEPs as economic imaginaries or ideas about race) are implicated in frame-setting practices that constrain or enable conditions that structure participatory parity along institutional lines. Here, the structuration of political representations in institutional frameworks establishes the boundaries for the legitimation of politically recognizable claims.

This model also develops further complexity into Fraser's remedies for political (mis)representation in other ways. Fraser's notion of affirmative remedies to (mis)framing assumes the nation-state to be the primary arbiter of claims for redistribution and recognition. This position reaffirms the status of the nation-state, leaving the structural causes of many social injustices that exist beyond the nation-state untouched. However, by recognizing the dynamic connections implicated in Jessop's model, researchers are better equipped to engage with the complex semiotic, extra-semiotic and site-specific particularities of how political (mis)representations become institutionalized and reinforced across several sites and scales. This model is also a significant contribution to other realist analyses of hegemony (see Joseph 2002 and Carroll 2006: 19-22).

However, the semiotic conditions listed above are not always completely functional and of a reproductive nature. Social transformation happens, and when it does,

Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2004) similarly argue, it happens because the conditions that work to reproduce misframing (see 1-4 above) are either absent or limited in their operation. It's important to note here that the concern is with *durable transformation* – that is, deep change in a social order that is institutionalized through structural (extra-semiotic) means. Thus, social transformation is a difficult process (with sometimes explosive moments during periods of crisis) that relies on specific semiotic conditions more or less open to innovation, variation, and differential selection and retention of non-hegemonic (or counter-hegemonic) discourses, which of course would in turn become hegemonic once taken up and institutionalized.

Applying the TMSA to Jessop's model also expands understandings of Fraser's transformative remedies to political mis-framing. Fraser's notion of transformative remedies to (mis)framing argues that the "political grammar is out of synch with the structural causes of many injustices of the globalizing world" (Fraser 2005: 81). This position challenges the status of the nation-state, seeking a transformation of the structural causes of social injustices that exist beyond the nation-state. The model above provides significant explanatory gains in understanding of how semiotic features (e.g., economic imaginaries or ideas about race) might lead to transformative change through semiotic, extra-semiotic and site-specific conditions. Furthermore, the model provides meta-theoretical assertions that facilitate researchers in directing analysis of political (mis)representation in institutional configurations.

This argument moves beyond ideal-typical generalizations of political (mis)representation, as represented in Fraser's framework, that express a conflation of the agency/structure relationship. By contrast, a realist position on political

misrepresentation moves towards an understanding how semiotic and extra-semiotic configurations contribute to the reproduction or transformation of political (mis)representations and their impact on first-order claims of redistribution and recognition. It allows us to untangle complexities of the semiotic/extra-semiotic dialectic as it exists through ontological connections of the economics/culture/politics divide. The results move us further toward a more complex non-reductive and non-essentializing explanatory framework for evaluating social injustices.¹³

Let's consider a brief example. One potentially rich research program that develops an understanding of how redistribution, recognition, and representation are interconnected in the context of Jessop's (2004) explanatory framework might look at how meanings associated with compatible ideas about ethnicity and economic imaginaries become selected and institutionalized in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies of multi-national mining firms. Such a research program would seek to understand how ideas about ethnicity related to Latin American campesinos, for example, intersect with economic imaginaries to articulate and institutionalize CSR and social management strategies which keep underlying structural inequalities intact and peasants living in relative poverty, despite the extraction of enormous levels of mineral wealth by multinational mining corporations operating on their traditional territories (see Gordon and Webber, 2008 and Banerjee 2003, 2008). This example separates semiotic properties or CEPs, in the form of ideas about race and/or economic imaginaries, with the

¹³ Recalling the discussion on "Realism and Racism" and CPE from the previous chapter, Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2004) and Jessop (2004) have developed a realist position that is mindful of how ideas about race or economic imaginaries as CEPs, for example, become selected and retained within political economic structures. This is important for understanding how particular forms of political (mis)representation become situated within institutional frameworks, circumscribing claims for redistribution and recognition.

underlying basis of deep structural forces (SEPs) that generate political (mis)representations through imbalances of contextual resources. In our example, the growth of CSR as a specific discursive hegemonic project can be linked in a dialectical relation to the political economic structures of multi-national mining corporations. Here, CSR policy is emergent out of underlying structural conditions, but as a discursive project, it presents its own set of mechanisms, properties and powers.

On the other hand, in Fraser's account of political misrepresentation, notions of misframing are presented without explicit regard to the underlying structural causes and functions that intersect with discursive representations. Doing so would allow for a more clear explanation of the economic, cultural, and political dimensions that structure the conditions of political misframing. Understanding the dialectical connection between agency-structure and emergence facilitates deeper analysis of how CSR policies rely on underlying structural conditions to present specific ideological representations or frames. Here, political misrepresentations are understood to be conditioned by the basic structure of institutional settings but they are not reducible to it. By failing to take account of the analytic separation of structure and agency across multiple analytic domains, social justice theorists will continue to run into the problem that their concepts remain overly broad and fail to adequately describe how multiple levels of reality and analytic domains interplay to reproduce social injustices through an understanding of emergence. But of course, it doesn't end here. These theoretical assertions must be pursued through abstractions of concrete processes to adequately explain real structures, processes and contradictions implicated in social injustices.

Over the course of this chapter, I have argued that a realist consideration of the structure-agency relationship provides a powerful explanatory schema for developing Fraser's recent addition of a political dimension of representation. Due to the arbitrary attitude to ontology inherent in ideal-typical generalizations, a conflation of the structure-agency relationship in Fraser's discussion of political representation occurs. Fraser is reduced to presenting praxis-based analysis of various ideal-typical forms of political (mis)representation. This analytic confusion presents obstacles to understanding the complex dynamics involved in processes of political (mis)representation.

Subsequently, I advanced an alternative realist position to political (mis)representation that fleshed out the details of Fraser's approach in the context of a CPE informed explanatory framework presented by Jessop (2004). Building on arguments from the previous chapter that used ideas about race and economic imaginaries as CEPs, I demonstrated how a realist meta-theory reveals how semiotic orders (as political representations, frames, ideas about race, economic imaginaries) come to be selected, retained and reinforced in political economic structures. This argument breaks down the distinct categorical divisions of the redistribution, recognition, representation paradigm for a more favourable analysis that separates the distinctive emergent properties of the structure-agency relationship to examine their interplay in concrete social contexts.

CONCLUSION

Of all the recent theoretical alternatives and explanatory frameworks that have emerged in recent decades in the social sciences, few have provided as complex knowledge of the social world as critical realism. In light of this, I argue that contemporary integrated theories of social justice can best be understood in realist terms. Within the limits of these realist terms, first-order and second-order realist concepts direct researchers in different ways. As a result, the contributions in this thesis are grounded in the assertion that social theory and empirical research can provide accurate descriptions and fuller explanations when it follows a distinctive realist approach that emphasises how we come to conceptualize, theorize and abstract.¹⁴ In what follows, I present two central pillars of this thesis and discuss related social and political implications of appropriating a realist-informed integrated theory of social justice.

The first central pillar of this thesis concerns the realist notion that social scientific knowledge is knowledge of an ontologically stratified social reality (Carter 2003: 158). The “first ontology, then epistemology” approach that characterizes a realist informed integrated theory of social justice is relevant to both the complexities of the social world and the generation of new explanatory frameworks for integrated theories of social justice. In this context, I have advanced a realist explanation often in terms of first- and second-order knowledge of the social world. First-order approaches direct new lines of social inquiry that lead to a distinctive view of overdetermined instances of social injustice. The realist appropriation of first-order theoretical concepts that act as mediating

¹⁴ This is even if some of the theoretical approaches applied in this thesis draw on indirect manifestations of the first-order realist insights of causality and abstraction. For example, Cultural Political Economy emerges from, and is compatible with, the central realist tenets presented earlier.

and mid-range theoretical-methods makes a sharp break with traditional, or under-elaborated, notions of causality by identifying causal powers and generative mechanisms that contribute to the emergence of concrete-complexes of social injustice in the intransitive dimension. This first pillar is rooted in producing first-order knowledge of the social world through an explicitly post-empiricist research approach. By basing first-order claims of knowledge on a stratified ontology, social research and subsequent theoretical developments avoid forms of economic- and cultural-reductionism and associated analytical confusions of relativism and pure social constructionism.

The second major pillar of this thesis involves the prioritization of ontology for advancing what I have deemed second-order epistemological reconstructions of contemporary integrated theories of social justice. This second main line of critique moves away from a logic of discovery of the intransitive dimension and towards the reformulation of already existing conceptual networks inherent in integrated theories of social justice. More specifically, in the context of the economy/culture/politics relationship, the dominant formations of contemporary theories of social justice are emboldened by explaining the complex connections between structure and agency. Fraser and her critics' attempts to reconcile the economy/culture/politics relationship is expressed through sensitizing and unwieldy abstractions that tend to hide more than they reveal about the complex connections of social injustices by prioritizing epistemological categories. A second-order realist approach excavates the ontological properties that rest implicit in the conceptualizations of integrated theories of social justice, forming the basis of conceptual critique. In the context of the economy/culture/politics divide, this enhances detailed explanation of how the relationship between culture, structure and

agency are implicated in exclusionary practices associated with instances of social injustice. A realist interrogation of Fraser's third dimension of political (mis)representation moves away from praxis-based theorizing that collapses the structure-agency relationship. In its place, we are better able to direct analysis toward the distinctive characteristics and mutually influential relations of semiotic and extra-semiotic conditions that secure the social reproduction of political (mis)representation.

The realist contributions that prioritize first- and second-order critique work towards completing central analytical tasks in sociology. Such tasks have been defined by Mouzelis (1995), "as not only providing fully worked-out, conceptual edifices (*a la* Parsons or Giddens), but also as providing tentative, flexible, open-ended, transitional frameworks useful for the empirical, comparative investigation of specific sociological problems" (p. 152). The realist informed integrated theory of social justice presented in this thesis provides a robust approach for such sociological explanation.

The two central aspects of a realist informed integrated theory of social justice also underscore the power of social science and its methods. As Urry and Law (2004) argue, the power of social inquiry in the social sciences (as expressed within its epistemological frameworks and methods) is productive in that they help create social conditions that structure action. Here, analytic methods are understood assume a performative character, *producing* the social realities they seek to explain. In this way, social scientific approaches inevitably get caught up in what Urry and Law call an "ontological politics" (p. 396). Here, realities expressed in our theories and methods present alternate explanations that produce diverse and often contested views on social and material relations.

The broad encompassing abstractions expressed in Fraser's ideal-typical constructs and Swanson's empiricist reliance on categorical constructions erode significant aspects of reality that are implicated in an ontological politics. The translation of the enacted reality implicit in Fraser and Swanson's broad analytical abstractions into political strategy limits potential for a targeted assessment of policy outcomes. Specifically, an arbitrary attitude to stratified ontology erodes the structure-agency distinction, a necessary analytical attribute for developing complex theories of social injustice. Without due regard for ontology, Fraser and Swanson impute agential powers as the product of larger structural, economic, and political forces, resulting in limited emancipatory translations for political strategy. Simply put, conflating the ontological connections implicated in reiterations of social injustice makes it difficult to identify subsequent targets for political strategy.

By contrast, a realist emphasis on the structure-agency relationship facilitates an assessment of policy outcomes on the basis of clear ontological distinctions, allowing for an prescient analysis of "who is doing what to whom" and under what structural and cultural conditions. Appropriating realist informed analytical social domain models and understanding how semiotic and extra-semiotic processes become selected and retained in institutional dynamics, social and political analysts gain access to greater levels of explanatory scrutiny in research that focuses on the reproduction of social injustices across many sites and scales. For example, a study of social injustices that emerge from face-to-face encounters should inevitably lead to a different form of policy intervention than what might arise from a study directed at relations between institutional settings. Linking emerging mechanisms across multiple analytical domains allows us to examine

how larger structural forces condition human activity, that equally, may or may not be implicated in exclusionary or discriminatory practices.

A realist informed theory of social injustice has much to offer contemporary analytical paradigms of social inequality. Bob Carter (2003) argues that while realism has established a respectable position in the philosophy of science, its translation into the practice of social science has been limited, save for a few notable exceptions (see Archer 1995; Layder 1998; Pawson and Tilley 1997; Sayer 1992). The larger question, however, is how feasible it is to translate realist insights into practical social scientific accounts of the world in the context of the contemporary neo-liberal university structure. The production of knowledge in the university, characterized by a corporate imperative emphasizing rapid productive outputs from its workers comes with the cost of developing greater complexity in accounts of the social world. Indeed, the existing social and economic hierarchy of the university context conditions its members to practice research in often times banal and explanatorily limiting terms. The disciplinary division of labour and professional circumscription in the academic setting contributes more to the shortcomings of a realist approach than its own critical insights.

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