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Mackie, Alan and Tett, Lyn

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'Participatory parity', young people and policy in Scotland

Alan Mackie and Lyn Tett

Abstract

The last three decades have witnessed significant changes in the social and economic context of young people's lives. There is increasing evidence that for young people growing up in the UK this is fuelling a disparity between those with resources and those without. What this means in terms of social justice, however, is difficult to discern. In Scotland promoting greater social justice so that all its citizens are included has been held up as a key vision of successive Scottish administrations since devolution began in 1999. Scotland therefore makes an interesting case for the examination of policy discourses in relation to young people. In order to do this the paper draws on a theoretical framework of justice developed by Nancy Fraser which is oriented on the norm of *participatory parity*. Combining this framework with an approach informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the current policy context in Scotland is examined in order to discern if it contributes to all young people achieving participatory parity and subsequently social justice.

Key words

Introduction

The last three decades have witnessed significant changes in the social and economic context of young people's lives and there is increasing evidence that this has fuelled a greater disparity between those with prospects and those without (Bynner, 2005; Parekh et al, 2010). The social, economic and demographic changes that have occurred have radically altered the landscape that young people must negotiate in their path to adulthood. For some, these changes represent a time of unlimited opportunity – to travel, to seek personal and spiritual fulfilment or to undertake a whole host of self-developing activities – before settling into adult life (Arnett, 2006). For others, such opportunities are still as distant as they would have appeared a half century ago. What these changes mean in terms of social justice for young people today is more difficult to discern. Researchers in Australia (Mosen-Lowe et al, 2009; Savelsberg, 2010; te Reile, 2006), Brazil (Wong & Balestino, 2001), Canada (Wishart et al, 2006) and England (Alexiadou, 2002) have all pointed out the ways in which disadvantaged young people are excluded through particular policy discourses that position them as deficient. In Scotland, however, promoting greater social justice so that all its citizens are included has been held up as a key vision of successive Scottish administrations since devolution began in 1999 (Mooney & Scott, 2012). Indeed the First Minister, Alex Salmond, has argued that 'Scotland could be a beacon for progressive opinion south of the border and further afield – addressing policy challenges in ways which reflect the universal values of fairness' (Salmond, 2012). Scotland therefore makes an interesting case for the examination of policy discourses in relation to young people. In order to do this we will use a theoretical framework developed by Nancy Fraser that is oriented on the norm of *participatory parity* and combine it with an approach informed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to discern if the policy context in Scotland contributes to young people achieving social justice.

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Nancy Fraser and Participatory Parity

Social justice, traditionally, is concerned with the principles by which goods are distributed in society. This *distributional* conception of social justice has been challenged by what Nancy Fraser terms 'the struggle for *recognition'* (1995: 68). Whilst the redistributional paradigm seeks equality through the redeployment of material resources, the recognitional paradigm posits that the conditions of a just society require 'social arrangements that permit all members of society to interact with one another as peers' (Fraser, 2003: 38).

Both types of injustice, economic or cultural, redistributive or recognitional, necessitate very different remedies for injustice. For the politics of redistribution, economic restructuring of some description is required, for the politics of recognition, cultural or symbolic change is necessary. This could involve re-evaluating disrespected identities or revaluing cultural diversity. As such, the politics of redistribution and recognition are often posited as mutually exclusive alternatives. Writers such as Gitlin (1995) and Rorty (2000) argue that the focus on recognition serves to distract from the real issue of distributive injustice and suggest that rather than uniting people in a genuine counter-politics, the focus on identity only sets them apart, thus suffocating any possibility of promoting broader political co-operation. Conversely, theorists such as Taylor (1992) and Honneth (2003) argue that ignoring difference and focusing exclusively on redistribution can serve to reinforce injustice by compelling minority groups and identities to 'fall in line' with the norms of the dominant group. Therefore, the struggles over a fairer distribution of opportunities, resources and rights should be thought of as struggles for recognition.

Fraser (2003), however, argues that issues of distribution and recognition interpenetrate. Though they do not fold neatly into one another, they interact causally. The concept of 'participatory parity' forms the normative core of Fraser's framework of social justice and, according to this norm, any practice which denies members of society the opportunity to participate in social life as peers must be called unjust. For participatory parity to be achievable two conditions must be met. The first is the 'objective' condition, where participatory parity is impeded by economic structures such as social arrangements which maintain great disparities of wealth or which institutionalise deprivation and exploitation (Fraser, 1996: 2003). The second is the 'intersubjective' condition of participatory parity. Injustices are committed here when individuals or groups are denied equal respect due to institutionalised patterns of interpretation which resultantly deny them the status of full partners in society. Fraser (1996) argues that 'both the objective and intersubjective conditions are necessary for participatory parity. Neither alone is sufficient' (p37). Treating every injustice as both economic and cultural, all must be assessed from both outlooks without reducing one to the other.

Key to this approach is what Fraser calls the 'status model' of recognition. This model views misrecognition as a matter of *social status*, where:

> …patterns of disrespect and disesteem are institutionalized, for example, in law, social welfare, medicine, public education, and/or the social practices and group mores that structure everyday interaction; they impede parity of participation, just as surely as do distributive inequities (Fraser, 1998: 25-6)

Fraser's status model shifts the focus from the individual onto the social institutions which can deny members the opportunity to interact on an equal basis with their fellow citizens.

To illustrate this point, it is useful to consider three groups and locate them on Fraser's conceptual spectrum. The classic redistributional injustice in Marxian terms is faced by the exploited working-class, who must sell their labour power in order to survive. Therefore, they can be located at the **redistribution** extreme of Fraser's spectrum.

At the other extreme, Fraser (1996) cites homosexuals as an ideal-typical collective that is rooted wholly in the status order of society, as they are spread throughout the class structure and 'occupy no distinctive position in the division of labour...rather, their mode of collectivity is rooted in the status order of society, and the injustice they suffer is quintessentially a matter of recognition' (p13). As such, they occupy the **recognition** extreme of Fraser's spectrum.

In contrast to these two extremes, Fraser (2003) considers 'race' to be the best example of a collective that is rooted in both the economic structure and status order of society. She argues that ethnic minorities continue to be discriminated against in the labour market whilst:

> …patterns of cultural value privilege traits associated with "whiteness," while stigmatizing everything coded as "black," "brown," and "yellow," …as a result, racialised immigrants and/or ethnic minorities are constructed as deficient and inferior others who cannot be full members of society (p23)

In this view, race can be seen as operating between the two extremes, and is a classic illustration of a '**bivalent' collectivity**.

In reality, of course, no-one is a member of only one group, and 'class', 'sexuality' and 'race' intersect, so individuals 'who are subordinated along one axis of social division may well be dominant along another' (*Ibid*: 26). They subsequently require a two-pronged politics of redistribution and recognition in order to achieve participatory parity.

Fraser (2008) has added a third, political dimension to her framework, that of *participation*. Fraser places this dimension alongside that of redistribution and recognition, stating that it 'sets the procedures for staging and resolving contests in both the economic and the cultural dimensions' (p17). Parity in this sense can only be achieved when individuals can participate on an equal footing in decision-making processes, particularly when considering issues that directly affect them.

In this paper Fraser's critical theory is drawn on as a multi-dimensional conceptual tool using the single principle of *participatory parity* to consider what injustices young people living in Scotland must overcome in order to achieve participatory parity.

Method

In order to interrogate how the Scottish Government seeks to overcome these barriers, the approach utilised here is to analyse policy documents relating to young people using critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is particularly useful in this context as

Taylor (2004) notes, 'it is the combination of linguistic analysis with social analysis which makes CDA a particularly useful tool for policy analysis in comparison with other approaches' (p436). CDA views the relationship between policy texts and the social practices and institutions as a dialectical one:

> …that is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258)

In order to be utilised successfully, Fairclough (2009) emphasises that CDA has to be multi-disciplinary in its approach and draw upon other critical theories outside linguistics. He suggests that social analysis (the external relations of the text) should be combined with semiotic/linguistic analysis (the internal relations of the text). Mediating between these two levels of analysis the *interdiscursive* analysis focuses on identifying which genres and discourses are drawn on in the text, and analysing how they work together in the text. Using CDA alongside the framework offered by Nancy Fraser, enables current policy in Scotland to be analysed to see how it frames issues of maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation in relation to young people.

The framework offered by Fraser is further complemented by CDA as both seek to locate how power and dominance is exercised at the structural level. As van Dijk (2001) notes:

> Dominance is defined here as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality…more specifically, critical discourse analysts want to know what…properties of text, talk…or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction (p. 300)

In terms of policy documents, this means looking at how particular issues are framed. What knowledge, values, norms and above all, *ideology* (representations of aspects of the world that contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation) inform the document? Interrogating how issues are defined, and the solutions offered to rectify them, is therefore crucial. Habermas (1977) makes the point that 'language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimise relations of organised power. Insofar as the legitimisations of power relations…are not articulated…language is also ideological' (p259). This makes the interrogation of policy essential in understanding how social justice is framed and how those in power seek to achieve their ends. And because the relationship between policy discourse and social structures is a dialectical one, it can help to sustain and reproduce the social status quo (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

In order to investigate the policy discourses in Scotland a range of policies relevant to young people and the issue of social justice were reviewed. A number were rejected as not pertinent to this age group (*The Early Years Framework* – (2008) Scottish Government; *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* (2007) Scottish Government) or as making no specific references to young people (*Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life* (2003) Scottish Executive; *Equally Well – report of ministerial task force on health inequalities* (2008) Scottish Government).

The policies that were included were:

- *The Government Economic Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2011) - Although the Economic strategy is not explicitly aimed at young people, it was necessary to analyse it as it shaped all the other policies.
- *More Choices, More Chances: A Strategy to Reduce the Proportion of Young People not in Education, Employment or Training in Scotland (Scottish Executive, 2006)* – The policy objective is to 'eradicate the problem of NEET…[Not in Employment, Education or Training]…the length and breadth of Scotland' (*Ibid*: 1).
- *Achieving our potential: A Framework to tackle poverty and income inequality in Scotland* (Scottish Government, 2008) –this document outlines the government's strategy for tackling poverty and equalising income inequality.
- *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* (Scottish Government, 2010) – This policy places 'a renewed focus and flexibility around the skills required to accelerate economic recovery and to sustain a growing, successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish' (Ibid: 9)
- *Bridging the Gap – Improving Outcomes for Scotland's young people through school and youth work partnerships* (LTS, 2010) - The principle aim of this policy is to encourage youth work and teacher partnerships to address the aims of the *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004) so that young people are enabled to become 'confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens' (LTS, 2010: 4).

The approach adopted involved identifying indicators of particular concepts and expanding these concepts into categories using thematic analysis. The first step of the analysis was reading and re-reading the policy documents, noting down how young people were conceptualised and represented and this in turn generated discursive themes that were identified throughout the documents. These themes were collected into potential categories that were then reviewed, defined and named. Once the key categories were identified, the next stage involved looking at how they were framed both in their use of rhetoric and metaphor to persuade and influence the reader as well as the ideological work of the texts in representing, relating and identifying particular values (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

In the next section the discourse analysis is connected to the social analysis through interrogating these key categories and linking the two analyses to the framework offered by Nancy Fraser. Throughout this analysis we ask 'does the policy environment contribute to young people achieving participatory parity'?

The Key Categories

Economic competitiveness

This category underpins all others because it has significant repercussions for how the current administration hopes to realise its conception of social justice. Throughout the policy documents reference is made to the requirement to keep Scotland competitive in an increasingly global market. For example:

> Scottish education is being transformed to meet the demands of the 21st Century. (LTS: 2010: 5)

> …to enable it to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world (Scottish Government, 2007b)

> Both innovation and commercialisation are key drivers of productivity and competitiveness, particularly in an increasingly interconnected global economy. (Scottish Government, 2011:47)

Such rhetoric, Fairclough (2003) suggests, is part of 'the neoliberal discourse of economic change … which demands "adjustments" and "reforms" to enhance "efficiency and adaptability" in order to compete' (p100).

This focus on economic growth runs through the policy documents and the position of the government is made explicit at the very beginning of the Economic Strategy that states:

> When this Government was first elected in 2007, we made clear in our Economic Strategy that we would make Scotland a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth...this remains our top priority. (Scottish Government, 2011:4)

As Ball (1998) suggests 'policies are both systems of values and symbolic systems…policies are articulated both to achieve material effects and to manufacture support for those effects' (p124). For example, in showing how the Scottish Government aims to overcome inequality the terms 'equity', 'solidarity', 'cohesion' and 'poverty' feature throughout the *Economic Strategy* and the *Achieving our Potential* policy documents. However, work is posited as the remedy and the catalyst for all these terms. For example:

> Increased equity – through improving opportunities and outcomes – across Scotland has the potential to engage large numbers of people and communities who face disadvantages into the mainstream economy (Scottish Government, 2011: 89).

It is unclear how such an approach addresses pre-existing issues of maldistribution in terms of wealth and income. The importance of this rhetoric in terms of justice becomes apparent when analysing the discourse in greater detail.

Opportunity

The current policy discourse has embraced the notion of the 'enabling state' (Lister, 2007), seeking to provide individuals with the opportunities to participate on a par with their contemporaries. Indeed, the very title of the *More Choices, More Chances* policy document reflects this position:

> Only by ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to succeed will we fully maximise the nation's potential.. (Scottish Government, 2011: 10)

> This strategy aims to promote equal access to and participation in skills, career

information, advice and guidance and learning activities for everyone. It is intended

to promote equality of opportunity to those who face persistent disadvantage and to improve the numbers of people economically active across all groups within society (Scottish Government, 2010: 6).

This reflects a meritocratic vision of society, however, as Fraser (2003) notes: 'it is not the case that everyone enters these struggles on equal terms. On the contrary, some contestants lack the resources to participate on a par with others, thanks to unjust economic arrangements. (p 57)

The position of equality of opportunity taken by the Scottish Government – rather than equality of outcome – ignores the impact of factors such as poverty and race which serve to marginalise young people at an early age. As Scott & Mooney (2009) note, it is 'worth asking whether the framework offers much more than previous approaches that prioritise work as the route out of poverty and fails to address inequalities of assets and income' (p384). Therefore, it appears that the Scottish Government still fails to recognise that maldistribution can negatively impact on the opportunities and life chances available to young people. As Hine & Wood (2009) note, opportunities are limited by factors such as economic circumstances, social and cultural capital, schools they attend and language competence so extending opportunity in the education or labour market is not enough on its own to overcome issues of maldistribution. Failing to address the underlying issues which disadvantage these young people means they will be unable to participate on a par with their better-off peers.

Discrimination

The government does acknowledge the impact of discrimination. For example, it states that:

> The Government is committed to ensuring that delivery of the Government Economic Strategy Supports the improvement of life outcomes for all of Scotland's people, including those who face disadvantage, discrimination or prejudice (Scottish Government, 2011: 92)

> Many women are concentrated in low paid employment and some minority ethnic communities, and in particular women from these communities. (Scottish Government, 2008: 10)

How it aims to tackle issues of discrimination, however, is less clear. The government aims to commit itself to carrying out an 'equality impact assessment' across six strands (race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age and religion/faith) (Scottish Government, 2008). However, work is prioritised as the main way of addressing income inequality:

> We will set out plans … for improved employability and skills services to Scotland's black and minority ethnic communities. (Scottish Government, 2008: 12)

> …we will extend our approach on inclusive employment for people with learning disabilities. (Ibid: 12)

It is intended to promote equality of opportunity to those who face persistent disadvantage and to improve the numbers of people economically active across all groups within society. (Scottish Government, 2010: 6)

Ensuring that these groups have equal respect in terms of 'opportunity' ignores the fact that they may be unable to take up such opportunities due to their pre-existing economic marginalisation. Or in Fraser's (1996) terms, ensuring that their 'intersubjective' needs are met is not enough if their 'objective' conditions have not also been met. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that 'many people still experience disadvantage and limited opportunities because of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, faith, age or social background' (Scottish Government, 2008: 12), the economic focus means that the overall aim is to reconnect 'people in disadvantaged groups…to the mainstream economy' (Ibid: 3). This is to be done by measures which:

> …promote equality and tackles discrimination – by challenging stereotypes… and supporting individuals so that all can reach their potential. (Ibid: 13)

> …raise public awareness and challenge the stereotypes and attitudes which limit the opportunities for particular groups. (Ibid: 14)

Whilst the discourse here moves from a complete emphasis on the individual to focus on discriminatory practices at an institutional level it still does not address the recognition aspect of social justice because it falls under what Fraser (2003) terms 'mainstream multiculturalism'. This means that rather than combating disrespect, measures such as this tend to reify group identity 'while leaving intact both the contents of those identities and the group differentiations that underlie them' (p75). This is compounded by a misleading discourse in the policy which states 'the barriers and limited opportunities that arise as a result can lead to poverty and disadvantage' (Scottish Government, 2008: 12). Whilst this may be true, it fails to acknowledge that poverty and disadvantage tend to limit the range of opportunities available to those who are economically marginalised (Steer, 2000; Wong & Balestino, 2001; Hine & Wood, 2009). This is without even considering the significant decline of labour market opportunities for all young people, particularly those in the aforementioned groups (Scottish Government, 2012). For young people in these groups, then, participatory parity will continue to be impeded unless due attention is paid to the socioeconomic conditions which underpin their exclusion.

The Individual

At the heart of the Scottish Government's vision of creating a successful country built on sustainable economic growth is ensuring individuals have the requisite skills to drive productivity and encourage capital investment. However, the responsibility of having the necessary skills rests with the individual as is evident in the policy discourse:

> (Individual Learning Accounts)…make a significant contribution to delivering ambitions on individual development - placing the individual at the centre of learning and skills development and supporting individuals to increase control and choice over their skills and learning development (Scottish Government, 2010: 29)

> … to engage with the concept of employability to enable the individuals concerned to progress towards the labour market. (Scottish Executive, 2006: 1)

> …agreed learning and support packages to meet individual needs (LTS, 2010: 22)

This focus on individual responsibility combined with the discourse of 'opportunity' means that for young people failing to make the transition from school to work/further or higher education, they are increasingly held accountable for their failing. Exclusion from the education/labour market is located in the young person's lack of 'agency' and this can also absolve governments from 'taking up a more complex level of responsibility and the consequent need to take more wide-ranging actions' (te Riele, 2006: 141).

Maldistribution and misrecognition intersect again. Such discourse fails to recognise that marginalised young people are heavily constrained in writing their individual 'biography' by factors such as poverty, social exclusion, geographical location and family disadvantage (Kemshall, 2009; Savelsberg, 2010). These factors can all combine to deny them the opportunity to participate on a par with their middle-class peers. This then feeds into their misrecognition as they are resultantly held responsible for failing to make the same transition as their better-off contemporaries. As a result, working-class young people increasingly find themselves economically marginalised, stuck in a 'churn' of unemployment, government training schemes, college courses and low-paid, low-skill jobs (MacDonald & Marsh, 2005: Roberts, 2011).

The policy goal throughout the documents is to enable young people to develop the four capacities of becoming 'confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors and responsible citizens' (LTS, 2010: 4). Fairclough (2001) states that lists such as these tend to be 'reader directive', outlining what is to be achieved without expanding on how they are to be achieved or for what purpose. Analysing the documents, what they mean for young people in terms of social justice becomes apparent. For example, the *Bridging the Gap* policy states that it is 'firmly focused on the needs of young people' (LTS: 2010: 5) but, when attention is turned to the group identified as 'marginalised young people', the goal of intervention is to assist them to 'move on successfully to further learning, employment or volunteering opportunities' (Ibid: 11) and 'Learning, living and working in today's economy requires young people to be flexible, adaptable and to have the on-going capacity to develop knowledge and skills. This investment in our young people is essential for the future growth of our economy' (Scottish Government, 2011: 61). Far from being focused on the 'needs of young people', policies appear more concerned with ensuring that young people are equipped with the skills necessary to enter the labour market, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances. As Alexiadou argues 'these discourses tend to ignore or marginalise the effects of governance structures on the production and distribution of opportunities' (2002: 73). Without addressing the underlying causes of educational disadvantage, it is difficult to see how 'affirmative' measures such as 'individualised learning support packages' (LTS, 2010: 11) will address the increasing polarisation between those who go on to higher education and those that do not.

Flexibility

The discourse of 'flexibilization' (Field, 2000) and adaptability runs through a number of policies:

> …placing a renewed focus and flexibility around the skills required to accelerate economic recovery and to sustain a growing, successful country with opportunities for all. (Scottish Government, 2010: 9)
> A flexible skills system is required to respond to these challenges and ensure there is the right mix of skills in the workforce to respond to labour market demands and support economic growth (Scottish Government, 2010: 14)

Combined with the individualised focus, this means that young people are under pressure to constantly update their skills in order to take their place in a competitive workforce that is 'focussed on the individual fitting into the culture of educational systems, rather than developing different environments to meet individual needs' (Mosen-Lowe et al, 2009). With the increase of youth unemployment, the result is that young people are involved in an 'arms race' with one another to avoid becoming a supernumerary of the new world order. Quite clearly, these pressures are not experienced evenly across the social spectrum:

> New forms of 'flexible' working have reduced job security and many of the least qualified young people have become trapped on the labour market periphery where they are vulnerable to periodic unemployment and to a process of churn between one poor job and another. (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007: 51)

Far from combating maldistribution, such discourse could be contributing to embedding and reinforcing existing inequalities. As labour market experiences become more polarised, those (primarily working-class) young people who are unable to compete find themselves caught in the aforementioned 'churn'. Moreover, the policy seeks to foster a culture of 'enterprise' and 'entrepreneurship' in order to remain competitive in the 'knowledge society':

> …through the enterprise in education strategy in Curriculum for Excellence, local authority schools in Scotland are ensuring young people are enterprising and entrepreneurial and prepared and ready for the world of work (Scottish Government, 2010: 16)
> 'We are consistently reminded by our members that… skills such as leadership, teamwork and enterprise are the kind of qualities that young people develop through taking an active part in their local communities.' (LTS, 2010: 19)

The language used serves in the misrecognition of those caught in the labour market periphery, leaving young people open to what Bourdieu (2003) calls 'flexploitation'. Here maldistribution and misrecognition intersect once again as young people are restricted to poorly paid employment, denied an adequate material standard of living and subject to patterns of communication which are alien to their lived reality. By creating the myth of a requirement for flexible, entrepreneurial young people, the Scottish government 'are merely instituting as societal norms those rules imposed on the dominated by the needs of the economy (from which the dominant are careful to

exempt themselves)' (Bourdieu, 2003: 30). Such a view serves to misrecognise young people who may be struggling to make the transition from school to work/further education. Indeed, the policy states that 'employers have identified "soft skills" as a gap' (LTS, 2010: 18) with an accompanying quote from the director of CBI (Confederation of British Industry) listing the qualities valued by employers (leadership, teamwork and enterprise). Again, deficiency is located at the level of the individual rather than in the socioeconomic processes which serve to marginalise so many young people in this transition.

Labels for Young People

The individualised focus of contemporary policy leads to a variety of terms being used to describe young people who fall outside what are considered ideal subject positions established for 'mainstream' youth. This section examines the main labels used that lead to misrecognition.

NEET & 'At risk'

One such label is 'NEET' (not in education, employment or training). The term itself is an example of misrecognition, because young people are classified through a negative, i.e. by defining them by what they are not . This in turn distracts from the structural issues which have served to marginalise young people from the employment market. Rather, the policy documents tend to focus on young people who are considered to be 'at-risk'. Foster & Spencer (2011) suggest that contemporary youth policy constructs young people as 'at risk' and risk factor analysis focuses on the characteristics present in individuals which can lead to 'problem' or 'anti-social' behaviour in later life. This is evident throughout policy:

> …which target young people at risk of missing out on work and further education opportunities. (LTS, 2010: 22)

> There are also a series of individual circumstances and barriers which are strong indicators of NEET or at risk NEET status. (Scottish Executive, 2006: 9)

The groups of young people identified as being 'at risk' in the policy are care leavers, young carers, teenage parents, offenders, low attainers, truants, young people with health problems and substance misusers. As the overwhelming concern of the government is on getting young people off benefits and into work, these 'rhetorical figures' condense into one overarching category, that of 'NEET':

> This acronym, which is in common use to refer to young people, characterises them as having a problem about being fully autonomous…interventions in their lives are based on a calculation of 'risk': either the risk they pose (usually boys) or the risk they are at (usually girls). (Batsleer, 2008: 32)

Such discourse continues the responsibilising culture that views individuals as being in deficit and contributes to the misrecognition of young people deemed 'at risk' as it 'feeds into the blaming and…problematising culture that exists around how the state should tackle the youth question' (France, 2008b: 9).

When the focus turns to how to tackle the issues faced by those young people deemed to be 'at risk', the strategies for reducing inequalities fall clearly into the 'affirmative'

remedies cited by Fraser (2003). Measures such as free school meals, tax credits, money advice services and ensuring that 'all young people will be taught how to manage their money and understand their finances' (Scottish Government, 2008: 16), whilst no doubt welcome to families of young people struggling financially, do little other than assist these families to better manage their poverty. Moreover, there is a particular focus in the policy on the parents of young people:

> …provides all children and young people with the best start in life – by putting parenting at the heart of policy. (Scottish Government, 2008: 13)

> Raising parents' aspirations often has a positive impact in increasing the confidence and motivation of their children. (LTS, 2010: 11)

Implicit in this discourse is the notion that the blame for young people being at risk of future exclusion lies with their parents. Viewed in this way, exclusion is not the same as poverty and is something that can be dealt with 'by tackling the poor attitudes of parents…to their responsibilities' (France, 2008a: 498). Attention is then turned away from causes of poverty and directed towards tackling the 'symptoms', aiming to help the marginalised manage their circumstances (Mosen-Lowe et al, 2009). As Fraser (1995) argues, affirmative measures such as these 'can stigmatize the disadvantaged, adding the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation' (p86).

The policy also commits itself to focusing on 'vulnerable' young people in the school-to-work transition and improving the 'capacity of individuals and their families to lift themselves out of poverty by developing their resilience' (Scottish Government, 2008: 4). The use of the term resilience is particularly telling in this context. Masten (2001) defines resilience as positive adaptation in the face of adversity and whilst this is an important characteristic for well-being (particularly for those living in poverty) it is not a substitute for removing the structural barriers which marginalise people in the first place. As such, surface reallocations of wealth and terms such as resilience do little other than to distract attention from the underlying causes of marginalisation and serves 'to control the poor and to continue the maintenance of the economic status quo, where the poor remain poor' (France, 2008a: 498).

Disaffected

This misrecognition is furthered by the discourse of 'disaffection'. Although its exact meaning is difficult to pin down, Mckendrick et al (2007) suggest that 'in conventional use, 'disaffected' means discontented, alienated and dissatisfied' (p140). This term appears throughout the More Choices, More Chances policy document:

> Wide-ranging action is needed across the education and wider children's services to improve the educational experience of all children, especially those most at risk of disaffection. (Scottish Executive, 2006: 2)

> This group may be 'quietly disaffected' and commonly have issues around motivation, confidence and soft skills. (Ibid: 8)

> Notwithstanding considerable development of vocational options and partnership working to engage with young people who are disaffected. (Ibid: 16)

Framed in this way, the government appears to attribute young people's alienation and under-achievement to their lack of aspiration and motivation. Far from this being the case, several studies have found that young people profess 'normal' aspirations (e.g. McKendrick et al, 2007; Foster & Spencer, 2011). These studies found that young people expressed conventional hopes such as a stable relationship, a home, children, a readiness to work and 'no sign of any consistent rejection of the work ethic, the value of education nor an oppositional culture in relation to education, employment or social engagement' (Mckendrick et al, 2007: 150). Rather, what is evident from these studies is that many young people although harbouring 'mainstream' ambitions, are hindered by factors such as poverty, family disadvantage, localised unemployment, disability and discrimination.

Categorisations such as these serve to further misrecognise already marginalised young people. As such, young people here can be said to be suffering from both maldistribution and misrecognition. Excluded from the spheres of education and labour and misrecognised in public policy, it appears that young people suffer both cultural harm and status subordination. Maldistribution and misrecognition intersect as young people's exclusion from the labour market leads to and feeds into their disparagement in policy.

Conclusion

In this paper we have shown how the policy discourse in Scotland has been framed through our analysis of key categories and labels for young people. From the perspective of Fraser's (2000) status model, social justice encompasses:

> ....two analytically distinct dimensions: a dimension of recognition, which concerns the effects of institutionalized meanings and norms on the relative standing of social actors; and a dimension of distribution, which involves the allocation of disposable resources to social actors. (p. 116)

As such, it would appear that the government's strategy for young people falls short in both domains. The policy appears strong on 'enabling' but is weak on the relationship between economy and society, ignoring the structural factors that marginalise young people from the employment market in the first place. They are further marginalised by the disrespectful and misleading terms which portray them throughout the policy documents, as the discourse serves to justify the government's 'affirmative' measures in tackling those young people deemed 'at-risk'.

As Maxwell (2009) notes 'over the last decade as the [Scottish Government's] social heart has become more attached to social democracy, its economic head has inclined to neo-liberalism' (p131). This value struggle appears in many of the policy documents and has significant implications for young people in terms of how the Scottish Government interprets, and hopes to realise, greater social justice. On the one hand, the documents propound the importance of equity, cohesion and solidarity and the government has enacted several measures which aim to work towards these goals including the continuation of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) that provides financial support to 16-19 year olds to enable them to attend school or college full time (which has been withdrawn in England by the Westminster government) (Mooney & Scott, 2012). However, on the other hand, at the heart of its strategy work is posited as the primary method of tackling income inequality. Central to this is the message that the government is committed to providing the 'opportunity'

for all to contribute to Scotland's economic growth. Two themes linked to this that run throughout the documents are 'making work pay' and 'income maximisation' for those that can't. It is uncertain, however, how inequality of income or wealth are to be addressed - both key causes of poverty and inequality. As Wyn & White (1997) caution, 'policies which deny the relevance of class, gender and ethnic relations as relations of power in effect risk contributing to the production of unequal relations' (p148). For all the talk of 'equity' and 'solidarity', the Scottish Government's commitment to these ideals is bound up in a neo-liberal framework where the reduction of inequality comes secondary to the requirements of economic competitiveness. Such a view means 'social justice is framed as subordinate to, and a platform for, the needs of national economic performance' (Law, 2005 p56). The discourse of 'opportunity' which dominates the policy agenda in Scotland, combined with the focus on the individual, has served to locate deficiency in those young people who fall short of the 'ideal' subject position (Bottrell, 2009). This means that young people can become labelled 'at-risk', 'or 'disaffected'. Such misrecognition serves to reinforce the economic marginalisation of those young people so identified, as the discourse serves to justify the 'affirmative' measures made by the government which do little to alter the status quo. Instead, such labels homogenise young people whose life paths, more so than any other group, are becoming increasingly fluid but still mediated through structural inequalities relating to class, gender, ethnicity and disability.

It would appear, then, that participatory parity for many young people is not going to be achieved in the near future. Fraser's framework has revealed that young people are denied participatory parity in a variety of ways which serve to reinforce one another. In terms of the 'objective' precondition of participatory parity, young people today find a labour market ravaged by macro-economic restructuring, an increasing wage gap between those that go to university and those that do not, an increase in temporary, low-quality and part-time jobs and a reduced entitlement to benefits that are insufficient to lift them out of poverty (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Scottish Government, 2012). Regarding the 'inter-subjective' precondition of participatory parity, those who do fall short of the 'ideal' are susceptible to a form of institutionalised cultural domination which is increasingly hostile to young people, and uses disrespectful terms to describe them. In doing so, they fail to acknowledge how immensely complex and fragmented the youth phase has become in late modernity. Processes of 'flexibilisation' and 'individualisation' are undoubtedly putting more pressure on already disadvantaged young people. As Wood & Hine (2009) note:

> Their social identities are subjected to far-reaching, diverse and interconnected influences. These range from changing macro-forces arising from globalisation and the risk society, to more constant issues of social stratification relating to class, gender, race, disability, sexuality and so on. (p. 3)

Where this places young people on Fraser's spectrum, then, is difficult to discern. Alongside these issues, factors such as geographical location, social and cultural capital and their level of personal agency will all play an important role in their ability to achieve participatory parity especially for young people living on the margins where the agency they have to determine the path of their own narrative is limited (Kemshall, 2009). In terms of the policy discourse, however, it seems that young

people suffer both **maldistribution and misrecognition** placing them in the centre of the spectrum as a bivalent collective.

The analysis has shown that these two spheres are intertwined and reinforce each other dialectically, as Fraser (1995) suggests, 'cultural norms that are unfairly biased against some are institutionalized in the state and the economy; meanwhile, economic disadvantage impedes equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres and in everyday life' (p72). The result is a vicious circle for young people who 'fail to make the grade'. This is further reinforced by their exclusion from the political sphere, where these power imbalances and negative discourses could be challenged (Fyfe, 2010). This means that the policies interrogated fail to address these issues and worse, actually contribute to the marginalisation of young people in Scotland. For a sizeable minority of young people, then, participatory parity and subsequently social justice seems a distant prospect.

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