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Department of Philosophy, Macquarie University**

Thesis Title:

The Theory of Recognition and the Ethics of Immigration

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Contents

Thesis Summary

This thesis examines the theory of recognition and applies it in the context of Australian immigration laws, policies and procedures. Part One (Chapter One) of the thesis addresses the question "What is recognition?", before turning to Axel Honneth's theory of recognition and the connections between his theory and other theories. In Part Two (Chapters Two, Three and Four), I consider a number of challenges that have been raised against Honneth's theory by Patchen Markell, Kelly Oliver and Nancy Fraser and I defend Honneth's theory against each of these challenges. I also raise my own questions about Honneth's account of the connection between esteem, achievement and social solidarity, and I consider whether questions of recognition of lack of recognition must be posed within the boundaries of a nation state.

In Part Three (Chapters Five and Six), I apply Honneth's theory in the context of Australian immigration. I argue that recognition in terms of love, respect and esteem can be linked to the categories of family, humanitarian and skilled/economic migration and I contend that there is a close relationship between social frameworks of recognition and the mechanisms of social inclusion or exclusion that occur in immigration laws, policies and practice. I claim that interpreting the context of immigration in this way helps us to understand both its social function and its normative significance. In the final chapter, I revisit the challenges to Honneth's theory and reconsider them in the context of the immigration policies. I argue that Honneth's account of the role of struggles for recognition and its connection to social progress is particularly useful for understanding the "moral grammar' and issues of justice that are at stake.

Candidate's Statement

This work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. I am the sole author of this thesis and all reference to the work of others has been clearly indicated as such.

Signed:

Date:

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor Associate Professor Nicholas Smith

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Special thanks to David Duloy and our children Thomas and Amy

for their love and encouragement

This thesis is dedicated to all immigrants who struggle for recognition

<u>Introduction</u>

In this thesis I explore the possibility of using theories of recognition to analyse immigration. A variety of different types of "recognition" have become a familiar component of the justice claims of many socio-political movements. For example, African American civil rights activists demand recognition of the right to be treated equally to the white majority. Same-sex couples claim recognition of an equal right to marry their partner. National minorities claim recognition of the right their distinctive identity, which would allow them to be educated in their own language or to follow particular religious practices. All of these claims have been characterised as demands for recognition even though they appear to focus on different types of recognition and call for quite diverse responses. In this thesis I shall argue that the claims of immigrants, in addition to those of socially structured groups such as African Americans, gay activists and national minorities, involve demands for recognition.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part One, "The Concept of Recognition", consists of just one chapter. It sets the scene by introducing the concept of recognition and considering some of the central claims that are made by contemporary theorists of recognition, in particular Axel Honneth. However, Honneth's theory has been subjected to a number of formidable criticisms. In Part Two, "Major Challenges to Honneth's Theory" (which includes Chapters Two, Three and Four) I examine three sets of criticisms of Honneth's theory that I take to be particularly important and I raise some criticisms of my own. I then undertake a critical analysis of these objections in order to consider the validity of Honneth's theory and to consolidate his theory in ways that make it not so vulnerable to the criticisms. The third and final part of the thesis, "Recognition and Immigration",

includes Chapters Five and Six. This part applies Honneth's theory in the context of Australian immigration and, in light of that context of application, reconsiders the challenges that were the focus of Part Two.

The first section of Part One addresses the question "What is recognition?" and begins by giving an overview of some of the different types of socio-political struggles that are commonly understood as demands for recognition. I contend that these struggles involve both claims for recognition of equal rights and demands for recognition of difference and that these different types of claims/demands appear to call for quite different responses. I then investigate the theoretical concept of recognition by sketching the accounts of recognition that have been given by the contemporary theorists Charles Taylor and Nancy Fraser in order to see if they are able to shed some light on the different demands for recognition. There are problematic limitations to both Taylor's "politics of difference" and Fraser's theory of cultural recognition (as distinct from redistribution) because both theories focus almost exclusively on the claims for political recognition that are made by distinct social or cultural groups. This focus on claims that have already achieved political or social articulation is too narrow because it can leave out some of the injustices that are suffered by people who are unable to effectively participate in this realm. I elect to concentrate on Honneth's theory of recognition because it has a broader theoretical focus and appears to have the capacity to offer a wider explanation of more types of recognition claims and struggles for recognition than the other theories.

The second section of Part One concentrates on what I take to be the key components of Honneth's theory. For Honneth, recognition is a broad explanatory concept with normative force. His central claim is that our capacity to function as self-directing

individuals depends on the recognition relationships that we have with other people throughout our lives. This means that adequate recognition is a necessity for everyone and not only for people who participate in the socio-political movements that make public demands for various forms of recognition. In order to explicate Honneth's theory I reconstruct his account of three distinct forms of recognition that occur through love, respect and esteem and of the importance of struggles for recognition. Honneth contends that his theory provides not only a description of how contemporary societies function but also an explanation of how the different forms of recognition can change over time and of the mechanisms that drive these changes. I argue that Honneth's theory can help to illuminate the normative dimensions that underpin many social struggles and that his theory is particularly useful as an explanatory and diagnostic framework for understanding social change.

In the third section of Part One I compare the normative aspects of Honneth's theory with the normative claims that are made by some other social and political theories. I argue that there are some similarities between Honneth's theory and the ethics of care, liberalism and communitarianism and I investigate a number of theoretical resonances and antagonisms. This involves an exploration of the connections between the ethics of care and the recognition through love relationships that Honneth describes, an analysis of Honneth's account of respect and its relationship to liberal accounts of autonomy and respect, and a comparison of communitarian accounts of social solidarity and the recognition that happens through frameworks of social esteem.

In particular, I contend that Honneth's account of recognition in the form of love and the account of care that is given in the ethics of care are very similar, although they are not

motivated in exactly the same way. The sphere of love in Honneth's theory and the ethics of care have also been subjected to similar criticisms of their inappropriateness for the political arena on the grounds of partiality and of allowing psychological or emotional responses to carry some weight. I argue that Honneth's model is not as vulnerable to these criticisms as the ethics of care because he also emphasises the importance of recognition in terms of respect and esteem. Although Honneth argues for the importance of autonomy and rights (which are also emphasised in liberal theories of justice), I contend that his account explains the importance of the social context that makes autonomy and rights a possibility. Honneth's account of the importance of social solidarity (which is also emphasised in communitarian theories) is also able to explain the importance of social progress and the role of social conflict. I conclude that Honneth's theory may be able to provide a different, broader (and perhaps better) framework than the ethics of care, liberalism or communitarianism.

Although I find Honneth's theory of recognition to be plausible (at least on face value), many other theorists have raised challenges to his theory and subjected it to a number of specific criticisms. If these criticisms of Honneth's theory were valid that would potentially undermine the legitimacy of applying his framework. In the fourth and final section of Part One I begin by briefly introducing three sets of criticisms that have been raised by Patchen Markell, Kelly Oliver and Nancy Fraser. Markell raises concerns about the empirical accuracy of Honneth's theory and whether individuals currently do (or could have) the capacities that mutual recognition seems to require. Oliver suggests that even if mutual recognition is possible, it may not be a desirable goal because it might cause more suffering and she argues that conflictual struggles are not the right instrument to generate

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mutual recognition. Fraser contends that Honneth's theory is not able to give an adequate account of the issues of redistribution and economic injustice.

I then introduce two criticisms of my own. Firstly, I argue that there are problems with Honneth's account of the connection between esteem, achievements and social solidarity. Even if achievements do generate self-esteem as Honneth contends, there are other sources of esteem that he has under emphasised. Honneth's focus on paid work-based achievements appears to problematically overlook other types of achievements that are closely connected to social solidarity.   Competitive paid work-based achievements also appear to be an unlikely mechanism for fostering social cohesion. Secondly, I point out that Honneth's theory is problematically focused on the recognition that occurs (or does not occur) within the borders of a nation state and I argue that the actual boundaries of some and perhaps all of the forms of recognition do not necessarily coincide with national borders. I will explore this criticism in more depth in Part Three when I apply Honneth's theory in the context of immigration.

Having briefly introduced these criticisms and potential problems at the end of Part One, I move on in Part Two to defend Honneth's theory against the challenges that have been raised. Each of the Chapters (Two, Three and Four) in Part Two addresses a particular set of challenges. In Chapter Two, I address what I have termed the problems of non-reciprocal recognition that have been raised by Markell and Oliver. I consider Markell's claim that mutual recognition is an unrealisable goal that misconstrues the cause of injustice and that recognition theorists mistakenly assume that individuals have a pre-given identity that needs to be recognised. I also outline Oliver's contentions that recognition theorists mistakenly assume that intersubjective relationships are necessarily conflictual

and that the need for recognition condemns oppressed people to seek recognition from their oppressors. Honneth's theory of recognition is then reconstructed in order to demonstrate that the theory is not actually subject to most of the problems that are identified by Markell and Oliver and to argue that Honneth's account can address these challenges. A key part of this argument is a detailed consideration of the different meanings of the term "recognition" and the confusions that can arise when Honneth's use of the term "recognition" is not understood as he intends it to be. I then consider the alternatives to recognition theory that are proposed by Markell ("acknowledgment") and Oliver ("witnessing") to see if they might enhance Honneth's theoretical framework or identify some areas that are under explored by Honneth. I argue that both "acknowledgment" and "witnessing" can be understood as a partial analysis of relationships of recognition because "acknowledgement' focuses almost exclusively on the responsibilities of dominant people and groups and "witnessing' focuses on the role and experiences of people who are oppressed. I contend that both "acknowledgment" and "witnessing" are ultimately dependent on the broader multidimensional mechanisms of mutual recognition that Honneth's theory describes.

After concluding that Honneth's theory can be defended against Markell's and Oliver's challenges, I move on in Chapter Three to address Fraser's contention that Honneth's theory of recognition cannot adequately address the issue of redistribution. In order to do this, I give a more detailed account of Fraser's theoretical framework and I rehearse and analyse the debate between Honneth and Fraser. My analysis returns to the question of the meaning of the term "recognition" and explores the different interpretations of "recognition" that are given by Fraser and Honneth. Fraser claims that Honneth's theory of recognition cannot adequately identify all of the causes of market forces. I argue that

having the ability to fully explain all the numerous mechanisms that distribute and redistribute resources is different from having the ability to evaluate the effects of maldistribution. I contend that Honneth does not claim (and does not need to claim) that his theory can explain all of the workings of the free market. One does not need to provide such causal explanations in order to provide a useful diagnosis of the normative dimensions of the effects of particular patterns of distribution and redistribution. I illustrate my argument by scrutinizing Honneth's own use of his theoretical framework to address various issues of injustice in the context of paid work that he argues have arisen as part of the evolution of modern societies. Honneth's account of the importance of recognition can be used to provide a substantial critique of the effects of these circumstances of paid work. Having concluded that Honneth's theory has the capacity to diagnose the effects of maldistribution, I move on to consider my own criticisms that I raised at the end of Part One in more depth.

In Chapter Four, I expound my own concerns about Honneth's account of the connection between esteem, achievement and social solidarity in modern societies. The first section of this chapter focuses on Honneth's description of the mechanisms that generate esteem in contemporary society. I contend that there are two distinct mechanisms of esteem. The first type of esteem relates to characteristics that are "innate" and the second type of esteem relates to attributes and traits that would count as achievements according to Honneth. I question the possibility of separating the esteem that relates to what are commonly understood as "innate" characteristics from the esteem that is connected to particular attributes, traits and achievements, but I argue that Honneth's theory can show how these two different types of esteem can have the potential to be either mutually supportive or conflicting.

In the second section of Chapter Four, I raise some concerns (that are also articulated by Honneth) about the emphasis on and prominence of particular types of work-based achievements in contemporary societies. As Honneth argues, the focus on particular types of work-based achievements can mean that there is a lack of esteem given to other achievements such as those that happen through voluntary work or care work. This means that some achievements may not be adequately recognised in terms of their contribution to society. I begin my exploration of these issues of achievement and contribution by considering the approach that Jonathan Seglow has used to address similar concerns. I analyse Seglow's account of the problematic relationship between achievements and contributions and identify some difficulties with the way that he has addressed this problem. Seglow categorises particular activities as competitive achievements and other activities as uncompetitive contributions. I disagree with Seglow's categorisation and argue that there are moments of competition and contribution in all of the activities that he identifies. However, I concur with Seglow's conclusion that it is hard to see how competitive achievements could be expected to foster an increase in social inclusion and social solidarity in the way that Honneth's account suggests.

I argue that Honneth's theoretical framework has the capacity to illuminate the relationship between achievements and contributions to society and to reveal the particular sort of skills that are currently considered to be socially useful. If we focus on Honneth's account of the importance of struggles for recognition we might expect that the definition of socially useful skills will be determined not only though market forces but also through struggles for recognition that question the prevailing norms of esteem by condoning or rejecting the

current ideas of which activities are worthy of esteem and how achievements ought to be evaluated.

This question of how contribution to society is assessed is closely linked to Honneth's conception of the mechanisms that support social solidarity. In the third section of Chapter Four, I explore Honneth's account of social solidarity and his assertion that solidarity is dependant on the existence of shared intersubjective value-horizons. I return to the question of the assumptions that are commonly made (not necessarily by Honneth) about the value-horizons that relate to recognition through love, respect and esteem. For example, it is assumed that love relationships occur within the bounds of a family, group of friends or other localised small social group. Respect, on the other hand, is expected to apply equally to everyone regardless of local ties, although there are disagreements about how broad the boundaries of respect should be and whether they are national or international. Social esteem is presumed to occur within the bounds of a particular community (or on some accounts a particular nation) that has a specific shared value-horizon.

I argue that the boundaries of each form of recognition appear to be different from those that are usually assumed to apply and I consider the possibility that the processes of immigration in fact generate and support wider or in some cases more circumscribed boundaries. Although love relationships are assumed to occur in situations of relatively close proximity they can in fact stretch across national borders and result in a very wide shared value-horizon that is not confined within a local community or a particular nation. The relationships of work-based social esteem that Honneth describes also have the capacity to go far beyond a local workplace, business or industry perhaps generating a type

of international shared-value horizon for those who have the abilities and traits that are valued according to the current standards of meritocratic achievement. In contrast, the relationships of recognition that are based on mutual respect do not necessarily have a universal value-horizon that applies equally to everyone. In fact, many institutionalised forms of respect such as legal rights are primarily enacted within the boundaries of a nation state despite the existence of some frameworks of international conventions and agreements. This raises questions about the extent of the boundaries (or shared value-horizons) of social solidarity that Honneth describes. These questions are closely related to my own concern that Honneth's own account of his theory may be problematically limited to the questions of recognition or lack of recognition that occur within the borders of a nation state.

I finish off this central part of the thesis by summarising the conclusions that I have drawn in response to the theoretical challenges that have been discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four. I conclude that mutual recognition is a possible and desirable goal. Although conflictual struggles are not the only way of generating mutual recognition, they may be the inevitable outcome of a lack of recognition (if the social and political circumstances allow such struggles to occur). Consequently, social struggles can be an invaluable indicator of lack of recognition or misrecognition. Honneth's theory has the capacity to provide some valuable insights into the injustice that relates to inadequate distribution and redistribution of material resources and to raise questions about the mechanisms that evaluate achievements and contributions to society. I contend that if my conclusions are correct we might expect Honneth's theoretical framework to be able to describe and elucidate the normative dimensions of the policies of social inclusion and exclusion that

control immigration and to highlight the moral relevance of the social struggles that occur in these circumstances.

In Part Three of this thesis (Chapter Five and Six), I test the conclusions that I have made by applying my own interpretation of Honneth's theory as a descriptive, diagnostic and normative theoretical framework. In particular, I apply the theory to Australian immigration law and policy. The applicability of Honneth's model suggests itself on several grounds. The circumstances of immigration relate very directly to the issues of social usefulness, social solidarity and shared value-horizons. There are substantial social struggles that are associated with immigration and we might expect that Honneth's theory would be able to give an explanatory and normative account of them. The processes of social inclusion and exclusion are controlled (at least to some extent) in this context and the criteria for admitting or excluding particular individuals are clearly articulated which makes them easier to describe. Australia has three main types of immigration that prima facie map on interestingly to Honneth's three types of recognition. In addition, Honneth's theory has not been applied in this way and in this context before by Honneth himself or by any other theorist (to my knowledge).

Chapter Five applies Honneth's theoretical framework to current (and some historical) Australian immigration laws, policies and procedures. The first section describes the three major categories of immigration, which are skilled migration, family migration and the humanitarian program. I argue that skilled migration can be understood as a form of recognition in terms of esteem for particular achievements, family migration as a way of fostering the recognition that occurs through love relationships and the humanitarian program as an attempt to restore recognition in terms of respect to some of those who lack

a form of respect.   These arguments support my contention that there is a close relationship between the established social norms of recognition and the related mechanisms of social inclusion or exclusion that are enshrined in the immigration laws, policies and practice. I contend that the degree of priority that is given to each form of immigration reflects a hierarchical recognition order where some forms of recognition are deemed to be more important than others.

In the second section of Chapter Five, I explore the diagnostic and normative dimensions of Honneth's theory by analysing the justice or injustice of the Australian immigration policies. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate whether interpreting immigration laws, policies and procedures in this way helps us to understand both their social function and their normative significance. I undertake this exploration by using the principle of justice that Honneth argues applies to each of the types of recognition. According to Honneth's theory, skilled migration (esteem) would be evaluated in terms of merit, family migration (love) in terms of need and humanitarian immigration (respect) in terms of equality. In many cases the categories of immigration are not, in fact, evaluated in the way that Honneth suggests and I argue that this is problematic. I also contend that all of the types of recognition are in fact relevant to questions of justice and injustice in each of the categories of immigration and I highlight how some applicants for immigration are problematically denied adequate levels of recognition in many forms.

Although the selection criteria that control the skilled migration program no longer evaluate applicants on the basis of "innate" characteristics such as skin colour or ethic origin (a change which would constitute social progress in Honneth's terms), they are based on a "recognition order" that reflects current (and contestable) assumptions of what

constitutes socially useful skills. I point out that successful applicants in the skilled migration category are well placed to have adequate levels of all three types of recognition. Skilled migrants are afforded a form of universal respect because they are admitted regardless of "innate" characteristics. These applicants are also able to sustain relationships of mutual recognition with loved ones because it is relatively easy for them to sponsor family members to accompany them or to join them in Australia.

The selection criteria for family migration also appear to reflect a "recognition order" of current norms that relate to love relationships by giving priority to heterosexual partnerships (even though there is some recognition of same-sex relationships with lower priority for processing of applications). I contend that need is not the only criteria that is used to assess applications for parent visas because wealthier applicants are admitted more quickly. This means that the principle of merit (in terms of potential for contribution to society) is able to take precedence over the principle of need in these circumstances, which could be problematic according to Honneth's framework for evaluating justice and injustice.

Although the selection criteria for the humanitarian program (primarily asylum seeker or refugee status) might be construed as an attempt to restore a type of universal respect to those who lack a particular form of respect, I argue that the Australian policies problematically restrict access to recognition in terms of respect, love and esteem for these applicants in a number of ways. Respect is not applied equally, the need for love is not adequately considered and the possibility of acquiring esteem for socially useful labour is curtailed. Respect in the humanitarian category is defined in accordance with international agreements that do not encompass all of the factors that may be necessary to support

adequate recognition in terms of respect. Even if applicants do qualify for admission under the restricted selection criteria, there are a number of policies that are designed to deter applicants and to avoid having to provide this type of recognition in terms of respect.

For example, there is mandatory detention of "unauthorised" asylum seekers. Parts of Australian territory have been "excised" from the migration zone to restrict the possibility of claiming asylum. Until recently, successful asylum seekers were required to pay a "detention debt" which covered the cost of their detention. There is also a policy of off shore processing of asylum claims in other countries or on a remote Australian island, which restricts access to legal support. There have been policies in the past that provided only temporary and revokable protection for refugees and it is possible that these policies may be reintroduced. I address each of these policies and analyse all of them in terms of Honneth's principles of justice. Although liberal theories of justice and the ethics of care could raise similar objections to some of the policies, I argue that Honneth's theory of recognition offers a broader diagnostic framework that reveals problems of injustice that may be overlooked by other theories.

Having put Honneth's theory to use for the sake of understanding the phenomena of immigration, in Chapter Six I reconsider my conclusions with regards to the challenges to his theory to see if they remain valid. I begin by revisiting the challenges that have been made by Markell, Oliver and Fraser and reconsidering each of them in the context of the Australian immigration policies. I make an assessment of how each of these theorists might address the questions of justice and injustice in immigration policies that I have identified. I argue that my use of Honneth's theoretical framework in these circumstances of immigration can be defended against the challenges that have been made by these other

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theorists, but some aspects of Markell's, Oliver's and Fraser's theories might serve to emphasise or call attention to issues of injustice in immigration that are under emphasised by Honneth.

Markell's concern that mutual recognition is an impossible goal appears to be valid for many "unauthorised" asylum seekers who have inadequate respect, curtailed access to loved ones and limited opportunities for acquiring social esteem for their work-based achievements. But adequate levels of recognition appear to be much more probable for skilled migrants and many family migrants. There has been an expansion of the selection criteria for immigration so that immigrants are no longer admitted solely on the basis of "innate" criteria such as skin colour and some of the other policies (such as temporary protection visas) that resulted in inadequate recognition have been revoked. This suggests that progress towards better levels of mutual recognition is at least possible. However, Markell's concern with regards to unrealisable sovereign agency is very pertinent to the interpretation of Australian sovereignty as a "right to exclude" (although Markell's argument relates to the sovereign agency of individuals and not to state sovereignty). The struggles of asylum seekers do appear to challenge the sovereign agency of the state. Some of these struggles appear to result in a type of "acknowledgement" of the sort that Markell describes, although this occurs through the mechanisms of reciprocity that Honneth describes.

Oliver makes the objection that recognition perpetuates oppression, since oppressed peoples are compelled to seek recognition from their oppressors. Recognition does not necessarily appear to perpetuate oppression for asylum seekers if they are able to escape the circumstances of their original persecution and to enter a state where they can be

afforded an adequate level of respect. It could be argued that those who are placed into

mandatory detention or subjected to detention debt and temporary protection are obliged to

seek recognition of refugee status from their oppressors in these contexts (if these policies

are interpreted as oppressive), although this would constitute an injustice in Honneth's

theoretical terms.

Some aspects of Oliver's account of the importance of "witnessing" have the capacity to

usefully highlight the multiple dimensions of mutual recognition that are at stake in the

context of immigration (if her theory were to be interpreted in a particular way). The role

of non-government agencies and advocacy groups in facilitating adequate levels of

recognition highlights that relationships of recognition are multi-faceted and not

necessarily achieved unilaterally or bilaterally. Despite Oliver's concerns that recognition

theorists over emphasise conflict, the struggles of asylum seekers do appear to highlight

underlying perceptions of injustice and to raise normative questions in the way that

Honneth suggests.

Fraser's concerns about the importance of redistribution appear to be very relevant to the

"economic" factors in legal and illegal immigration. However, I argue that a specifically

"economic" analytical perspective is not required to allow us to comprehend the socio-

economic injustices that can occur as a result of particular immigration policies.

Immigration policies could be interpreted as an attempt to control market forces in

accordance with the established norms of recognition, because the policies control the

movement of skilled workers and of unskilled "illegal" immigrants. The struggles of

"illegal" immigrants could be interpreted as a mode of challenging the norms of

recognition and changing or circumventing the recognition order. Honneth's account of

the role of struggles for recognition can explain the phenomena of "illegal" immigration without recourse to a specifically "economic" analytical perspective.

In the second section of Chapter Six, I review the problems that I raised with regards to Honneth's account of the connection between esteem, achievements and social solidarity and reconsider them in the context of Australian immigration. Honneth's theoretical framework is able to reveal and analyse the different mechanisms of esteem that are expressed in the immigration policies and to show how the esteem that relates to "innate" qualities such as ethnic origin has come to be replaced by the esteem that relates to work-based achievements over time. I argue that there are some problems with the way that the achievement principle is applied because the competitive environment is not based on a fair opportunity to compete for everyone. I consider the issue of the recognition or lack of recognition of the achievements of potential immigrants and argue that Honneth's theory is able to highlight some of the forms of injustice that occur in the application of the norms of achievement and social contribution. In order to do this, I review the questions of justice and injustice in a wider context that involves not only potential immigrants but also the members of the receiving and home societies. This wider context raises broader questions about the competitive nature of the meritocratic assessment of achievements, which reflect Seglow's concern about the difficulty of fostering social solidarity in a competitive environment. I argue that the work-based achievements of "illegal" "unskilled" immigrants are discounted and disconnected from social solidarity and contend that Honneth's theory can explain the type of social problems that would arise in these circumstances.

In the final section of Chapter Six, I conclude this re-evaluation of the challenges to Honneth's theory by reconsidering his account of the connection between struggles for recognition and social progress in relation to the many struggles that arise in the circumstances of immigration. While liberal cosmopolitans and communitarians can throw light on aspects of these circumstances, I claim that Honneth's theory is better placed to account for the full range of normative issues that are at stake in immigration.

Part One: The Concept of Recognition

Chapter One – The Concept of Recognition

Section One - What is "Recognition"?

The concept of "recognition" appears as both a socio-political demand or force and a key component of many philosophical theories. In the following discussion, I will explore the role of recognition in recent social struggles and in a number of contemporary philosophical theories. I will then provide an in-depth exploration of one particular theoretical viewpoint and the major challenges to that theory.

As a socio-political claim or force in the relatively recent history of western democracies, demands for "recognition" came to the fore with the social movements of the late 1960s. Recognition continues to be an important component of demands for social justice by indigenous peoples, African American civil rights activists, homosexual activists, the women's movement, anti-colonialists, peace movements, environmentalists and many other groups. This represents a substantial shift from the focus of post World War II social justice policies that concentrated on redistribution of material goods within a framework of liberal democratic states via mechanisms of welfare and economic planning.[1] In part, this change might be explained by the winding back of welfare state systems that occurred from the 1980s as part of New Right policies of free market economics. However, the shift in focus is also accompanied by changes in the way that individuals and groups identify themselves and their needs, moving from ideas of "class, equality, economy and nation" to those of "identity, difference, culture and ethnicity".[2]

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[1] Simon Thompson, *The Political Theory of Recognition: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006); p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 3.

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An important aspect of demands for recognition is that they frequently encompass quite different and seemingly contradictory claims that might call for very different responses. Claims may call for recognition of equality through the expansion of universal rights to include previously marginalised individuals or groups, in other words demanding the right to be treated in the same way as other people. Alternatively, claims may call for recognition of the differences between individuals and groups, which would require treating some people differently to others and acknowledging that universal responses may not meet particular needs. For example, when Rosa Parks sat in the "whites only" section of a bus in 1950s Alabama and refused to give up her seat for a white man she demanded recognition on the basis of her equal status, which she later expressed as "a person with dignity and self-respect" who "should not set my sights lower than any one else just because I was black"[3]. Calls by same-sex couples for equal access to marriage might also be interpreted as demands for recognition of an equal right to be considered to be a consenting adult who can enter into a legally binding marriage contract. Recognising these demands would require affording African American people equal rights to white people and giving same-sex couples equal rights to heterosexual couples.

But other claims for recognition such as those of Sikh men to be able to wear a turban instead of a crash helmet or French Muslim schoolgirls to be allowed to wear the hijab at school appear to be demands for recognition of difference. Meeting these claims with a response that is based on equal rights might seem to require that Sikhs and French Muslim schoolgirls are afforded the right to dress in the same way as the majority of their society who do not abide by the religious tenets of Sikhism or Islam. This is clearly not the

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[3] Cited in Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890-2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002); p. 228.

outcome that is sought by their claims; in fact it is being compelled to be "equal" to the majority in these circumstances that is experienced as an injustice. Refusal to grant recognition can appear to be equally contradictory with responses that can assert "you cannot be treated the same as others because you are different" or "you cannot be treated differently because you are the same as others". In racially segregated 1950s Alabama and for same-sex couples who are not permitted to marry it is the enforced state of difference that is experienced as an injustice, but it is a particular kind of enforced state of equality that is problematic for members of some minority groups.

The recognition of difference that is sought is not just an acknowledgement that people have different characteristics or identities. Acknowledgement can be a positive or benign recognition of talent or success, but it can also be a negative or neutral response that denotes limitations or failure.[4] Recognition of difference requires a positive acknowledgement of the relevant differences, or at least one that is neutral and not negative. Recognition of the rights of Sikh men to wear a turban or Muslim girls to wear the hijab requires acknowledging that these forms of dress are as acceptable as wearing a crash helmet or no head covering. This suggests that there is in fact a kind of equality that is involved in the recognition of difference, because it requires that different qualities or aspects of identities be assessed as being equally acceptable.

A number of contemporary theorists of recognition have been able to shed some light on these differing interpretations of the role of recognition within moral and social life. Charles Taylor focuses on the political aspects of recognition within modern societies, in particular the struggles of minority groups in multicultural societies who claim recognition

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[4] Peter Jones, 'Equality, Recognition and Difference,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* Vol. 9: 1 (2006), pp. 23-46; p. 28.

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of their difference as part of a "politics of identity". These groups seek to overcome their

feeling of alienation from the wider society by achieving public acknowledgment of the

validity of their particular needs, characteristics and aspirations. Taylor focuses

particularly on the plight of the French speaking Quebecois who struggle for recognition of

their different needs within the mainly English speaking Canadian state.[5] This is an

essentially political interpretation of the process of recognition or lack of recognition that

may or may not be afforded by liberal democratic states, although Taylor does also offer a

broader interpretation of the way that concepts of the self in general depend on interactions

with other people.[6] He argues that the link between recognition and personal identity is a

specifically modern phenomenon that is influenced by two factors. Firstly, in pre-modern

"honour" based social hierarchies status and esteem were a part of an individual's social

position. In these circumstances, recognition was pre-determined and could be somewhat

taken for granted. When these hierarchies collapsed, they were replaced by the modern

democratic ideals of egalitarian citizenship and universal human dignity for all. The

assertions that misrecognition constitutes an injustice are closely related to these modern

expectations of equal status for everyone.[7]

Secondly, Taylor argues that the connection between recognition and identity is also

influenced by the modern understanding of individualised identity which is based on the

ideal of "authenticity", or being true to one's self.[8] This might suggest an expectation that

identity can be inwardly generated. However, Taylor argues that individual identity is

actually formed and supported by intersubjective dialogue with other people. Human life

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[5] Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition,' in Amy Gutmann (ed), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); pp. 25-73.
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 25.
[7] *Ibid.* p. 27.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 28.

is inherently "dialogical" and not "monological".[9] The interaction and dialogue with others is continual and inescapable. We learn to express our identity though our "languages" of speech, art, gestures and love.[10] Both the need for recognition and the circumstances of dependence on others existed in pre-modern societies, but the modern demand for an authentic and partly inwardly derived identity specifically depends on an exchange of mutual recognition. If these conditions of mutual recognition are not available, the attempt to achieve full self-realisation can fail.[11] Taylor argues that misrecognition or a lack of recognition can warp personal or group identity by causing the internalisation of beliefs of inferiority, which will result in low self-esteem. Failure to appropriately recognise a person can be a form of oppression, which inflicts harm because the person internalises a depreciatory self-image. Even if the circumstances of this oppression are removed, the person may be still be unable to take advantage of their new freedom because they remain imprisoned by the sense of inferiority.

Fraser also focuses on the struggles of contemporary social movements and identifies misrecognition or non-recognition as an injustice that is suffered by groups such as women, African Americans or homosexuals. However, for Fraser recognition and redistribution of wealth are two conceptually different pre-requisites for justice and they may need to be analysed and addressed separately. She equates recognition to "cultural injustices" and redistribution to "economic injustices", although she does concede that in the real world these forms of injustice are always mutually imbricated. In particular, Fraser argues that maldistribution cannot be reduced to issues of misrecognition. Economic injustices occur within the political-economic structure of a society and they include

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[9] *Ibid.,* p. 33.
[10] *Ibid.,* p. 32.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 35.

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exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation.[12] Cultural or symbolic injustices

occur within social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication and they

include cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect.[13]

Fraser argues that recognition is a matter of justice and not a matter of self-realisation. She

construes recognition in terms of social status that is conveyed via social institutions and

not via "deprecatory attitudes or free-standing discourses".[14] Fraser cites a number of

advantages to understanding recognition in this way. Firstly, it avoids the problem of

agreeing on a universally shared ideal of self-realisation or the good life.[15] Secondly,

basing injustice on individual or interpersonal psychology comes dangerously close to

blaming the victims and presuming that they are psychologically damaged in addition to

being victims.[16] Thirdly, the status model avoids the expectation that everyone should be

equally entitled to social esteem. For Fraser, equal rights to esteem would make the whole

concept of esteem meaningless.[17] Finally, she argues that her model allows the claims of

both recognition and redistribution to be integrated and understood in the "single

normative universe" of "universally binding deontological morality".[18] That is, as a matter

of what should be right for everyone at all times and not as a component of particular

individual or collective ideals of what constitutes a good life.

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[12] Nancy Fraser, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?' in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York & London: Routledge, 1997); p. 13.
[13] *Ibid.,* p. 14.
[14] Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange* trans. J. Golg, J. Ingram and C. Wilke (London: Verso, 2003); p. 29.
[15] *Ibid.,* pp. 30-31.
[16] *Ibid.,* pp. 31-32.
[17] *Ibid.,* p. 32.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 33.

The goal of this status model of recognition is "participatory parity". This requires that all adult members of society are able to interact as peers, or on a par with others. Participatory parity has both an "objective condition" which precludes economic dependence and inequality and an "intersubjective condition" that precludes "institutionally organized norms that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them".[19] These and other components of Fraser's theory have been explicated in more depth in the course of a recent debate with Alex Honneth. I will rehearse and critique Fraser's arguments more fully when I analyse some specific challenges to Honneth's theory in Chapter Three.

Both Taylor and Fraser highlight important aspects of contemporary demands for social justice and they offer detailed insights into the mechanisms that motivate recent political struggles. However, despite their strengths both of these accounts are limited in some aspects. Taylor's focus is on the public sphere and its potential for providing and maintaining opportunities for social and political recognition. The issue, and perhaps the importance, of recognition within more intimate relationships is at best overshadowed, and perhaps overlooked. Taylor seeks to understand why recognition has become so important within the context of historical changes in social structures and self-understanding, but he is not primarily offering recommendations for solving the full range of problems of recognition.

Taylor is particularly focused on the politics of difference, or claims about the right to retain different ways of life or a distinct identity. However, it is not always clear whether these claims refer to individuals, cultural groups or cultures in themselves. This is an

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[19] *Ibid.,* p. 36.

important distinction because recognition might require different things depending on what is the object of recognition. If recognition is understood as an important component of self-realisation, then it might only be able to be afforded to the "self" or "selves" that are individuals or members of groups, and not to the more abstract concept of a culture, or at least not in quite the same way.[20] If recognition of cultures per se is required, then the difficult questions of how we might evaluate different cultures and who might be relevantly qualified to make that evaluation become the focus of contentious debates.[21] Taylor does respond to these issues by suggesting that it may be reasonable to assume that all long-standing cultures may have some value, perhaps equal value[22], but the question of recognition for Taylor remains focused on cultural groups, and the arena of the public or political sphere.

Fraser's theory also concentrates on a goal of political, or socio-political, interaction. The issues of recognition within intimate relationships and of individual psychological wellbeing are either somewhat understated or specifically discarded as an appropriate concern of theories of social justice. She argues that justice "by definition" pertains to social structures and institutional frameworks.[23] In fact, even though Fraser views individuals and not groups as the fundamental subjects of justice, she argues that individual difficulties that do not constellate into patterns cannot really be questions of

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[20] Lawrence Blum, 'Recognition, Value and Equality: A Critique of Charles Taylor's and Nancy Fraser's Accounts of Multiculturalism,' *Constellations* Vol. 5:1 (1998), pp. 51-73; pp. 52-53.
[21] *Ibid.,* pp. 57-58.
[22] Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition' in Amy Gutmann (ed), *Multiculturalism*: *Examining the Politics of Recognition*; pp. 72-73.
[23] Nancy Fraser, 'Recognition, Redistribution and Representation in Capitalist Global Society: An Interview with Nancy Fraser,' interviewed by Hanne Marlene Dahl, Pauline Stoltz and Rasmus Willig, *Acta Sociologica* Vol. 47: 4 (2004), pp. 374-382; p. 378.

justice.[24] This appears to limit the importance of recognition to those issues or problems that have already achieved political or social articulation, and to leave out some of the injustices that are suffered by those who are unable to effectively participate in this realm.

Honneth addresses some of these limitations of theoretical focus and scope and he offers a broader theory of recognition than Taylor and Fraser. In the next sections, I will reconstruct Honneth's theory, consider the relationship between his theory and other theories, and explore the validity of key criticisms that can be raised against Honneth's view.

Section Two - Honneth's Theory

Honneth agrees with Taylor and Fraser that contemporary demands for recognition are important phenomena to be taken into account by a theory of social justice. Taylor does not set out to be a recognition theorist as such, but Honneth has ambitious goals to develop a "social theory with normative content" with recognition at its core.[25] Although Honneth views the struggles of marginalised groups as a key indicator of whether they may have been afforded an appropriate level of recognition, he argues that the capacity of all humans to be fully functioning individuals depends on the relationships of recognition that we have with others throughout our lives. This places Honneth's concept of recognition in a much broader normative context than solely the "politics of identity". He offers a more extensive understanding of different types of recognition that includes recognition in private or intimate relationships and identifies two distinct kinds of the socio-political

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[24] *Ibid.,* pp. 378-379.
[25] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press, 1995); p. 1.

recognition. Honneth specifically differs from Fraser because he argues that issues of redistribution can and should be understood and addressed through a theory of recognition. The purpose of Honneth's more extensive analysis is not just to show that recognition occurs in wider contexts than current identity-politics. He intends to provide a critical analysis of contemporary society that not only interprets social struggles, but also explains why recognition is so important and how it might generate improved conditions of social justice. In contrast to theories of social justice that are based on particular forms of public reasoning or on a specific set of moral principles, Honneth draws on Hegel's *System of Ethical Life*, the social psychology of George Herbert Mead, and other empirical studies in psychology, history and sociology to generate an account of ethical life.

Honneth rejects the claims of social theorists such as Hobbes or Machiavelli who argue (according to Honneth) that we are atomistic individuals who are solely driven by our desire for self-preservation.[26] He contends that we are intrinsically social beings who rely on relationships of mutual recognition that are "pre-requisites for self-realisation".[27] This means that even the possibility of becoming an autonomous individual, or of actually forming an identity, depends on the recognition that we receive from other people who we also recognise. Honneth maintains that an adequate amount of recognition is important for the development and flourishing of every human being, and that inadequate recognition or withdrawal of recognition can have a negative impact on these processes.

For Honneth, "recognition" is something that is given and received in the forms of attitudes of love, respect and esteem and each of these types of recognition primarily occurs within and affects a different dimension or sphere of human life.

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[26] I will not examine the validity of Honneth's interpretation of these thinkers.
[27] Joel Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in Axel Honneth, *Ibid.*, p. xi.

a)   Love

Honneth begins by focusing on love relationships, which include parent-child relationships, adult relationships between lovers, and close friendships. He argues that this type of reciprocal recognition is "both conceptually and genetically prior to every other form".[28] He points out that we first encounter this type of recognition in the form of early childhood relationships with our primary caregivers. Drawing on the findings of psychoanalysts Donald Winnicott and Jessica Benjamin[29] and on other empirical studies of infant development[30] Honneth supports the contention that the recognition that we initially obtain through intimate personal relationships is an important part of the process of self-formation. Our infant relationships with our mother or primary care giver can allow us to develop a type of practical relation to self where we can come to exercise our autonomy within a framework of dependence, or as Honneth contends in a "symbiosis refracted by mutual individuation".[31] The recognition that occurs throughout our lives within the family and in other relationships of love and friendship is vital for the maintenance of basic self-confidence or self-trust, and for having a sense of physical integrity. Each of us needs to be recognised as loveable in ourselves, and this type of recognition necessarily focuses on the fact that a person is an individual who has concrete needs that are worthy of being satisfied. This happens within a context of mutually needy creatures. This mutuality allows the subject to become independent whilst at the same time being emotionally tied to others, to achieve an "independence that is guided - indeed, supported - by care".[32] Importantly, Honneth argues that this type of recognition is not entirely a matter of

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[28] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.*, p. 107.
[29] *Ibid.,* see pp. 98-107 for a detailed summary of this research.
[30] *Ibid.,* pp. 96-97. Honneth cites the research of René Spitz, Morris Eagle, John Bowlby and David Stern.
[31] *Ibid.,* p. 107.
[32] *Ibid.*

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reasoning. It "presupposes liking and attraction, which are out of individuals' control".[33] We cannot make ourselves have the prerequisite positive feelings and attraction that are presupposed in this type of relationship, and we cannot extend these feelings at will to cover a larger group of people than our close loved ones.

Love is not awarded equally to everyone and so its focus may appear to be individual and not universal. However, Honneth argues that everyone requires at least a basic level of love and trust, because this is a pre-condition for identity formation and individual autonomy. This means that an adequate level of love is a universal need even though the need for love may be satisfied differently from person to person, and the actual practices of parenting and other love relationships may differ historically or culturally. If personal identity is initially constituted through relationships of love and trust between infants and parents, then inadequate recognition may undermine or limit this developmental process. Honneth argues that lack of recognition in love relationships (which may occur through physical, psychological or other types of abuse) can result in the loss of physical and personal integrity. This tends to generate a perception of defencelessness and to create a lack of trust in one's self and in others.[34]

Having highlighted the primacy and significance of relationships that are commonly understood to be within the "private" realm of home or personal intimacy, Honneth then examines the more "public" forms of recognition that are the focus of Taylor's and Fraser's accounts. He argues that "respect" and "esteem" have become two distinct types of recognition that address different dimensions of human life. This distinction is the result of particular historical circumstances. In pre-modern societies social status was

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[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.,* pp. 132-133.

automatically connected to the role or class membership of a person within a society. For example, kings and aristocrats had high status and peasants did not. Modern concepts of citizens' rights challenge this situation and generate the notion of "respect" that depends on "status as a person" as distinct from "esteem" that depends on "social standing".[35] This distinction is important because it helps to explain why "respect" could generate claims for recognition of equality, but "esteem" might call for recognition of difference.

b)   Respect

Honneth points out that modern societies have introduced frameworks of general legal rights that are meant to apply to everyone. These rights support the social integration of each individual through relationships of mutual respect. Each person's basic rights are meant to stem from an idea of the equal worth of persons, and not from their particular traits, abilities or social standing. In this Kantian interpretation of respect, people are entitled to equal dignity because of their fundamental humanity.[36] Honneth argues that in modern societies there has been a tendency to expand the scope and range of human rights so that more people are included in the definition of "legal persons" who are equally entitled to certain rights. This type of expansion of rights does seem to be evident in the case of Rosa Parks who sought to be included in the group of people who had an equal right to occupy a seat on the bus, and also in the claims of same-sex couples who want to have an equal right to be legally married. In general, the scope of rights in western societies does appear to have expanded historically from including only wealthy white men to including all white men, and then gradually affording rights to women and to people who had been excluded because they were not white. Honneth argues that there is a

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[35] Joel Anderson, 'Translator's Introduction' in *Ibid.,* p. xiv.
[36] Axel Honneth*, Ibid.*, p. 112.

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tendency to expand the range of rights to include not only civil rights that guarantee liberty and political rights that guarantee participation, but also social rights that guarantee basic welfare.[37] This was evident in the social welfare policies of many states from the second half of the twentieth century.

For Honneth, legal rights are "depersonalised symbols of social respect" and the experience of having legal recognition allows us to see our own actions as the universally respected expression of our own autonomy.[38] Having rights means that we are able to have self-respect because we deserve the respect of others. Honneth argues that loss of self-respect occurs when people are excluded from possessing general rights. This involves a type of structural exclusion or ostracism, which implies that a person or group is not a full member or the society and that they are not afforded the same degree of moral responsibility as others.[39] In theory, this form of recognition ought not to have an inherent hierarchy or order. It is universal and egalitarian, because it ought to be equally enjoyed by everyone. This is quite different from the type of recognition that is afforded through social esteem because esteem is necessarily connected to the particular characteristics of individuals and is hierarchical in nature.

c)   Esteem

Honneth argues that esteem has an individual or specific focus, but this operates in a different way to the recognition that we are afforded in love relationships. It is not the particular individual per se, but the specific attributes of the person that are esteemed, or

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[37] *Ibid.,* p. 115.
[38] *Ibid.,* p. 118.
[39] *Ibid.,* p. 133.

not esteemed. Individuals are esteemed for their unique aptitudes and abilities, the

"particular qualities that characterize people in their personal difference".[40] Self-esteem is

generated by recognition of the particular traits and abilities that are valued within a

society. The social "worth" of the individual is "measured by the degree to which they

appear to be in a position to contribute to the realization of societal goals".[41] However,

individuals may also be able to maintain a sense of self-esteem through group membership,

because the worth of their group is connected to the socially determined degree of their

collective contribution to the realization of societal goals.[42] Contempt for individual or

collective ways of life results in the loss of the opportunity to have positive self esteem.

This happens through processes that insult or degrade the ways of life, beliefs, or specific

traits and abilities of those who are not esteemed.[43]

Like "respect" modern "esteem" is connected to particular historical social processes that

identify and reinforce certain patterns of esteem. In particular, modern categories of social

standing or prestige represent an important historical transition from concepts of honour

that were based on pre-ordained social positions and a fixed social hierarchy. Within any

society there will be some sort of hierarchy or order of esteem where particular types of

activities and certain types of people are considered to be more worthy of esteem than

others. However, Honneth contends that in modern societies esteem is not necessarily

attached as it was in the past to traits that are attributed to entire groups. Societal values

are no longer an entirely pre-ordained objective system of reference in which social honour

relates to class-specific expectations. Esteem now occurs in a broader context of value

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[40] *Ibid.,* p. 122.
[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.,* p. 123.
[43] *Ibid.,* p. 134.

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pluralism and is oriented towards the specific capacities that are developed by individuals during their lives.[44]

There is not an automatic assumption of equality or universality within the recognition that is given through esteem. In fact, esteem necessarily assumes that some will be more esteemed than others. However, if individuals require at least some level of social esteem in order to acquire self-esteem there needs to be an opportunity for each person to attain some degree of social standing and to have their contribution recognised. Honneth argues that in the modern context this results in an inherent tension, because there is no universally agreed system of reference for measuring contributions that does not involve some form of cultural interpretation. In these circumstances, the dominant interpretations of societal goals are constantly challenged by groups who want to raise the value (or perhaps overcome the undervaluing) of their specific traits and ways of life.[45] This raises questions about how, and by whom, societal goals are formulated, evaluated and re-evaluated.

Honneth's description of the problems of esteem in modern contexts might appear to be reflected in Taylor's account of the politics of difference especially where the Quebecois questioned the assumption that the language and customs of the English speaking majority in Canada must automatically be adopted by the French speaking minority. Honneth's account of esteem might also seem to be able to shed some light on specific claims for recognition of difference such as those of Sikhs and French Muslim schoolgirls who wish to be able to wear the turban or hijab. But for Honneth, these issues are more about respect than esteem. Honneth describes the framework of mutual esteem in terms of relationships

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[44] *Ibid.,* p. 124.
[45] *Ibid.,* pp. 126-127.

of "solidarity".[46] He would consider that the Quebecois, Sikhs or Muslim schoolgirls are not being specially recognised for their particular attributes, but being given the equal dignity and respect that anyone is due. There is no need to be in "solidarity" with them to show this respect.[47]

There are some inherent tensions in Honneth's description and interpretation of esteem. Being esteemed because of your own abilities is a different type of recognition to the type of esteem that might be given to the members of a group. The qualities that are recognised in terms of group membership could be particular individually acquired abilities such as professional qualifications, but group membership may also be of a less voluntary nature that can be somewhat pre-dictated by factors such as gender and ethnicity, or cultural, language and perhaps religious grouping. There is also a potential for ambiguity in the idea of a social solidarity that is generated by competitive hierarchies based on ability where some people are better than others, as opposed to broader ideas of social contribution where everyone might be more equally involved. These differences in the notion of esteem raise questions for Honneth's description of "solidarity" through achievement, which I will discuss in more depth in Chapter Four.

Honneth's theory is not just a descriptive account of the way that current societies function. He intends to explain how social recognition through love, respect and esteem has developed over time and to draw attention to the mechanisms that can drive these changes. In order to do this he focuses specifically on the importance of the effects of lack

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[46] *Ibid.,* p. 128.

[47] Honneth considers and rejects the possibility of a fourth type of recognition that is given to cultural groups. He argues that the demands of identity-politics are actually claims for "universal basic rights". See *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 163.

of recognition or misrecognition. He contends that relationships of recognition are gradually expanded through conflictual processes that involve struggles for recognition. These historical processes should not be understood as "mere events"[48] but as dynamic mechanisms that can result in individuals being able to understand themselves as both "a full and a particular member of the social community" and to become more fully included in the society.[49]

d)   The struggle for recognition

Honneth suggests that misrecognition or nonrecognition can result in injuries to the identity in the same way that disease results in injuries to the body. Even metaphorical descriptions of the results of inadequate recognition appear to reflect this when we speak of the "psychological death" that results from abuse such as torture and rape, the "social death" that is the consequence of denial of rights and the "scars" that accompany the denigration of particular forms of life.[50] This analogy implies that negative emotional reactions such as social shame can provide symptoms of the presence of disrespect and the impetus to realise that there may have been a denial of legitimate recognition. It also suggests that it could be possible to avoid disrespect by implementing preventative strategies.

Honneth argues that experiences of inadequate recognition may also generate a struggle for recognition where the person or group articulates or demonstrates their disappointment at

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[48] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 170.
[49] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition and Justice,' *Acta Sociologica* Vol. 47: 4 (2004), pp. 351-364; p. 354.
[50] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 135.

having been denied appropriate recognition and makes a claim or demand for recognition. The experience of being disrespected is experienced as an emotional response that is the motivational impetus for these struggles. However, as Honneth points out, struggles for recognition do not automatically happen. They depend on there being possibilities for struggle within the particular cultural and political environment.[51] The social environment can be specifically constructed to make it extremely difficult to attempt to make changes. Those who are most subject to misrecognition can be the target of numerous different attacks on their self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. These cumulative spirals of lack of self worth may be very hard to break out of.

For example, for African-Americans like Rosa Parks the 1950's legislative policies of segregation meant not only that she did not have the right to occupy a bus seat if a white person was standing. The policies also meant that she was unlikely to receive more than an elementary education and consequently that she would probably be employed in a low status job like a seamstress, as she was, which would require working long hours for little pay. In these circumstances, her capacity to adequately care and provide for any children that she might have and/or for other loved ones might also be affected. For Rosa, disrespect under the law, contempt for her racial group and lack of esteem for her capacity to contribute to society were woven together in a web that had the potential to undermine all forms of recognition. She was one of many people who lived, and still live, in similar circumstances. One would expect that many of those people would have a negative emotional reaction to the humiliation and denigration that may accompany these circumstances, but as Honneth suggests injustice does not inevitably reveal itself explicitly to them.

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[51] *Ibid.,* pp. 138-139.

As Honneth argues, this connection between the injustice of disrespect, affective reactions, moral-political convictions and social movements or political resistance is a weak "foothold of morality within social reality".[52] It is not necessarily an automatic causal flow. Making claims presupposes certain capabilities, and requires a social and political structure that provides people with the skills and opportunities to make claims effectively. The political and social environment also needs to provide the opportunity for achieving recognition through struggle. This is an important claim because social struggles are often understood solely as a mechanism for achieving material opportunities for a particular class or group without an understanding that there is an underlying moral dimension.

If material benefit was the only goal of a social conflict that might suggest that the issue could be adequately addressed with a redistribution of material goods. Honneth specifically questions the validity of understanding social conflicts in that way because this understanding misconstrues the moral dimension, which need not be opposed to the material aspects of the struggle. He concedes that not all social struggles appear to be entirely morally motivated, and some struggles can appear to have been driven by self-interest or economic necessity. However, he argues that it is wrong to think that all conflicts can be reduced solely to issues of self-interest and material goods. To do so would hide the "moral grammar" of social struggles.[53]

If lack of recognition is the root, or a major part, of the problem then attempting to resolve the conflicts by redistributing material goods will not be a sufficient response. This aspect of Honneth's theory is a key area of debate between Honneth and other theorists, partly

[52] *Ibid.,* p. 138.
[53] *Ibid.,* p. 166.

because of their concern that the importance of addressing injustice in the distribution of material goods may be lost or underestimated if struggles are understood solely as demands for intersubjective recognition. I will return to these and other criticisms of Honneth's theory in the last section of this chapter, but, before I do so, I will consider the relationship between Honneth's theory of recognition and other theories in order to put recognition theory in context and to argue that it offers some advantages for practical application.

Section Three - Recognition Theory and Other Theories

Recognition is not only about close relationships of love and care, or only about universal rights, or only about social solidarity. Recognition involves and requires all of these things concurrently, even if particular types of recognition may appear to be emphasised in certain situations or at specific times in our lives. The inevitable overlap and interplay between the spheres of recognition is important for each individual, but it is also highly relevant for fully comprehending the broader issues of social and political justice. This feature of recognition theory means that it may have the potential to offer a different (and perhaps better) perspective on questions of justice than other theoretical viewpoints, such as the ethics of care, liberal/rationalistic theories, and communitarianism.

Each of Honneth's spheres of recognition has similarities to one of these other social or political theories, but none of the other theories addresses all of the aspects that are considered by Honneth. There are broad theoretical resonances and antagonisms that are tackled by Honneth's framework and this may provide some important advantages for theoretical application. Honneth identifies his own recognition-theoretic approach as

standing "in the middle between a moral theory going back to Kant, on the one hand, and communitarian ethics, on the other".[54] I contend that Honneth's theory incorporates some of the ethical insights of the ethics of care, Kantian morals and communitarian ethics, and also addresses some of the criticisms that have been directed against each of these theoretical positions. This is a valuable contribution of Honneth's theory, because it raises the possibility that these theoretical positions are not necessarily always opposing and irreconcilable. Rather they may be incomplete components of a broader and more comprehensive theoretical framework. Some aspects of the ethics of care, and Kantian and communitarian theories might best be understood and applied within the context of a wider theoretical whole. In the following sections, I will show how Honneth's theory connects with, and differs from, each of these other theoretical frameworks.

a)   The ethics of care and the sphere of love

Honneth does not limit his theoretical focus to the domain of the public political arena that is the sole concern of many theories of justice. He not only brings the realms of the personal and the intimate to the fore, but he claims that these types of interpersonal relationships are as important as (and in some circumstances prior to) the public interactions that are the focus of more mainstream liberal or explicitly political theories. Honneth's sphere of recognition through love has strong resonances with feminist demands for an "ethics of care". The "ethics of care" arose partly as a challenge to moral theories that focused almost exclusively on public life and rational theorising, but also as a claim about moral motivation and development.[55]

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[54] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.
[55] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982).

Carol Gilligan argues that an ethics of care is different to an ethics of justice on four counts. Firstly, the ethics of care emphasises the importance of continuing relationships with others. Secondly, it is concerned with the consequences of moral decision making on other people. Thirdly, it considers extenuating circumstances when considering the rightness or wrongness of the behaviour of others and fourthly, the ethics of care interprets moral choices within the particular historical context in which they are made.[56] This emphasis on the importance of close interpersonal relationships has many similarities to Honneth's account of the recognition that occurs through love, and Honneth also emphasises the relevance of particular historical circumstances. Gilligan has been mistakenly interpreted as describing a specifically female ethics of care that is different (but equal) from a specifically male ethics of justice. In fact, Gilligan claims that she is describing two modes of thought and not seeking to assert that these modes are gender specific.[57] This understanding would be closer to Honneth's theoretical model, which argues that all humans need both love (in Gilligan's terms an ethics of care) and respect (in Gilligan's terms an ethics of justice).

Virginia Held's more recent account of the ethics of care describes caring for others as "both a value and a practice"[58]. In terms of recognition theory, this claim seems to closely approximate the understanding of recognition through love as both an attitude and a form of action (even though Honneth does not specifically use the concept of "care" in this way). There are at least five significant claims that are similar in both Held's and Honneth's accounts. Firstly, individuals are not understood to be entirely independent autonomous agents, because (as both theorists point out) we are all dependent on others as

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[56] Rosemary Tong, *Feminist Thought* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989); pp. 162-163.
[57] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*; p. 2.
[58] Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); p. 9.

infants, and (as Held emphasises) we may become dependent through illness or old age and many people who have disabilities may never become independent.[59] Secondly, both Honneth's theory and the ethics of care have a more nuanced account of the role of emotions in moral life than the rationalism of Kantian and utilitarian theories. This is not to say that all emotions are seen as useful in moral decision-making. The egoism and favouritism that might interfere with impartial decision making are rejected, but "sympathy, empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness" are viewed as essential pre-requisites for understanding morality and for implementing a fully moral decision making process.[60]

In Honneth's terms, we might interpret these emotions and attitudes as modes of recognition of others who are loved and/or cared for within intimate relationships. Thirdly, there is a strong, shared rejection of always giving priority to universalistic and abstract rules because the needs of particular individuals may have priority. Held argues there may be conflicts between "care and justice, friendship and impartiality, loyalty and universality".[61] Honneth presents a similar argument that the recognitive spheres of love, respect and esteem can overlap and sometimes conflict.[62] This suggests that some types of recognition, including love, might have priority at particular times or within particular contexts.

The fourth point of apparent agreement concerns the importance of "private" relationships between people. For the ethics of care, the traditional focus on the public sphere results in a moral vacuum that renders women and children vulnerable to oppression. Honneth

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[59] *Ibid.,* p. 10.
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.,* p. 11.
[62] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition and Justice'; p. 361.

includes relationships of love on equal terms with the "public" spheres of respect and esteem thus emphasising that moral theory cannot function adequately if it omits this type of recognition. Finally, both the ethics of care and Honneth's theory of recognition reject the understanding of human relationships as a conflict between self-interested parties who form contractual relationships (either in real life or as a hypothetical means to understanding how society works). As Held argues, many relationships such as that of a child to its parents are not usually contractual and understanding them in this way misconstrues the nature of the relationship and serves to hide the actual nature of it.[63]

The ethics of care not only has theoretic similarities to the recognitive sphere of love, it also provides empirical evidence of an actual struggle for recognition. By challenging ethical theories that either denied that women's experiences and voices were relevant or specifically denigrated women's capacities for moral judgement, the ethics of care highlights the inadequacies of theories that only reflect the life experiences of some (in this instance male) members of human society. These feminist struggles for recognition have sought to broaden the theoretical scope from the human as Man (with woman lacking his essential capacities) to the human as "woman, man or child".[64]

The exclusion of some members of society from a theoretical framework is problematic not only because many people are denied the opportunity to access the supposedly "universal" outcomes of the moral theory, but also (and perhaps primarily) because theorists are able to make some assumptions about the nature of human life without regard to all of the prerequisites that are required for life. For example, as both Held and Honneth argue, thinking and acting as independent beings depends on having a social framework

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[63] Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care*; p. 13.
[64] *Ibid.,* p. 62.

that makes this possible.[65] (This is also the central point of communitarian critics of liberal individualism.) Theorists who benefit from such a social network but are not directly involved in its construction and maintenance can mistakenly expect that everyone can be an entirely autonomous being who primarily functions in public spaces. We can appear to be able to be entirely self-interested if others have looked after and are looking after our interests.

Where there appears to be substantial theoretical overlap in the underlying assumptions of Held and Honneth (even though they come to their conclusions from somewhat different starting points) they do differ in their interpretation of the relationship of the ethics of care to other moral theories, and the relationship of love to the other types of recognition. Held considers the relationship between care and justice and argues that care is the fundamental value because life can go on without justice, but we (and therefore justice) cannot exist without care.[66] She also argues that care has an important role to play in the regulation of markets, primarily because she wants to argue that education, health care and child care are not appropriate areas to be left to the mercy of market forces.[67]

For Honneth, the three recognitive spheres of love, respect and esteem are all required for human flourishing. Although love might be prior to the other types of recognition in terms of our development as infants, Honneth's account does not infer that it is always more fundamental than respect and esteem. This may provide a broader theoretical framework than Held's account, because it allows us to more fully comprehend not only how care

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[65] *Ibid.,* p. 14.
[66] *Ibid.,* p. 17.
[67] *Ibid.,* p. 122.

influences justice and markets, but also how justice influences care and markets and how markets control care and justice.

The sphere of love in Honneth's theory and the ethics of care have been subjected to similar criticisms of partiality and inappropriateness for the political arena. With the acknowledgement of the importance of personal relationships comes the spectre of permitting psychological and emotional responses to carry undue moral weight along with moral responses that are based on reasons that might be universally applied.[68] Although there are some difficulties in considering the personal, the intimate and the emotional within the sphere of justice, I contend that social justice cannot be fully understood or addressed if these aspects are denied. As Honneth's model suggests, a social or political theory needs to consider both the "private" and the "public" arenas and to admit that these spheres of interaction cannot be fully understood in isolation.

I have argued that there are many similarities between Honneth's sphere of love and the ethics of care, including similarities in the criticisms that have been raised against both of these theoretical viewpoints. There are also some similarities between Honneth's account of the sphere of respect and liberal theories, and between Honneth's treatment of the sphere of esteem and communitarianism. On one hand, Honneth's sphere of recognition

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[68] Nancy Fraser argues against the consideration of psychological responses. She contends that injustice is found in the framework of social relationships and not in individual or interpersonal psychology. Linking injustice to internally distorted self-consciousness might appear to blame the victim or suggest that they have a damaged psyche thus "adding insult to injury". Fraser does not deny that misrecognition may have psychological consequences. But she argues that we should not rely on the presence of psychological effects to judge that misrecognition is wrong. See Nancy Fraser, 'Status subordination or impaired subjectivity?' in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; pp. 30-33 (particularly pp. 30-31) and 'On the Place of Experience in Critical Theory: Against the Reduction of Political Sociology to Moral Psychology' in the same volume; pp. 201-211.

through "respect" appears to reflect a Kantian concern for autonomy and for universal

rights that stem from the basic humanity of all persons. On the other hand, Honneth's

sphere of esteem appears to reflect a communitarian focus on the importance of

community membership and of shared values. Recognition theory encompasses aspects of

each of these theoretical viewpoints by including "the most general norms possible" in the

sphere of respect as well as "the orientation towards self-realisation as the end" in the

sphere of esteem.[69]

Honneth's theory also reflects some of the criticisms of both liberalism and

communitarianism and, as Honneth argues, his recognition-theoretic approach stands "in

the middle" of these two theories.[70] Honneth's approach could be misconstrued as "sitting

on the fence" by accepting some but not all of the tenets and criticisms of each theory

without resolving any of the apparent incompatibilities. However, Honneth provides a

powerful account of the way that rights, autonomy and social solidarity are necessarily

closely connected and of the type of social circumstances that are a pre-requisite for rights,

autonomy and shared social horizons.

b)   Liberal autonomy and the sphere of respect

Although Honneth argues for the importance of both autonomy and rights, his account of

these concepts differs significantly from liberal theories. He follows Hegel in raising what

might be termed a "methodological" objection that specifically rejects the Kantian

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[69] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*;
p. 173.
[70] *Ibid.,* p. 172.

understanding of autonomy that has "the character of a mere 'ought'".[71] For Honneth,

autonomy is not something that is derived from Kantian reflections on our capacity for

reasonable action, or from Rawlsian thought experiments that ask us to suspend our

knowledge of our actual position in society. Autonomy is embedded in real life situations

and it relates to fully embodied individuals who live in many different social situations.[72]

Honneth also raises what might be termed an "empirical" objection that rejects the

"atomistic" understandings of autonomy that can accompany some liberal theories of

justice and argues that it is misleading to rely on an idealisation of individuals as "self-

sufficient" and "self-reliant".[73] Honneth contends that thinking and acting as an

autonomous being depends on being part of a society that makes this possible (which

appears to reflect the criticisms of liberalism that have been made by communitarian

theorists). For Honneth, failing to realise the importance of the social context that fosters

autonomy is problematic, not only because it disregards the empirical evidence of the

social relationships that are generally required to support meaningful lives or because it

fails to understand that autonomous critical reflection relies upon effective dialogue with

others.[74] Social context is vitally important because autonomy is a vulnerable state that

relies upon adequate relationships of mutual recognition with other people. He points out

that it is hard (although not impossible) to maintain a robust conception of self-worth if we

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[71] *Ibid.,* p. 5.
[72] Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds), *Recognition & Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); pp. 7-8.
[73] Joel Anderson and Axel Honneth, 'Autonomy, Vulnerability, Recognition and Justice,' in John Christman and Joel Anderson (eds), *Autonomy and the Challenges of Liberalism: New Essays* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); p. 129.
[74] *Ibid.,* p. 130.

are subjected to inadequate recognition or misrecognition that can result in humiliation and denigration.[75]

Although Honneth differs from Rawls in terms of methodology, he recognises that theorists such as Rawls and Amartya Sen do argue that social context is important and emphasise that social justice requires that there are "material and institutional circumstances of autonomy", such as food, shelter and education.[76] But Honneth argues that autonomy requires more than just having an adequate amount of material goods. Ensuring that sufficient material goods are available is "an important step in the right direction" towards providing the circumstances that are required for individuals to be autonomous, but autonomy can only exist in the context of the social relationships that support it.[77]

Honneth points out that Rawls emphasises the importance of self-respect as a basis for autonomy[78], but Honneth does not think that this is sufficient to explain the importance of social relationships. Honneth's account includes the rights that are the "legally institutionalized relationships of universal respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons" that are so important for liberal theories.[79] He agrees with the liberal view that rights protect autonomy directly by protecting individuals from undue interference, but he points out that rights also support autonomy more indirectly because rights support self-respect. [80] This is an important observation because it does appear to be necessary that rights are enacted, defended and maintained if they are to have any real meaning. Making

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[75] *Ibid.,* p. 131.
[76] *Ibid.,* p. 129.
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] *Ibid.,* p. 132-33.
[79] *Ibid.,* p. 131.
[80] *Ibid.,* p. 133.

rights-based claims, complaining if rights are not upheld, and arguing for the acceptance of new or expanded rights does appear to require having an adequate level of self-respect. Although it is not impossible for individuals who lack self-respect to demand their rights, it does seem plausible that self-respect will play a large part in motivating such demands and in making it more likely that they will succeed.

Honneth also highlights the importance of the intimate relationships of love and trust and the networks of social solidarity that are given little or less emphasis in liberal accounts. He maintains that the self-trust or self-confidence that is fostered in our intimate relationships (that are not the primary focus of liberal theories) is also a pre-condition for autonomy. This is because social circumstances such as torture or rape that violate an individual's self-trust will most probably also undermine that individual's autonomy.[81] Even if self-respect and self-trust are adequately supported, a society that undermines an individual's self-worth could still fail to adequately support autonomy. If particular types of social roles (such as stay-at-home dad) or achievements are denigrated, this limits the options that are open to some individuals, and this in turn limits their capacity for autonomous agency.[82]

Honneth recognises that liberal theorists could argue that they can address the need for self-confidence and self-esteem within the framework of rights. But, as Honneth points out, this misconstrues the problem because we need love and esteem "precisely not because [we have] a legal claim to it".[83] So, rights-based theories fail to provide all of the pre-requisite social conditions that are required to support autonomy in three ways: They

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[81] *Ibid.,* p. 135.
[82] *Ibid.,* p. 136.
[83] *Ibid.,* p. 138.

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underestimate the self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem that need to be considered as pre-conditions for autonomy; they need a broader account of how a society's "recognitional infrastructure" can render the autonomy of individuals unacceptably vulnerable and; they need to go beyond consideration of adequate distribution of material goods and acknowledge that there are "recognitional pre-conditions" of autonomy.[84]

Honneth's argument that self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem are social pre-conditions of autonomy and legal rights is considered to be untenable by a number of other theorists.[85] This is not because Honneth emphasises the connections between social relationships and autonomy or respect, but because the modes of recognition are understood in terms of "self-realisation". For liberal theorists, justice (or "the right") must have priority over self-realisation (or "the good"). For example, Fraser (who could be construed as a liberal theorist in the mould of Habermas in this respect) argues that it is important to identify whether what ought to be happening is justice or self-realisation. According to Fraser, Honneth views the problem of misrecognition as a matter of self-realisation, but she views it as a matter of justice. Questions of justice concern "the right" and justice should be understood in terms of universally binding norms of morality like Kantian *Moralität* that apply regardless of cultural or historical circumstances. In contrast, Fraser contends, questions of self-realisation concern "the good" and they are culturally and historically specific issues of ethics like Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*.

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[84] *Ibid.,* p. 142.
[85] See also Christopher Zurn, 'Identity or Status? Struggles over "Recognition" in Fraser, Honneth, and Taylor,' *Constellations* Vol. 10: 4 (2003), pp. 519-537; particularly pp. 527-529.

Fraser argues for a "status model of recognition", which does not view misrecognition as problematic because it impedes a person's self-realisation.[86] For Fraser, misrecognition is a problem because it results in institutionalised subordination of members of a society that prevents them from participating on a par with one another in social life. She contends that her model is superior to Honneth's because it allows claims for recognition to be justified in circumstances of value pluralism without requiring adherence to a "single conception of self-realization or the good life that is universally shared" (in other words, it is non-sectarian).[87]

Honneth responds to Fraser by pointing out that when we come to evaluate struggles for recognition in moral terms we do not accept all demands as legitimate. We make these judgements in terms of our ideas of a good or just society with some consideration of other principles such as social efficiency and stability.[88] He asks whether we can actually judge what constitutes justice without having some concept of the good life. As I have argued, Honneth's account of the pre-conditions of autonomy and rights suggests that achieving and sustaining these aspects of justice may be, in fact, subject to cultural and historical circumstances. This is because the pre-requisites of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem that can be characterised as matters of "self-realisation" are necessary for the establishment and maintenance of the autonomy and rights that are considered to be key components of justice. If the opportunities for "self-realisation" are culturally and historically specific, then the possibilities for achieving justice may necessarily be subject to the same forces. As an empirical description of how the norms of justice actually do vary in different cultural or historical circumstances this might be relatively

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[86] Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; pp. 28-29.
[87] *Ibid.,* p. 30.
[88] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* pp. 171-172.

uncontroversial. But this "relativity" remains problematic for liberal theorists (and for Fraser), who argue that the norms of justice ought to be universal.

Honneth has considered the question of whether the "right" or the "good" should have priority by analysing the challenges to liberal theories (in particular, John Rawl's theory) that have been made by communitarian critics. He defends the liberal position up to the point where he considers that the communitarians have a better, "albeit not yet very clear", argument.[89] Honneth points out that Rawls was able to defend his theory of justice against Michael Sandel's argument that subjects are unlikely to be able to adopt a neutral attitude to making decisions about justice because they are always situated in a society and are shaped by their life goals and value-orientations. Rawls could accept that subjects are (ontologically) socially situated, and still argue that well-ordered societies required certain (normative) pre-requisites (such as legally guaranteed basic liberties and economic safeguards) in order for subjects to have any real capacity to make uncoerced choices about ideas of the "good" society.[90] In fact, (Honneth contends), Rawls could argue that any decision about right or wrong in questions of whether an individual or group should be included or excluded in a society depends upon the norms of universal human rights.[91] But, Honneth argues, this acceptance of the importance of social context does mean that Rawls's theory changes from describing "metaphysical" abstract persons who have

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[89] Axel Honneth, 'The Limits of Liberalism: On the Political-Ethical Discussion Concerning Communitarianism,' in Charles W. Wright (ed), *The Fragmented World of the Social, Essays in Social and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); p. 233.

[90] *Ibid.,* p. 236.

[91] *Ibid.,* p. 237. Honneth points out that Sandel's communitarian justification of the American Civil Rights movement depends on recognising that some citizens have been "wrongly" excluded from the common life of the nation.

particular abilities to describing "political" citizens of a Western democracy who share common convictions,[92] which is how Rawls himself came to see the matter.

Honneth argues that accepting that individuals are socially situated should not mean that the importance of individual autonomy is undervalued. We cannot judge the commonly shared values of our society and decide whether we should accept or challenge them if we are subjected to external social constraints that interfere with these decisions.[93] As Taylor contends, making our own decisions requires a social context that supports the acquisition of skills such as self-awareness and moral discrimination. Social context also provides feedback, and sometimes "helpful correction" from others who share our "orientation towards the goal of self-realisation".[94] Legislation that protects the right to self-determination makes our liberty possible, but individual liberty also depends on being part of a society which values and supports the liberty of its members.[95]

Just as Rawls's accommodation of the importance of social context seems to limit his theory to the particular social and historical circumstances of Western democracies (thus losing universal validity), so any "concrete concepts of the collective good" seem to require some reference to universalistic principles.[96] Honneth argues that this puts both liberals and communitarians in the same position, because they cannot make justifiable distinctions between morally acceptable and morally objectionable conceptions of the collective good.[97] In his early exploration of this problem, Honneth suggests that discourse ethics might offer a viable solution to this apparently intractable problem by offering a

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[92] *Ibid.,* p. 238.
[93] *Ibid.,* p. 239.
[94] *Ibid.,* p. 240.
[95] *Ibid.,* p. 241.
[96] *Ibid.,* p. 244.
[97] *Ibid.,* p. 245.

"normative concept of community",[98] but he has subsequently offered his own recognition-theoretical response to this challenge. In the next section, I will argue that Honneth's explanation of the role of social context differs from that of communitarian theorists and is able to better respond to the question of the relationship between the norms of justice and shared social values.

c)   Communitarianism and social solidarity (the sphere of esteem).

Honneth concedes that his theory of recognition is a "hypothetically generalised outline of the good life",[99] which appears to reflect the concerns of communitarian theorists. While the exact nature of communitarianism is contested, a number of objections are routinely made against it. There are substantial differences in Honneth's account of social solidarity that render it less subject to these criticisms and his account appears to be able to deal with each of these objections, regardless of whether they are actually valid of communitarianism or not. As Majid Yar has argued, a number of different challenges have been raised. Firstly, in modern societies there are plural conceptions of the "good life" that do not generate the kind of common ground that communitarian accounts suggest.[100] Secondly, societies that do not include such a diversity of conceptions of the good life might not allow dissensus or might offer a "truncated or 'bordered' conception of critical reflection" on the established social values.[101] Thirdly, communitarians underestimate the role of power in perpetuating inequality, exploitation and disadvantage[102] and fourthly this

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[98] *Ibid.,* p. 246.
[99] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 180.
[100] Majid Yar, 'Honneth and the Communitarians: Towards a Recognitive Critical Theory of Community,' *Res Publica* Vol. 9 (2003), pp. 101-125; pp. 108.
[101] *Ibid.,* p. 109.
[102] *Ibid.,* p. 111.

may lead to an inability to view change and conflict as a pathological "deficit of shared norms and values".[103] Finally, communitarian accounts can provide a "dualistic, oppositional framework" where community and individuals are understood as oppositional and irreconcilable.[104]

Where communitarians emphasise the value of communality as a good in itself (or "the community side in the individual-community dialectic"), Honneth emphasises that social relationships are valuable because they support individual self-realisation.[105] He contends that we need to be able to do more than merely analyse the present community standards of justice. We should be able to increase the opportunities for everyone to achieve a higher degree of individuality ("individualisation") and generate transformation through a lasting rise in the level of social integration ("inclusion").[106] This requires a conception of progress.

It is this focus on the importance of social progress that differentiates Honneth's theoretical position from communitarian theories. Many communitarian theorists emphasise the importance of intersubjective relationships within stable communities, but Honneth is well aware of the problems that can be generated if individual freedom becomes overshadowed by a static acceptance of traditional social values. Honneth does not argue that social value-horizons are, or should be, a static, uncontested framework. He stresses the importance of struggles and conflicts (aspects of social context that are under emphasised by some communitarian accounts) where the preconditions of the good life are challenged

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[103] *Ibid.,* p. 112.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication. A Critical Study of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009); p. 282.
[106] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; pp. 184-185.

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due to dissatisfaction with established norms. As Jean-Philippe Deranty argues, Honneth's emphasis on "dissensus" and on the "extensions, corrections, complements, [and] transformations of existing principles of justice" allows Honneth's theory to have the capacity to transcend particular historical circumstances and political traditions.[107] This means that recognition theory is not restricted to being a theory of existing communities and the social values that generate their social solidarity, but is able to explain how societies and value-horizons change via a "negativistic methodology, whereby the norm of justice is defined primarily as the abolition of injustice".[108]

As Honneth argues, justice is generated from claims of injustice in real but changing circumstances. This gives Honneth's theory distinctive advantages because the values of societies have always changed, although the rate of change may vary. Honneth's framework allows us to interpret struggles for recognition such as those of Rosa Parks who sought to be treated equally to white Americans, the suffragettes who fought to have an equal right to vote and the gay rights activists who currently seek the right to same-sex marriages. These conflicts changed, or attempted to change, what is valued by society. Honneth's theory also allows us to understand the changes in what is valued that were engendered by the struggles of the Quebecois to be allowed to use the French language in Anglophone Canada and by other claims for recognition of the value of cultural diversity in multi-cultural societies. As Yar argues, Honneth's theory is able to transform our understanding of what a community/society is or could be. Community is not a static entity, but rather a "dynamic relationality out of which shared self-conceptions and

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[107] Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Beyond Communication. A Critical Study of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy*; p. 287.
[108] *Ibid.*

structures of personhood genetically emerge" that is "split between the presently actual

existent and the futurally promised or anticipated".[109]

I have argued that Honneth's theory is able to retain some of the theoretical insights of the

ethics of care, liberalism and communitarianism and avoid some of the criticisms of each

of these theories. However, this does not mean that his theory of recognition has been

accepted as a viable alternative to other theories or that it has not been subjected to

substantial criticisms. In the next section, I will outline the objections that have been

raised against Honneth's theory and then I will go on in Chapters Two, Three and Four to

consider a number of them in greater depth.

Section Four - Criticisms of Honneth's Theory

As a critical theorist, Honneth's goal is to describe the way that contemporary societies

function and to offer a framework which draws on progressive historical improvements to

provide concrete criticism of the moral well being of these societies. In this section, I will

briefly outline a number of aspects of Honneth's theory that have been criticised for being

descriptively inaccurate and/or lacking the potential to fully illuminate and criticise actual

injustices.

Honneth outlines a structure of reciprocal recognition that suggests that there is a moral

impetus towards particular types of reciprocal interpersonal relationships that would

require specific capacities and capabilities from all participants. In a world where

adequate mutual recognition appears to be the exception rather than the norm and many

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[109] Majid Yar, 'Honneth and the Communitarians: Towards a Recognitive Critical Theory of Community'; p. 121.

interpersonal relationships seem to be based on domination and subordination (as Honneth admits), we might question the descriptive accuracy and usefulness of Honneth's account of reciprocal recognition in a number of ways:

1. Is Honneth's theory empirically accurate? Do most individuals currently have the capacities that reciprocal recognition seems to require? If they do not, might the capacities for mutual recognition be dormant or repressed? If so, could they ever be realised?

2. If mutual recognition is possible, is it a desirable goal, or might it cause more suffering?

3. If mutual recognition is possible and desirable, this raises the political question of what is the best means for bringing it about? Honneth suggests that structures of reciprocal recognition are realised through social struggles. Are conflictual struggles the right instrument to generate mutual recognition? Even if social struggles can be a constructive force for social improvements, is conflict always necessary?

4. Even if mutual recognition is possible and desirable, and Honneth is right about the role of social struggles in bringing it about, is mutual recognition the only thing that is required for addressing injustice? If the distribution and redistribution of material goods are primarily about self-interested competition for resources and not about moral claims, then Honneth's theory of a "moral grammar of social conflicts" may not be able to deal adequately with the many types of economic injustice that

appear to be solely about inequity of material wealth. Can Honneth's theory of mutual recognition give an adequate account of injustice in distribution and redistribution and is it the best means of making all of the concrete changes that are needed?

I will go on (in Chapters Two and Three) to argue that Honneth's theory can meet each of these challenges, at least to an extent that does not entirely undermine his theoretical goals. However, there are other challenges for his theory that may be more difficult to overcome. Honneth argues that the achievements that occur through the application of personal traits and abilities can generate self-esteem and be a force for social solidarity. This raises a number of issues:

5a.   Even if the achievement principle can generate self-esteem in at least some ways, is it the only factor that does this? Some types of group membership have a negative impact on self-esteem or broader social solidarity because of mechanisms of social exclusion such as racism and religious intolerance. Does Honneth's account pay adequate attention to these factors?

5b.   Is Honneth's account of achievement broad enough? If personal achievements do generate self-esteem does this only happen through the traits and abilities that are used in modern workplaces and rewarded with remuneration? Does Honneth adequately consider the social bonds that are fostered by informal networks or associations and by activities such as voluntary work that play an important part in generating self-esteem for both volunteers and beneficiaries?

5c.   Even if personal achievements do generate self-esteem, is social cohesion necessarily generated by the achievement principle? Can the essentially competitive relationships of the modern workplace really be a socially cohesive mechanism?

These problems of the efficacy of Honneth's achievement principle and the role of personal achievement in generating social solidarity exacerbate a second set of problems that concern the structure of Honneth's theory and its scope of application. Honneth describes three spheres of reciprocity. He appears to infer that the sphere of love applies within a family or intimate relationship, the sphere of respect occurs under the auspices of the legislative framework of a nation state, and the sphere of esteem happens between the members of a particular society who generate social solidarity through contributing their own aptitudes and abilities. The boundaries between these spheres are not as clear as they might appear to be from Honneth's account and, as he concedes, there may be overlaps and conflicts between the spheres. In fact, justice may depend on where the boundaries are or ought to be. In addition, contemporary family, legal and social networks are not necessarily enacted within a local neighbourhood, inside the borders of a nation state or in the confines of a particular community. Nuclear and extended family and other love relationships can extend across the world, crossing state borders either legally or illegally and penetrating national, ethnic, cultural or religious ties. The (admittedly limited) reach of international law and the powerful forces of globalised commerce and banking both seep through national and community borders. This poses new and ever-expanding challenges for recognition through love, respect and esteem and multiplies opportunities for misrecognition and non-recognition. Even if Honneth's theory of recognition could be descriptively and diagnostically useful within the well-defined borders of the nation state,

would it be equally as informative in the broader global context in which those boundaries are no longer so uncontroversial?

Each of the challenges to Honneth's theory has ramifications for the processes of globalisation that drive the movement of people and material wealth in the contemporary world. I will begin a more thorough exploration of these criticisms in Chapter Two by discussing the problems of reciprocal recognition and arguing that Honneth's theory can meet these challenges. In Chapter Three, I go on to argue that Honneth's theory can describe and analyse the effects of the mechanisms of distribution and redistribution. If the forces that drive distribution of material resources in contemporary societies can be understood at least to some extent in terms of Honneth's "achievement principle", this raises substantial questions of justice in relation to the recognition that occurs through social esteem. In Chapter Four, I address a number of specific questions about the viability of Honneth's "achievement principle" as a mechanism for generating self-esteem and social solidarity in contemporary societies. I will then conclude my discussion of these major challenges to Honneth's theory by summarising my response to the objections that have been raised and contending that his theory has the potential to provide new and different insights into the processes that either support or reduce social solidarity.

Part Two: Major Challenges to Honneth's Theory

Chapter Two - The Problems of Non-Reciprocal Recognition

In this chapter, I will analyse the criticisms of recognition-based theories of social justice that have been made by Markell and Oliver. I use Honneth's theory of recognition to demonstrate that these criticisms are not entirely valid and I argue that recognition based theories of social justice are able to address the demands that are made by both of the critics. I also analyse the alternatives to recognition that are proposed by Markell and Oliver, and argue that their theories of "acknowledgment" and "witnessing" presuppose certain aspects of relationships of mutual recognition and are conceptually flawed in other ways. I conclude that Markell and Oliver do highlight important concerns that should be addressed by theories of recognition. However, they do not entirely discredit recognition theories or offer a viable alternative.

I begin by examining Markell's criticism of recognition, which argues that mutual recognition is an over ambitious goal that misconstrues the real source of injustice and assumes that people have a pre-given identity. I then examine Oliver's argument that criticises recognition theories on the grounds that the theories assume that intersubjective relationships necessarily involve conflict, and because they condemn people who are oppressed to unsuccessfully seek recognition from their oppressors. I then reconstruct parts of Honneth's theory of recognition in order to demonstrate that it does not necessarily include the flaws that have been identified and criticised and I argue that Honneth's theory can adequately address many of the problems that are raised.

In the third and final part of this chapter I consider the alternatives to recognition that are proposed by Markell and Oliver. In the case of Markell, I argue that his "ethics of

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acknowledgment" constitute a particular type of non-reciprocal recognition that focuses on the responsibilities of dominant people and groups, and that his theory is ultimately dependant on broader relationships of mutual or reciprocal recognition for its successful implementation. In response to Oliver's argument for an "ethics of witnessing", I argue that her theory is also a partial analysis of relationships of mutual recognition due to her important but limited focus on the role and experiences of those who are oppressed.

My argument and conclusion present mutual recognition as not only the goal of ethical interaction but also the mechanism that is necessary for this on-going project. I also support Honneth's view that struggles for recognition offer a diagnostic key to identifying injustice and to forging better ethical responses to social problems.

Section One - The Criticisms of Theories of Recognition: Markell and Oliver

Markell offers a number of criticisms of recognition-based theories of social justice that suggest that the goal of mutual recognition is too ambitious in some ways and that it does not pay sufficient attention to various sources of injustice. He offers an alternative theory based on "acknowledgment" which involves a Greek "tragicist" model of recognition of finitude that draws on Aristotle and Greek tragedy as well as Arendt. I will analyse this theory in the final section.

a)   Human finitude and mistaking the source of injustice

Markell argues that mutual recognition is an appealing but impossible goal that does not fully comprehend the limitations of individual people and of social and political life.

Human agents have finite possibilities and they are subject to an open and unknowable future. It is unrealistic and misguided to rely on a distorted picture of the actual interactions of the human world that mistakes the "irreducible conditions of social and political life for pathologies that might someday be overcome".[1] The goal of mutual recognition is also problematic because it presupposes that justice is merely a matter of negotiating identity and difference and this can miss the real source of injustice. The root of injustice may not stem from "demeaning images of others" or a failure to adequately recognise their identities.[2] Injustice may actually result from social arrangements that allow some people and groups to enjoy a semblance of "sovereign agency" at other people's expense.[3] This can shield them from the inherent riskiness of existence and allow them to live their life without coming to terms with their own limitations.

Markell argues that sovereign agency is an illusory pseudo-autonomy that can only be maintained by limiting the agency of other people through subordination. It follows that the subordination of some people is a result of the failure of the dominators to acknowledge their own circumstances, and not a result of their failure to recognise the identity of others. Markell supports this argument with his own interpretation of Hegel's analysis of the relationship between a master and a slave. He argues that Hegel's example suggests that subordination is caused by the failure of the dominator to acknowledge something about him or her self, and not by a failure to recognise others. Markell contends that a politics of recognition would not be able to identify this aspect of oppression.[4]

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[1] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); p. 4.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 5.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 112.

b)   Presuming a pre-formed identity and causing injustice

Markell also argues that recognition theorists, in particular Charles Taylor, assume that individuals can have an identity that precedes their actions and interactions. It is this pre-constituted identity that is challenged or transformed within the social and political struggles for recognition.[5] This allows us to access the pre-given facts about ourselves and to discover "what acting 'authentically' means for us".[6] This is problematic because it makes empowerment a process of rediscovering the past, and not of "breaking with it".[7] Markell sees this as an incoherent conceptualisation of identity because, following Hannah Arendt, he asserts that identity is actually a result of interaction. Identity cannot be pre-existent, agents cannot control their own identity and identity can only be retrospectively recognised. Markell does not provide specific examples in support of this assertion, but perhaps he means that a person cannot just decide in isolation that their "authentic" identity will have pre-given particular characteristics such as a gender, ethnicity or social role without having regard to the on-going social interactions that either support or negate such a decision. In the end, Markell asserts, others narrate our identity and we can never really be the masters of our identity once we are dead.[8]

Markell also suggests "affirmative images of others could be consistent with, or serve as vehicles of, injustice". In fact, successful recognition could reinforce an existing injustice and may even create new injustices.[9] He supports this assertion with an account of the process of emancipation of the Jews in German speaking countries during the eighteenth

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[5] *Ibid.,* p. 2.
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 12.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 13.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 14.
[9] *Ibid.,* p. 5.

and nineteenth centuries. He argues convincingly that there were neglected costs of this process of recognition, which included a "transformation of Jewish life and culture" and "the projection of the worst Jewish stereotypes onto poorer and more vulnerable eastern Jews".[10] So, for Markell, mutual recognition is both an insufficiently revealing tool of analysis and an inappropriate goal, because it misconstrues the actual processes of identity formation and it may inadvertently cause injustice.

Oliver also argues that recognition theories are flawed in terms of their understanding of the world and that recognition does not offer a viable way of overcoming injustice. However, her criticisms target different aspects of recognition theories and their application, especially the experiences of those who are oppressed and the role of conflict. Oliver offers a model of ethical relationships based on "witnessing" which involves a particular theory of subjectivity. I will examine this alternative in the final section.

c)   Oppression

Oliver maintains that the struggle for recognition inevitably produces pathological relationships of dependency for oppressed people. She supports her argument with examples of pathologies of misrecognition such as the experiences of colonised peoples. Oliver agrees with the arguments of Honneth and others that relationships of domination and oppression can reduce the oppressed person to the status of an object, and that this specifically undermines their possibility of having a sense of the self as a subject and an

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[10] See *Ibid.,* pp. 123-151, particularly p. 149. Another, and perhaps not unrelated, example of this problem of unintended injustice could be the creation of the state of Israel, which had negative implications for Palestinians even though it was intended to address a pattern of injustice against Jews.

agent.[11] She argues that for those who are oppressed, ignored or misrecognised there is no option but to seek recognition from the dominant group or culture. In consequence, it is the actual circumstances and experience of oppression that "creates the need and demand for recognition".[12]

Oliver cites Frantz Fanon's argument that black colonised peoples adopt the identity that is projected onto them by their white colonisers. They are dehumanised and presented with two equally unacceptable options of recognising themselves either as white or as evil.[13] She argues that it is only after this experience of oppression that the oppressed become preoccupied with needing the attention of their oppressors.[14] Even when the oppressed are freed from these circumstances of oppression they remain oppressed if they are not allowed to create their own values and meaning.[15] Oliver suggests that Honneth's theory of recognition presupposes injustice because he argues that "the condition of possibility of self-respect is that one is disrespected", and he maintains that recognition in terms of "self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem all come through conflict". She suggests that this argument is analogous to thinking that war is necessary for peace.[16]

d)   Conflict

Oliver also argues that mutual recognition presupposes a model of subjectivity that assumes that there is an inevitable conflict in intersubjective relationships. This threatens

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[11] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); p. 7.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 9.
[13] *Ibid.,* p. 26.
[14] *Ibid.,* p. 26.
[15] *Ibid.,* p. 29.
[16] *Ibid.,* p. 49.

the possibility of establishing and maintaining genuinely ethical interaction.   She

interprets the Hegelian notion of recognition as an antagonistic struggle between people

who only recognise themselves as the same as, or different from, other people. She argues

that this assumption of conflict makes it particularly difficult for recognition theorists to

explain how struggles for recognition can become resolved in compassionate relationships

or in democratic political structures.[17] Whilst agreeing, "subjectivity is necessarily

intersubjective and dialogical" Oliver argues that it is "not necessarily antagonistic".[18] She

argues for the rejection of relationships that involve hostility and conflict and for replacing

them with relationships of unconditional asymmetrical love and care.

These criticisms of lack of acknowledgment of human finitude, presumption of pre-formed

identity, unintentionally causing injustice, the role of recognition in perpetuating

oppression, and of the presumption that intersubjective relationships are intrinsically

conflictual are all potentially serious problems for recognition theories. However, it is

questionable whether these criticisms actually represent the goals or content of Honneth's

theory and whether they constitute a rebuttal of recognition per se or a description or

critique of relationships of misrecognition. In order to respond to each of these arguments,

I will reconstruct Honneth's theory of recognition and identify where the theory addresses

or contradicts the assertions of Markell and Oliver.

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[17] *Ibid.,* p. 4.
[18] *Ibid.,* p. 5.

a)   Response to Markell

I will respond to Markell's arguments by demonstrating that recognition theorists do not need to interpret the need for recognition as if it were a desire for sovereign agency, or seek to argue that sovereign agency is an achievable goal. I also question Markell's suggestion that Honneth's argument presumes a pre-given identity, and Markell's argument that recognition is consistent with or may cause injustice. In fact, aspects of Markell's own argument that identity is mutual constituted through intersubjective relationships are very similar to Honneth's theory. I concede that particular struggles for recognition may well result in unintended injustice, but I argue that a goal of mutual recognition necessarily implies an on-going process where new injustices are addressed. I will also respond to Oliver's criticisms and argue that theories of mutual recognition do not necessarily force those who are oppressed into a pathological dependency on their oppressors or suggest that conflict is the basis of intersubjective relationships, even though Honneth does argue that struggles for recognition may be an inevitable part of human existence and that they are important because they can indicate (but not demonstrate) that something is wrong.

The term "recognition" can be understood in a number of ways. Each of the quite distinctive uses of the English word "recognition" is important for the philosophical debate that surrounds theories of recognition, and many of the conflicts that characterise these deliberations are generated because social movements and theorists understand the term "recognition" to mean different things. Paul Ricoeur identifies a chronological order to

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these various definitions of recognition, which connects them to particular themes or

theories at particular times.[19]

The first of these definitions connects the term "recognition" to identification. This type

of "recognition" is an active initiative of the mind that is used to master the meaning of our

world and come to know what is around us.[20] This does not necessarily imply a moral

judgment, unless being one thing is considered to be of less worth than being another. As

many theorists have argued, this identification of things and people raises a number of

significant questions. There could be substantial possibilities for misuse of power by those

who are in a position to decide which categories will be used and whether particular things,

groups or individuals fulfil the eligibility criteria for particular categories. In addition,

there is an important difference between identifying things and identifying people. Both

people and things can be identified numerically, qualitatively and generically, but only

people are able to self-identify. Qualitative self-identifications are "formed in complex

dialogues and struggles with the views that others have of us".[21] This can make a vast

difference to the identities that are recognised or formed depending on the qualities or

features that are used to define the identity. For example, a person might be identified as a

member of a resistance movement or as a terrorist depending on the criteria that are used.[22]

The limits of our pre-conceived categories can also predetermine our capacity to

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[19] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*, trans David Pellauer (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[20] Paul Ricoeur argues that this usage is theoretically aligned with Descartes' theory of judgment and Kant's "recognito", and that this type of recognition requires having both the capacity for judgment and the ability to exercise that capacity. It also requires being able to distinguish and identify ideas, people or things, and truth or falsehood. See *The Course of Recognition*; pp. 24-25.

[21] Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, 'Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons,' in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds), *Recognition and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); p. 35.

[22] *Ibid.*

comprehend our world. As Ricoeur argues, there are limits to what we can recognise and there can be gaps between recognising and knowing. This means that when "recognition" equates to "identification" there is always the possibility of the unrecognisable.[23]

The second type of "recognition" is used to describe the process of recognising ourselves by taking responsibility for a transition from ignorance to knowledge, or more specifically self-knowledge.[24] This may involve realising or admitting an acceptance of responsibility or a mistake.[25] This type of recognition seems to require taking responsibility willingly in spite of constraints and not being ignorant of the factual conditions or rules.[26] This usage is very similar to Markell's use of the word "acknowledgment" which involves accepting your own finitude instead of oppressing others to maintain a fallacious sense of sovereign agency. It also appears to have some close resonances with slightly different definitions of "recognition" that involve "acknowledgement" of norms, principles, rules or claims as valid. Acknowledging a norm or rule is not just identifying it. Acknowledging a claim involves forming the opinion that it is legitimate and not deliberately violating a claim without having valid stronger reasons.[27] However, these types of "recognition" through self-knowledge and "recognition" of external norms are slightly different. Ricoeur's account of self-knowledge involves a process of self-awareness through narrative identity.[28] Ikäheimo and Laitinen claim that only normative entities can be acknowledged,

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[23] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*; p. 61.

[24] Ricoeur connects this process to Aristotle's virtue ethics. See *Ibid.,* p. 76.

[25] Heikki Ikäheimo, 'On the Genus and Species of Recognition,' *Inquiry* Vol. 45: 4 (2002), pp. 447-462; p. 448.

[26] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*; p. 84.

[27] Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, 'Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons'; p. 36.

[28] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*; pp. 109-110.

so they might interpret Ricoeur's account as "acknowledgement" of the validity of claims concerning one's duties or responsibilities.[29]

The third use of the word "recognition" differs from "identification" and "acknowledgement". Non-human things can be identified. Entities such as norms and values (or responsibility for self-knowledge) can be acknowledged, but only people can be "recognised".[30] An important distinction of this meaning of "recognition" is that it is dialogical and not monological. It involves taking another person to be a person. This requires that they are aware of the attitudes that are being displayed and able to reciprocate. It is a "two-way-complex-of-attitudes" which requires the participation of both parties.[31] That is, it is not a one-way attitude where recognition is conferred on someone else without her or his knowledge, or without the recognisee's acceptance of the competence of the recogniser.[32] This is a crucial and frequently underemphasized difference in meaning. Many conflicts that are connected to the "politics of identity" are struggles for "recognition" that actually question the competence of the recogniser(s) who apply categories of identification without the involvement or agreement of those who are being identified. This is particularly apparent when processes of identification seek to categorise indigenous peoples, women, African Americans, or people who are not heterosexual as not quite "human" or not human enough. However, where it might seem

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[29] Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, 'Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons'; p. 36.

[30] Ricoeur connects this type of mutual recognition with Hegel's rejection of Hobbes' arguments that the fear of death is at the root of political and moral ideas and that self-interest is the motivator for social co-operation. See *The Course of Recognition*; pp. 166-167.

[31] Heikki Ikäheimo. 'On the Genus and Species of Recognition'; p. 450.

[32] Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, 'Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons'; p. 38.

to be possible to "identify" humans as non-humans it is not possible to "recognise" them in that way.

Ricoeur argues that in the course of the progression from the active "identification" that seeks to master meaning to this more passive "recognition" both the recogniser and recognisee become "under the tutelage of a relationship of reciprocity".[33] But although Ricoeur identifies this as a more passive form of recognition, reciprocity does not in fact appear to be particularly passive. It could be less active than the "doing to other things/people" of identification or the "doing to self" of acknowledgment, but this "doing with others" appears to require much more than passivity. In fact, I contend that successful mutual recognition might require a great deal of sustained effort and adjustment of attitudes and actions, but identification or acknowledgement could be relatively uncomplicated processes so long as pre-ordained categories or norms are learnt, accepted and applied without question. Mutual recognition may also involve struggles for recognition where individuals or groups articulate their demands and this appears to be quite the opposite of passivity.

Honneth uses "recognition" in this third sense as something that specifically applies to attitudes of love, respect and esteem, which are given and received by people. Recognition in Honneth's terms is not something that can be bestowed by one person onto another person without their knowledge, or adopted unilaterally without specific participation in the relationship of mutual recognition. It is not a way of categorising people by giving them a specific identity. It is both a mechanism of interaction between people and an attribution of a particular status to all of the people concerned. Honneth specifically

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[33] Paul Ricoeur, *The Course of Recognition*; p. 248.

describes how identity is initially constituted through relationships of love and trust between infants and parents, and how inadequate recognition can undermine or limit this process. Citing anthropological studies, he argues that the recognition that occurs between family members, and in other relationships of love or friendship, is essential for the development of basic self-confidence or self-trust and for having a sense of physical integrity.

Honneth argues that moral agency in modern societies is fostered by the recognition of general legal rights that assume the equal worth of persons and support social integration. This form of recognition is intended to be universal because it ought to be equally enjoyed by everyone. He also argues that self-esteem is generated by recognition of the particular traits and abilities that are esteemed and valued within the community. Being esteemed by others supports the capacity for self-esteem and provides the opportunity for achieving and sustaining personal dignity. Individuals are also able to maintain a sense of self-esteem through a feeling of "group-pride" or "collective-honour".[34]

These three types of recognition are necessary for individuals to flourish, and consequently lack of recognition or misrecognition may lead to lack of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. Inadequate recognition may generate social struggles for recognition if the circumstances permit and these struggles can provide a vital indicator that adequate mutual recognition is not being sustained. Honneth's theory implies that quite a dynamic level of interaction and mutuality might be required to maintain adequate levels of recognition for everyone. This raises questions about the types of verbal dialogue, attitudes, physical space and institutional support that might be required to successfully support this process.

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[34] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 128.

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Markell argues that mutual recognition is an unrealisable goal and that it can hide the true source of injustice that stems from misguided attempts to achieve sovereign agency. Honneth's theory does maintain that everyone needs an adequate level of recognition in order to experience their status as a focus of concern for others, as a responsible agent and as a valued contributor in shared projects. Honneth does not suggest that recognition results in a state of entirely independent sovereign agency for individuals, or that this would be desirable even if it were possible. He argues that the goal of recognition is social development that moves closer to a good and just society that fosters mutual recognition for its members. This happens in two ways, through the "moral socialisation of subjects" and the "moral integration of society".[35] Individuals become more able to see themselves as "both a full and a particular member of the social community" and the members of the society become more fully included.[36]

An ideal of perfect and sustained mutual recognition may be as unrealisable as Markell suggests, but it does not follow that advocating the goal of improving mutual recognition is misguided. As Honneth argues, the historical growth of mechanisms of love, respect and esteem suggests that these aspects of recognition may be subject to change in the future. He argues that "historical processes no longer appear as mere events, but rather as stages in a conflictual process of formation, leading to a gradual expansion of relationships of recognition".[37] This implies that each increase in recognition may be followed by other increases, but it does not suggest that a final point of perfect recognition could ever be reached.

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[35] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition and Justice'; p. 354.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 170.

Markell's argument regarding the source of injustice does have some validity. Some struggles for recognition do result from an unrealistic quest for protection from personal finitude that can only be achieved at the expense of others. However, recognition theorists have addressed this problem of claims for recognition that do not have a worthy motive. Both Honneth and Fraser discuss the claims of white supremacists. Fraser suggests that recognition theories can have a problem with some claims for recognition, such as the claims of racists, because they should not be recognised.[38] However, as Honneth argues, the claims of white supremacists do reveal that something is wrong, even though the source of their discomfort is misplaced onto the victims of their racial prejudice.[39] Racists often express fears that another group will take their employment opportunities. When the other people are more skilled or prepared to work harder these fears are frequently well grounded. In fact, the attempt to dominate and denigrate others in these circumstances can be interpreted as a failure by the racists to acknowledge their own inadequacies. This example of injustice does seem to work in precisely the way that Markell suggests. However, the theoretical framework of recognition has the potential to reveal and analyse the problem.

Markell argues that recognition theorists assume the recognition of a pre-given identity. However, Honneth presents a view of identity as an on-going work in progress in which even a minimal form of agency depends on mutual interaction with others, and he suggests that identity can be destroyed and changed. If Honneth did use the term "recognition" to mean "identification" of particular attributes or characteristics he could be accused of

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[38] Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*; p. 38.
[39] Axel Honneth, 'An Interview with Axel Honneth,' interviewed by Anders Petersen and Rasmus Willig, *European Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 5: 2 (2002), pp. 265-277; p. 270.

presenting recognition as the ability to recognise and categorise people according to pre-given standards. However, Honneth's use of recognition describes three types of mutual interaction. This does not necessarily assume a pre-given identity in the way that Markell has argued.

There are at least two options for understanding how the two-way dialogical relationship of recognition actually works. It could be understood as a form of attribution of particular properties where the recognisee acquires something new, or it might be understood as a form of perception where properties or status that are already present are emphasised or made more evident.[40] This second understanding could appear to be problematic because there would need to be a way of deciding which properties are valuable and it might also problematically lock us in to pre-existing values, "within the experiential horizon of a particular lifeworld".[41] This does seem to connect with some of the problems of recognition that Markell raises because it relies on the validity of the pre-existing categories.

However, Honneth argues that mutual recognition has the potential to generate normative progress because there is an internal connection between the purpose of recognitive relationships and the expansion of values. He argues that human autonomy is the goal of recognition. We can only be "free" if we are able to relate to ourselves rationally and this is dependant on other people affording us adequate recognition. So for Honneth recognition is an essential part of freedom. If recognition is understood in this way it could either work directly by generating the relevant qualities or indirectly by actualising them.

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[40] Axel Honneth, "Grounding Recognition: A Rejoinder to Critical Questions" *Inquiry* Vol. 45 (2002), pp. 499-520; pp. 506-507.
[41] *Ibid.,* p. 508.

In either case, recognition would be necessary for autonomous self-determination, but only if recognition actually generates the relevant qualities would it be both necessary and sufficient. Honneth supports an indirect understanding of the role of recognition where potential qualities are transformed into actual qualities. We respond to qualities that people already possess, but these qualities are only available to them because they have experienced the recognition of them.[42] So we respond to aspects of identities that may in fact be revealed by the process of recognition and not to a pre-existing or pre-formed identity.

Markell argues convincingly that struggles for recognition can result in injustice by using the example of how positive recognition of German Jews in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Germany resulted in negative stereotyping of Eastern European Jews. This would be a substantial problem for a theory of social justice that attempted to fairly distribute a finite amount of recognition. However, Honneth's theory suggests that there can be a constant expansion of recognition and so we might expect that disadvantaged people such as the Eastern European Jews that Markell describes may also make demands to be adequately recognised if their social and political circumstances allow this. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe did result in the opportunity for many groups who felt that they have been previously marginalised to make demands for recognition. Honneth does not claim that all demands for recognition are worthy of recognition and he does not suggest that it would necessarily be acceptable to recognise one individual or group at the expense of others. The goal of mutual recognition is to achieve an adequate level of recognition for everyone and it would not be acceptable to merely shift a lack of recognition or misrecognition from one group to another.

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[42] *Ibid.,* pp. 509-510.

b)   Response to Oliver

Oliver's argument that the need for recognition is symptomatic of oppression is anticipated by Honneth's account. Honneth argues that demands for recognition can be generated by oppression and he states that people who are oppressed need to have the means to articulate their circumstances. He also argues that there is a requirement for particular social and political frameworks to allow for the possibility of struggle.[43] Oliver's analysis seems to infer that it is only those who are oppressed who have a need for recognition, but this is not supported by Honneth's account. He maintains that everyone, regardless of their social status needs to be recognised by others because it is a pre-requisite for the initial formation of subjective identity and a necessary component of on-going self-identity. So the need for recognition is a universal requirement, and struggles for recognition may indicate that this need has not been met.

Honneth does suggest that social struggles can be necessary to establish and maintain the frameworks of close relationships, universal legal and institutional relations and networks of community solidarity. This is because experiences of disrespect through misrecognition or nonrecognition can generate a struggle for recognition.   Contrary to Oliver's reconstruction of Honneth's theory[44], he does not argue that disrespect is necessary for acquiring respect or that the different aspects of recognition are all necessarily generated through conflict and struggles for recognition. He actually argues that self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem are generated through relationships of mutual recognition, and

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[43] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 138-139.
[44] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*; pp. 48-49.

not through lack of love, disrespect or contempt. Honneth does emphasise the role of struggle, but this is because he believes that struggles have been misinterpreted. He points out that some struggles are motivated by the collective interest of "the securing of economic survival", but he wants to resist the utilitarian approach that would interpret all struggles in this way.[45] He argues that conflict may also be motivated by moral reactions to injustice. This is a clarification of the way in which we should interpret social conflicts and not a claim that there actually is, or must necessarily be, a direct causal connection between conflict and rectifying injustice.

However, in Honneth's defence all forms of intersubjective relationships, even unconditional love relationships, may involve some degree of conflict, or disagreement and antagonism. As Markell argues, conflict is not always a sign of oppression.[46] Even in the most unconditional and loving relationships between a parent and their infant there are necessarily moments of conflict. Encouraging a weaning baby to eat nourishing food or discouraging a stubborn toddler from mortally dangerous explorations are inherently conflictual practices that also actually demonstrate the love and care of the parent. Of course, ethical parent and child relationships do not degenerate into a state of war, and ethical parenting would not involve resolving the conflict by force feeding an infant or restricting the movements of toddlers to the extent that they are unable to develop physically.

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[45] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 165.
[46] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*; p. 37.

As Honneth suggests, the conflict that is involved in raising a young child can be part of a process that establishes an individual identity for both the child and its parent.[47] Even adult love relationships of unconditional love can also involve a degree of conflict. This does not mean that Honneth argues that conflict is a good thing, although he is neutral in terms of whether violent or non-violent resistance is used in struggles for recognition, and on whether conflict is caused intentionally or unintentionally.[48] Although a degree of conflict may be a part of all intersubjective relationships, this does not mean that it is the most fundamental form of interaction. Mutual recognition is a possibility at every level of interaction with others. From the most intimate forms of love relationships that develop and sustain self-confidence to the broader sphere of social interaction that fosters self-respect and provides the opportunities for self-esteem, there are norms of mutual non-conflictual recognition. It is often the breeching or breakdown of these norms that gives rise to the extremes of conflict which generate struggles for recognition.

Section Three – The Alternatives to Recognition

I will now examine Markell's and Oliver's alternatives to recognition in order to identify the commonalities with recognition theory and to highlight the strengths and limitations of their proposals. I argue that some aspects of "acknowledgement" and "witnessing" are presupposed by Honneth's theory, although he does not describe these specific attitudes and actions of recognition as clearly as Markell and Oliver do. I also argue that both "acknowledgement' and "witnessing" can be construed as partial accounts of a broader theory and that they actually presuppose a degree of reciprocality and mutual recognition.

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[47] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; pp. 99-100.
[48] *Ibid.,* p. 163.

a)   Markell's alternative: acknowledgment

Markell argues for a politics of non-reciprocal "acknowledgment" which is self-directed

and not other directed. He asserts that we cannot know other minds, but it is what we do

that matters and not what we know. The object of acknowledgment is not other people but

ourselves.[49] We need to acknowledge the conditions of our existence and the limits of

"identity" as grounds for action. The problem is not that we cannot really know others; it

is that knowledge of others cannot provide us with sovereign agency.[50] This argument

stresses the importance of focussing on our own finitude in order to acknowledge the

practical limits of our human existence. Markell also contends that it is important to come

to terms with the fact that living with others typically involves risk, conflict and

misunderstandings that may not be able to be overcome.[51] He concludes that justice will

not necessarily involve giving more recognition to people who are oppressed. It may

require dismantling the structures of privilege and domination that have given rise to the

misrecognition or nonrecognition.[52]

Markell bases his argument on a radical reading of Hegel's dialectic of the master and

slave in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807.[53]   He argues that recognition theorists

mistakenly interpret Hegel to mean that the struggle for recognition can only find a

satisfactory solution in reciprocal recognition amongst equals.[54] Markell identifies two

different voices in Hegel's account, which he argues that Hegel fails to reconcile. The

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[49] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*; p. 35.
[50] *Ibid.,* p. 36.
[51] *Ibid.,* p. 38.
[52] *Ibid.,* pp. 180-181.
[53] See *Ibid.* pp. 90-122.
[54] *Ibid.,* p. 91.

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"diagnostic" voice predominates in Hegel's description of the relationship between a master and a slave and the struggle for recognition. The "reconciliatory" voice is used in Hegel's account of a community of equal and mutual recognition.[55] Markell argues that for Hegel recognition always comes too late. It is part of the problem of subordination because it does not address the real cause of subordination and it intensifies the impulse to dominate.[56] Markell interprets Hegel to mean that subordination is not rooted in the failure of the powerful to recognise the worth of the subordinated. It results from the failure of the powerful person to recognise his or her own human finitude.[57] This is a complicated argument and it is beyond the scope of this discussion to fully explore the issue of what Hegel might have intended by his account. Consequently, I will focus my comments on the conclusion that Markell draws from his analysis.

Markell's argument raises important questions regarding the role of personal responsibility in recognising and minimising situations of injustice and domination. However, he focuses almost exclusively on the role of the "master" and on the attitudes and actions that may be required to change the type of behaviours that characterise and facilitate domination of others. Markell's process of "acknowledgment" may well be an appropriate response to some instances of oppression. However, "acknowledgment" could also be interpreted as a particular attitude of mutual recognition, particularly as Markell describes it as something which can be expressed through acts and practices such as "taking a risk, withdrawing, speaking, listening, welcoming, polemicizing, claiming a right, mourning, celebrating, forgiving, punishing".[58] All of these actions could be methods of affording

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[55] *Ibid.,* pp. 92-93.
[56] *Ibid.,* pp. 94-95.
[57] *Ibid.,* p. 112.
[58] *Ibid.,* p. 38.

mutual recognition within Honneth's theoretical framework of intersubjective relationships of love, respect and esteem.

Markell's assertion that "sometimes less may be more" is also an important consideration.[59] It could be more effective to offer less recognition to those who are dominant or to change the circumstances that facilitate their domination than to try to offer more recognition to those who are oppressed. However, it is questionable whether these forms of "acknowledgment" could be achieved without relationships of mutual recognition. Having the ability to acknowledge your own human limitations and acquiring an understanding of your social environment in order to identify and respond to oppression seems to require a structure of mutual interaction with other people. Oppression needs to be articulated or revealed in some way, perhaps by Oliver's method of "witnessing", before an oppressor or other parties could even begin to give appropriate recognition, compassion or retribution. An oppressor is unlikely to have any knowledge of the outcome of their actions unless they are involved in a relationship of reciprocity with other people.

Markell may want to reject this interpretation of "acknowledgement" as a form of mutual recognition. He could choose to define acknowledgement solely as a process of self-knowledge that happens within a pre-existing framework of norms and practices in accordance with the second meaning of the word "recognition" that I previously discussed. But that stance would require an explanation of how self-knowledge might occur in isolated individuals. If interaction with other people plays any part at all in the development of self-knowledge then Honneth does appear to offer an account of this process that is at least plausible. Honneth describes how the existing norms and values

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[59] *Ibid.,* p. 181.

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might change and this also appears to be a necessary part of explaining what might trigger the admission that previously held norms such as slavery or colonisation should be revised.

Markell's theory does serve to emphasise the importance of self-reflection and willingness to accept responsibility for our own actions and these may be aspects of attitudes and processes of mutual recognition that are somewhat underdeveloped in Honneth's own account. Honneth describes how changes in norms and values might be generated, but he does not say a great deal about how this actually happens in terms of the specific behaviour of individuals or how people actually come to replace previously held attitudes of domination for ones that allow others to escape from oppression. Struggles for recognition such as the American civil rights movement and the South African anti-apartheid movement provide evidence that demands for recognition can and do result in changes in the behaviour of the dominant group. In these instances previously oppressed people have acquired not only the right to occupy a seat on a bus or have full citizenship, but also the possibility of nominating for presidency and being the president. These developments support Honneth's account and they also seem to reflect Markell's argument that domination requires self-reflection and changes in the behaviour of the dominator(s). However, "acknowledgement" in these circumstances does appear to be a mode of "recognition".

b)   Oliver's alternative: witnessing

The inadequacy of one-sided interaction is also a possible objection to Oliver's argument for "witnessing", but for different reasons. Oliver appears to focus almost exclusively on the role of the "slave" in her account. She argues that the demands of various social

movements are not merely demands to be recognised or made visible, but also demands for

compassion and retribution. If only the dominant group is able to give recognition this will

merely repeat the structures of privilege and domination that perpetuate the oppression of

some people.[60] Oliver also is concerned that it is only possible to recognise something that

is familiar in other people and this means that difference must be assimilated into

sameness.[61] She argues for a model based on "witnessing" which involves not only giving

eyewitness accounts, but also bearing witness to the meanings that cannot be seen. This is

not to be reduced to the concept of testimony where historical accuracy is the only goal. It

moves beyond the finite truths of historical circumstances to the infinite possibilities of

bearing witness to the truth about humanity. This involves a two-fold understanding of

human subjectivity, which includes both the subject's social position in a historical context

and their subjectivity, which is not completely determined by these practical

considerations.[62]

Oliver argues that subjectivity is "experienced as the sense of agency and response-ability

that are constituted in the infinite encounter with otherness, which is fundamentally

ethical".[63] Subjectivity involves having a sense of oneself as an agent which is "founded

on the possibility of address and response; it is a fundamentally dialogic structure".[64]

These structures of address and response develop in infancy from birth and sustain psychic

and social life. The inner witness is where the subject position and their subjectivity

meet.[65] This description of the "infinite encounter with otherness" appears to be entirely

compatible with Honneth's account of dialogical processes of mutual recognition, however

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[60] Kelly Oliver, 'Witnessing and Testimony,' *Parallax* Vol. 10: 1 (2004), pp. 79-88; p. 78.
[61] *Ibid.,* p. 79.
[62] *Ibid.,* pp. 80-81.
[63] *Ibid.,* p. 81.
[64] *Ibid*.
[65] *Ibid.,* p. 83.

Oliver has more to say about what might actually be required in these processes. She cites a powerful example of the witnessing of a Holocaust survivor who described an uprising in which prisoners set fire to their prison camp.[66] Oliver argues that the historical inaccuracy regarding the number of chimneys that were actually set alight should not be allowed to interfere with the wider significance of the testimony, which was about the possibility of resistance in these terrible circumstances.[67] The ability of the oppressed to bear witness to their oppression is highly significant because facts cannot disclose the full significance or meaning of historical circumstances. For Oliver this structure of address and response is prior to subjectivity and intersubjectivity.[68]

This account has many similarities with Honneth's theory in terms of the importance of mutual interaction and dialogue as both a prerequisite and an on-going requirement for agency. Oliver's description of witnessing and bearing witness, and of the importance of address-ability and response-ability could be interpreted as a method of articulating certain types of relationships of mutual recognition. However, because Oliver appears to construe Honneth's interpretation of "recognition" in terms of a form of "identification" that is "always of something already known" and confers "validity, existence and entitlement" (and not as a multi dimensional form of mutual interaction) she does not interpret the process of witnessing as a mode of struggling for recognition.[69]

In fact, Honneth's theory does have a place for the importance of facilitating the expression of experiences of suffering and he would probably agree that this type of

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[66] *Ibid.,* pp. 83-84.
[67] *Ibid.,* p. 83.
[68] *Ibid.,* p. 85.
[69] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*; p. 170. Oliver also connects this problem to the "visual foundation" of recognition and the inherently illusory aspects of vision.

bearing witness needs to happen in order to facilitate justice within particular circumstances. In the course of his examination of the theories of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jürgen Habermas, Honneth directly refers to the problems that are encountered by survivors of concentration camps whose grievances are silenced because they "do not find an appropriate medium of articulation in the genre of discourse constituted by formal law".[70] Honneth also supports Stephen White's account of the importance of the ability to listen, to be emotionally involved and to accept and encourage personal particularities, which can all be seen as aspects of the concept of "care".[71] However, both the silencing of oppressed peoples and the importance of listening are somewhat under explored in Honneth's account of mutual recognition.

Social struggles might be one way of breaking out of the enforced silence, but as Honneth admits struggles are not always possible and they do not necessarily result in the claims of oppressed peoples being adequately heeded and addressed. In contrast, the role of the listener is a key factor in Oliver's account, which describes witnessing as a way of claiming retribution and compassion and not just an opportunity for being heard. She points out that victims can be "rendered docile or speechless" and argues that there are "effective and affective differences between listening for what we already know and ... listening for what we don't know".[72] She also contends that "victims of oppression, slavery and torture are not merely seeking visibility and recognition ... they are also seeking witnesses to horrors beyond recognition". [73] These are important components of

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[70] Axel Honneth, 'The Other of Justice: Habermas and the Ethical Challenge of Postmodernism' in Stephen K. White (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); p. 294.
[71] *Ibid.,* p. 300.
[72] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*; p. 8.
[73] *Ibid.*

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the struggles of oppressed peoples that do appear to be a necessary part of identifying and overcoming the injustice.

Oliver's account of the difficulties of overcoming oppression raises complicated questions regarding the abilities and aptitudes that might be required to facilitate an adequate discourse of mutual recognition and suggests that this would require not only the knowledge or cognition of the other person's point of view but also a degree of reciprocal empathy. Her argument emphasises the important role of compassionate listening (or at least what Stephen White has described as "capabilities of passive concern"[74]) within the framework of mutual recognition. As she suggests, empathy requires more than cognition. It is a specifically emotive response to the circumstances of others and not just a "cognition' or "re-cognition" of their plight.

However, Oliver contends that subordinated groups are forced to base their struggles for recognition on a desire for recognition from their oppressors, and it is questionable whether this is always the case. In Oliver's own example of the witnessing of a Holocaust survivor the listeners are academics and not prison guards. They are people who are likely to listen to and empathise with the witness. As Oliver argues, justice requires more than being heard or identified, it requires an appropriate response to the claim. If the listener is hostile or disinterested witnessing alone will not bring about justice. Mutual recognition requires that the recognisor be deemed to be capable of making an adequate judgement.[75]

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[74] As cited by Honneth in Axel Honneth, 'The Other of Justice: Habermas and the Ethical Challenge of Postmodernism'; p. 304.

[75] See Heikki Ikäheimo and Arto Laitinen, 'Analyzing Recognition: Identification, Acknowledgement, and Recognitive Attitudes towards Persons'; p. 38 for a comprehensive discussion of this requirement.

Honneth's theory can shed further light on this issue of what might constitute an appropriate response. A person who is subjected to a denial of recognition on the basis of their "race" is not necessarily committed to accepting the judgment of the racist. In fact, making a claim for recognition in these circumstances specifically denies that the racist has made the right judgment, because it implies a rejection of the assumption of racial superiority and inferiority. American civil rights activists focused their demands on appeals to the broader society and not on directly influencing the views or actions of members of the Ku Klux Klan. The African National Congress appealed to the international community for support in terms of economic sanctions in order to overthrow the system of apartheid governance. In contemporary societies groups who are subjected to racial discrimination are more likely to appeal to legislative frameworks of anti-discrimination laws (if they exist) that are intended to provide a level of adequate respect for all members of the community than to attempt to insist that they are respected by white supremacists.

Despite Oliver's concern that conflict is overemphasised by Honneth's theory, overcoming oppression by escaping enforced silence and demanding to be heard does often appear to involve conflict. Her own example of the witnessing of a Holocaust survivor describes the burning of chimneys, despite the probable futility of such an action in the circumstances. This is hardly an example of passive or non-conflictual resistance. But Oliver does raise significant problems regarding Honneth's reliance on Winnicott's account of "symbiotic oneness" between mother and infant that requires a violent break in order for the child to become independent. She argues that this violent break is only necessary if the mother-infant relationship is perceived to be antisocial when in fact it is the prototype for all social relationships. She also criticises Honneth's "patriarchal" portrayal of motherhood as

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"natural and necessary" and "ahistorical".[76] Oliver does not offer an alternative account of

caregiver-infant relationships, but we might infer from her criticisms of Honneth that she

would contend that these relationships are social, prototypical and not necessarily violent.

Honneth's argues that parent-infant relationships are "both conceptually and genetically

prior to every other form".[77] This appears to be entirely consistent with Oliver's view of

these relationships as a "prototype". He also uses quotation marks when he refers to

'mother' in his account of Winnicott's object-relations theory which suggests an awareness

that primary caregivers may well be people who are not in fact the child's biological

mother, although he does not explicit stress that point.[78] However, I would concede that

some aspects of Winnicott's theory do raise questions about the type of conflict that

necessarily occurs within mother-infant relationships.

According to Honneth, Winnicott contends that infant development includes a

psychological mechanism of "destruction" where the infant reacts violently towards the

'mother' by "hitting, biting and kicking" and "if the 'mother' survives these destructive

attacks without taking revenge" this allows the child to place himself or herself in the

world as a subject alongside other subjects.[79] As Oliver might argue, although many young

children go through a stage of violent behaviour, this is not always the case and even if

they do display violent behaviour it is not always directed at the 'mother' or primary

caregiver. This could make Winnicott's account of the inevitability or necessity of a

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[76] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*; p. 48.
[77] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 107.
[78] See *Ibid.,* pp. 98–106 for Honneth's reiteration of Winnicott's theory. Winnicott does not refer to the mother as 'mother' and Oliver's criticism of Honneth might be more appropriately directed at Winnicott's account.
[79] *Ibid.,* p. 101.

violent break in our primary love relationships rather questionable. If Honneth does rely on an empirically inaccurate theory that appears to give a central (even primary) role to violence this could indeed be problematic. However, in Honneth's defence, he uses Winnicott's theory to illustrate the importance of the "precarious balance between independence and attachment" in our primary love relationships, which rejects the Freudian account of other people as secondary players in an individualistic account of ego-driven infant development.[80]

If we understand Winnicott's theory as an account of the necessarily interpersonal process by which infants gradually acquire their independence, the empirical question of whether violence is always involved becomes less central. Winnicott does seek to interpret acts of infant violence that are directed towards primary caregivers, but that does not necessarily mean that Honneth needs to argue that these relationships are or must necessarily be violent. As I have previously argued, loving parental care can often involve modifying or restricting the behaviour of infants and it would not actually be "care" if it did not do so in some circumstances. A more general claim that infants gradually acquire a degree of independence within a framework of occasionally conflictual interpersonal relationships is less controversial and it would probably be less problematic from Oliver's point of view.

Conclusion

Markell requires powerful people to curb their tendency to dominate others by realising that a goal of sovereign agency is unachievable. Oliver stresses the importance of

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[80] *Ibid.,* p. 96. Honneth has recently indicated that he has reviewed his use of Winnicott's account of child development in this context. See Axel Honneth, 'Reply' in D. Petherbridge (ed), *The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth*, (Leiden and Boston, Brill, forthcoming manuscript).

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providing opportunities for those who are oppressed to be properly heard. Both of these arguments are important and relevant to a theory of social justice that is based on mutual recognition. But both Markell and Oliver fail to consider an important aspect of interpersonal relationships of recognition. As I have argued, neither the oppressors nor the oppressed are likely to achieve social justice unilaterally. It is also theoretically problematic to imagine that humans can always be clearly divided into two distinct groups of the dominant and the oppressed. The same person may be dominant in some of their relationships or social circumstances and oppressed in others. For example, as Fanon and others have argued, it is quite common for men who are subjected to oppression because of their "racial" characteristics to oppress the women and others in their own community.[81] Social relationships can, and often do, involve chains of oppression that link many different people through a variety of work, social, political and familial relationships. The impact of each experience of oppression can be passed on to someone else or some other group. Focusing only on oppression or only on domination makes it difficult to adequately interpret and address these multi-dimensional relationships. It may also fail to reveal the historical or broader social factors that have a causal role in social injustice.

In conclusion, Honneth's theory of recognition does not assume that humans can overcome their finitude by becoming sovereign agents. In fact, his theory suggests that becoming an agent at all and maintaining an adequate degree of agency depend on relationships of mutual recognition. This does not happen by identification of a pre-formed identity, but through ongoing intersubjective relationships of love, respect and esteem. Recognition is needed by everyone and not just by people who suffer injustice. Recognition does not necessarily exacerbate oppression, because people who are oppressed may be afforded

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[81] Franz Fannon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Great Britain: Penguin, 1967); pp. 40-41.

recognition by members of the wider society instead of seeking recognition from those who are directly responsible for the oppression. A degree of conflict may be part of many social interactions, but violent conflict is not necessarily the primary form of recognitive love relationships. Conflict can be an important indicator of experiences of injustice and a mechanism for claiming recognition that may be used by people who are oppressed. This means that conflict may be unavoidable in some circumstances and that it can be an invaluable (but not infallible) indicator of misrecognition or lack of recognition. The relationship between oppression and domination can be much more complicated and more closely linked than either Markell's or Oliver's account might suggest. Comprehending and addressing relationships of injustice may well require a multi dimensional theory of mutual or reciprocal recognition.

Chapter Three - Recognition and Redistribution

Does focusing on "recognition" mean that "redistribution" is no longer given due consideration? In this chapter, I will consider the question of whether Honneth's theory of recognition can adequately address the issue of redistribution. I argue that his theory can not only meet this challenge, but can also help us to understand why redistribution and distribution are so important. I begin by rehearsing and analysing the debate between Honneth and Fraser in *Redistribution or Recognition* and then go on to consider some of the specific criticisms of Honneth's theory that are made by Fraser and Christopher Zurn. I argue in support of Honneth's theory and maintain that understanding issues of redistribution and distribution within his theoretical framework does offer the potential for a powerful critique of injustice that occurs through inadequate distribution of resources.

Section One - Fraser's and Honneth's Positions

The debate between Fraser and Honneth highlights a shared concern for social justice, but it also reveals a number of differences of interpretation and intent. Honneth and Fraser agree that questions of justice should encompass both recognition and redistribution and they both reject "economistic" arguments that view recognition as a sub-category of redistribution.[1] However, there are substantial differences in the way that they comprehend "recognition" and the relationship between recognition and redistribution. Fraser argues that for the past 150 years "egalitarian redistributive claims have supplied the paradigm case for most theorizing about social justice" where inequalities are presumed to

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[1] Fraser argues that orthodox Marxism would be an example of this type of view because it understands all exploitation, and ultimately all injustice, as stemming from the economic structure. See *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; pp. 16-17.

be unjust, but more recently social justice claims have revolved around the "politics of recognition".[2] For Fraser, claims for recognition are about difference and not about equality. This "identity politics" of difference has somewhat displaced the politics of equality and Fraser argues that this is problematic because injustice cannot be properly understood if economic redistribution along egalitarian lines is neglected.

Fraser contends that existing claims for social justice refer to "folk paradigms" that involve either redistributive claims or claims for recognition. She defines these "folk paradigms" as "sets of linked assumptions about the causes of and remedies for injustice" that are assumed by and associated with specific social movements.[3] These movements can appear to be dissociated from one another, decoupling "cultural politics" from "social politics" or the "politics of difference" from the "politics of equality", but Fraser contends that this is misleading because social struggles inevitably incorporate both economic and recognitive dimensions.[4] She also points out that it is wrong to understand the many different types of claims for "recognition" only as claims for the "affirmation of group specificity".[5] Taylor's example of the Francophone Quebecois who want to be able to educate their children in French may be a case of such affirmation but claims by women who want equal access to work opportunities and equal remuneration are also claims for recognition, even though they seek to affirm their equal status in the workplace and not their specificity as women.

Although Fraser concedes that the issues of recognition and redistribution are empirically interwoven in social struggles she suggests that there is good reason to maintain an analytical distinction between the folk paradigms of recognition and redistribution. She

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[2] *Ibid.,* p. 7.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 11.
[4] *Ibid.,* pp. 8-9.
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 12.

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contrasts these folk paradigms in terms of their different conceptions of justice, remedies for injustice, conceptions of the groups that suffer injustice and different understandings of group differences. For Fraser, the redistribution paradigm focuses on socio-economic injustices such as exploitation or economic marginalisation (where others appropriate the fruits of workers' labour or people are denied the opportunity to work or confined to undesirable and/or poorly-paid work). But the recognition paradigm focuses on cultural injustices such as cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect (where people are subjected to the alien or hostile interpretations of a more powerful culture and rendered invisible or maligned by unfavourable stereotyping). In accordance with Fraser's analytical distinctions we might interpret the plight of sweatshop workers in developing nations or the Dhalit or "untouchable" caste in India as examples of socio-economic injustices, but the marginalisation and stereotyping of African Americans or indigenous Australians might be understood as cultural injustices (even though all of these examples have elements of both economic marginalisation and cultural domination).

Fraser argues that the paradigms of recognition and redistribution call for different responses to rectify injustice. Redistribution involves economic changes such as the distribution of income and goods, or reorganising labour, ownership or investment arrangements, but recognition calls for cultural changes such as positively valuing the identities and cultural products of disrespected groups or changing the broader social patterns of representation and interpretation. The collectivities that require redistribution might be defined as the working class in terms of orthodox Marxist class struggles (i.e. subjected to inequality of ownership of the means of production), or include groups of low paid menial workers and unpaid care workers. But recognition involves the status order of a society and focuses on socially stigmatised or trivialised collectivities such as gays and

lesbians or women. Redistribution seeks to abolish the differences between groups such as the working class and the capitalist class, but recognition seeks to either celebrate difference or change the way in which it is understood.

Fraser concedes that some groups (such as gender or racially defined groups) are subjected to the "two-dimensional" subordination of both maldistribution and misrecognition.[6] That is, they suffer material inequalities and they do not have their group specificity affirmed or are disrespected as a group. She also suggests that this actually applies to some extent to most groups, and, of course, individuals may be members of two or more groups.[7] However, Fraser argues for the importance of maintaining a type of "perspectival dualism" that describes these claims separately and may require different responses to deal with these different claims. She argues against "reductive" theories of recognition that assume a "culturalist view of distribution" by citing an example of a white male industrial worker who becomes unemployed because of a corporate merger.[8] For Fraser, this type of injustice has "little to do with misrecognition" because it results from the economically driven profit motive that is a "structure of capitalism" and not from "cultural value patterns".[9] I will return to this particular example at a later stage when I consider whether Honneth's theory is able to adequately address this type of problem.

Fraser goes on to argue that class and status are different structures that do not neatly correspond to particular social movements, although they do differentiate between people on the basis of either economic mechanisms or cultural patterns. For Fraser, injustice in terms of class occurs through maldistribution and in status through misrecognition. She

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[6] *Ibid.,* p. 19.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 26.
[8] *Ibid.,* pp. 34-35.
[9] *Ibid.,* p. 36.

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contends that in modern societies there is a "partial uncoupling of the economic mechanisms of distribution from the structures of prestige".[10] Economic ordering is typically institutionalised in markets and cultural ordering through institutions such as kinship, religion, and law and modern society contains zones of both types of ordering. Fraser argues that marketization (i.e. coordination of social activity by market mechanisms) has led to the "modernization, not supersession, of status subordination".[11] Differences in social status have not faded away as Marx predicted. This is partly because social institutions such as the family and the state have a large impact on social status, but also because markets have instrumentalized pre-existing cultural values so that they may be bent to capitalist purposes. Fraser illustrates this assertion by arguing that racist norms remain part of capitalist labour markets even though slavery and racist laws have been abolished. At the same time, she argues, modern civil society has become diversified into a number of different non-marketized "legal, political, cultural, educational, associational, religious, familial, aesthetic, administrative, professional and intellectual" institutions.[12] This serves to pluralize and hybridise value horizons because each institution has its own pattern of cultural value even though they may overlap with other patterns. This encourages opportunities for status subordination within each of the different settings.

Fraser rejects both the "economism" that would reduce status to class and the "culturalism" that would reduce class to status, because this does not account for the fact that economy and culture are always intertwined. But she also rejects the "poststructuralist anti-dualism" of theorists such as Judith Butler and Iris Marion Young who argue that economy and culture are so closely connected that there is no way of meaningfully distinguishing

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[10] *Ibid.,* p. 53.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 58.
[12] *Ibid.*

them.[13] For Fraser, the only framework that adequately encompasses both types of

injustice is a "perspectival dualism" which sees economy and culture as irreducibly distinct

perspectives of the overall problem and allows us to analyse the relations between these

perspectives. She concludes that remedies for injustice will often involve consideration of

both perspectives because there should be "no redistribution without recognition" and in

many contexts "no recognition without redistribution".[14]

Honneth shares Fraser's concern that moral/political problems of redistribution may be

being neglected. He agrees that there is a new underclass that should not be ignored and a

problematic steady increase in the wealth of a small minority. However, he disagrees with

the categorical framework that Fraser uses to conceptualise normative goals. For Honneth,

the relationship between recognition and redistribution is not about "weighing political-

moral tasks"; it is about a deeper philosophical question.[15] He argues that Fraser's focus is

on finding the best tools to explain and justify the claims of existing social movements.

But this is problematic for Honneth because critical theory needs to have a wider focus

than the suffering that is already explicitly expressed by social movements. This is partly

because there may be other moral demands that have not been made explicit in the public

sphere and because there are social movements that have illegitimate claims. But

Honneth's main point is that attending to movements that are already mobilised and visible

is not necessarily the best way to comprehend the broader sources of social injustice and

social progress. Honneth's focus on recognition is not aimed at the "politics of identity",

which he argues is neither a new phenomenon nor one that is necessarily inclusive or

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[13] *Ibid.,* pp. 60-61.
[14] *Ibid.,* pp. 65-66.
[15] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* p. 112.

democratically oriented.[16] Rather, "recognition" is a theoretical concept that aims to

provide an "improved insight into the motivational sources of social discontent and

resistance".[17] This concept of recognition is much broader than the "restricted" sense of

recognition that Fraser uses which applies specifically to issues that relate to cultural

status.[18]

Honneth argues that distributional injustices are, in fact, an "institutional expression of

social disrespect" or "unjustified relations of recognition".[19] If this is right, recognition is

the "final and decisive problem" and Fraser's argument for the necessity of perspectival

dualism is wrong.[20] Honneth shares Fraser's view that Marxism mistakenly assumed that

actors had solely "rational-purposive" interests (a sort of utilitarian anthropology that was

supposed to apply to a whole class) and so the issue of moral claims or vulnerabilities did

not arise. But in contrast to Fraser, he contends that critical theory that revolves around the

claims of existing social movements (as he claims Fraser's theory does) does not pay

enough attention to what is motivating moral claims. This type of theory lacks a plausible

way of hypothesising about the potential causes of the feelings of injustice because it does

not have a normative core that could explain what moral expectations subjects have of

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[16] See *Ibid.,* pp. 121-123 for Honneth's convincing account of the key role of recognition
in historical struggles such as those against slavery and colonialism, and the
problematically exclusionary claims of movements such as neo-Nazism and religious
fundamentalism.
[17] *Ibid.,* p. 125.
[18] As David Owen and James Tully contend, these quite different conceptualisations of a
restricted cultural or more general form of recognition mean that in much of the debate
between Honneth and Fraser they appear to be talking "past each other". See David Owen
and James Tully 'Redistribution and recognition: two approaches' in Anthony Simon
Laden and David Owen (eds), *Multiculturalism and Political Theory* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2007); p. 268. n. 6.
[19] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*;
p. 114.
[20] *Ibid.*

society.[21] For Honneth, justice is not just a matter of ensuring that existing institutional

rules are being followed according to what counts as good reasons; we should also

question whether the rules and the reasons reflect the moral expectations of individuals.

Honneth argues that struggles that relate to redistribution are in fact a specific form of

conflict over the interpretation and evaluation of what he calls the principle of

achievement. He points out that all of the forms of recognition have undergone a historical

differentiation. Love evolved through the marking off of childhood, the emergence of

"love-marriage" and the type of social relationships of loving care that ensued. Status was

decoupled from a person's origin, age, or function and replaced by legal equality

(recognition through respect in Honneth's theoretical terms). Individual achievement

within the "religious valorization of paid work"[22] brought new status to the rising

bourgeoisie. Thus honour was both democratised in equal respect for persons and

meritocracised in awarding social esteem on the basis of being a productive citizen. In our

own society achievement has become linked to the "economic activity of the independent,

middle-class, male bourgeois" and payment and esteem are clearly interlinked.[23]

It is important to note that this is Honneth's description of the way that social

circumstances actually are, and not his account of the way that they ought to be. Although

he contends that via the "achievement principle" individuals learn to understand

themselves as subjects who possess abilities and talents that are valuable for society he

concedes that, in practice, the achievement principle is problematic because certain types

of efforts are not viewed as achievement or work (eg raising children). However, he

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[21] *Ibid.,* pp. 127-128.
[22] *Ibid.,* p. 140.
[23] *Ibid.,* p. 141.

argues that achievement-based esteem is preferable to the older estate-based form of social esteem. The focus on achievement could work positively by supporting the demand that individual contributions should be recognised, but it can also work negatively to legitimise unequal distribution of life chances and goods. This is a negative outcome for Honneth because it works against the presumed moral ideal of equality.

Honneth argues that the welfare state was a penetration of the principle of equal legal treatment (the recognitive sphere of respect) into the previously autonomous sphere of social esteem.[24] This meant that some share of social goods was distributed to legal persons according to their rights, even if the largest share was still allocated according to the achievement principle. Members of capitalist societies can demand redistributive recognition in two ways, through social rights that guarantee a minimum of essential goods (legal equality) or through an appeal to achievements that should be better recognised (eg lower paid women's professions and unpaid housework etc).[25] For Honneth, there is nothing to be gained by Fraser's perspectival dualism. Moral experiences of misrecognition are at the root of all social conflicts, even those concerning unequal distribution. Whether the conflicts are economically or culturally based is only a secondary consideration of the type of disrespect that is being experienced.[26] Even where redistribution of resources is the goal of conflicts the established norms of recognition have a constitutive role, because what is actually being contested is the justice or injustice of particular ways of evaluating social achievements and contributions.

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[24] *Ibid.,* p. 149.
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 153.
[26] *Ibid.,* p. 157.

Fraser is not convinced by Honneth's argument. She contends that there are other systems of interaction that Honneth fails to consider. The economic market order is culturally embedded, but it has its own logic and it interacts with the cultural order in complex ways. Capitalism is controlled by "impersonal system mechanisms, which prioritize maximization of corporate profits".[27] These include factors such as labour supply and demand, the power balance between labour and capital, wage regulation, technological costs and availability, international currency exchange rates and the cost of credit. These issues cannot be reduced to the "cultural" question of what is the appropriate level of esteem that should be given for individual achievements. She concedes that social struggles may have a cultural dimension, but argues that this dimension is not all that is required to analyse them.

Honneth counters that he is not intending to explain the developmental processes of modern capitalist societies, but only to reveal the moral constraints that underlie various different types of social interaction including the economic sphere. He agrees that the achievement principle is not the only factor that constrains the labour market, because the labour market is constrained by law (and the associated rights or restrictions that laws enshrine) as well as by particular interpretations of the achievement principle. However, he argues that the economic sphere is not independent of the "tacit consent" (at least) of the people who are affected. [28] Economic processes are determined by normative rules and people do actually experience the deregulation of labour as a loss of moral rights. Systems like money and political power depend on some belief in their legitimacy and so they have a social dimension. Even deciding to focus on profit maximisation requires some sort of normative agreement and legal support. Honneth concludes his contribution to the debate

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[27] Nancy Fraser, *Ibid.,* p. 215.
[28] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* p. 250.

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by arguing that the spheres of recognition each have a "surplus validity" of moral norms and principles, which causes them to expand and develop.[29] He admits that this is problematic for achievement-based esteem because it is applied within established value frameworks of what is esteemed and he suggests that perhaps progress here involves widening the horizons of what is to count as esteem worthy achievement.

Section Two - The Crux of the Debate

This is a complex debate because it operates on a number of levels of moral philosophy, social theory and political analysis, which are combined into a critical theory of capitalist society.[30] It is not my intention to resolve all of the questions that are raised by this debate. Rather I will focus my analysis on the claim that Honneth's theory cannot adequately address the issue of redistribution. Descriptively, Honneth and Fraser appear to agree that the struggles of people who feel that they have been subjected to injustice may be symptomatic of actual injustices. Honneth certainly argues elsewhere that the struggles for recognition of social movements are an important indicator of social injustice, even though he does not want to see them as the only indicator. Both agree that issues of recognition and redistribution appear to be part of those struggles. However, the disagreement arises when they consider the question of how best to analyse these struggles and whether certain categories of analysis will be useful for identifying not only what is happening, but also what ought to be happening. At the core of the debate is the question of whether there is a "structure of capitalism" that is not always influenced by "cultural value patterns" (as

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[29] *Ibid.,* p. 263.
[30] Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* p. 4.

Fraser contends),[31] or whether capitalism is "a consequence of a mode of cultural valuation that is bound up, from the very outset, with asymmetrical forms of recognition".[32]

This brings us to what I take to be the crux of this debate between Honneth and Fraser. Although Honneth's theory does appear to be able to describe and criticise the mechanisms of distribution and redistribution, can it describe them adequately? Fraser does not want to give up the analytical perspective of redistribution because it appears to be necessary to identify and overcome the injustice that occurs in the system-driven environment of markets. Fraser argues that existing markets follow their own systematic mechanisms that are conceptually distinct from moral or cultural considerations. She contends that in our own society there are both "marketized arenas, in which strategic action predominates, and non-marketized arenas, where value-oriented interaction predominates".[33] In the marketized zone interaction is governed by "strategic imperatives, as individuals act to maximize self-interest".[34] In other words, she argues that modes of recognition are not the *cause* (or perhaps the sole cause) of market forces. If Fraser is correct, the mechanisms of distribution could sometimes operate in a way that cannot be adequately described in terms of issues of recognition (as she defines them).

Fraser argues that Honneth's theory is incapable of providing an account of market mechanisms and that it denies that they even exist. However, Honneth does not deny that market mechanisms exist. This is a very important and frequently misinterpreted aspect of Honneth's argument. He does not claim that existing market mechanisms are directly or entirely driven by mutual respect and esteem for personal and group achievements. He

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[31] Nancy Fraser, *Ibid.,* p. 35.
[32] Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* p. 5.
[33] Nancy Fraser, *Ibid.,* p. 53.
[34] *Ibid.,* p. 58.

argues that via a series of decisions (or through "tacit consent") the economic sphere is allowed to function in a particular way. Even if it appears that there are no explicit norms in the current "free" markets, there are underlying norms that either regulate or deregulate aspects of market forces. As Honneth points out, "Indeed, the term 'deregulation' itself is a direct indication of the fact that the labour market is organized by legal norms that express the moral interests of those involved".[35] Honneth is not arguing that existing markets are, in fact, *caused* or controlled by factors that do not include profit maximisation and market forces. He is arguing that decisions have been made to allow markets to be relatively unfettered in this way. In other words, that markets are not *prevented* from functioning as they do.

Despite the concerns of Fraser and other theorists such as Zurn,[36] Honneth's assertion that social norms are a major factor in permitting or constraining market forces and their effects appears to be a fairly uncontroversial empirical claim. Current capitalist societies have agreed to permit "free-market" forces to have a relatively free reign and we can compare that situation to historical examples of other social systems such as communism, feudalism or "social welfarism" where very different social and political choices resulted in different forms of economic systems and controls. There are some legislative restrictions that police the current "free market" in many capitalist societies, and there are also some requirements for reporting various aspects of economic activities to the wider society. However, as Honneth argues, these controls are limited either by the scope of legislation or because no

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[35] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* p. 254.
[36] See Christopher Zurn, 'Recognition, Redistribution and Democracy: Dilemmas of Honneth's Critical Social Theory,' *European Journal of Philosophy* Vol 13: 1 (2005), pp. 89-126.

legislation or other form of control has been applied.[37]   There are also some forms of redistribution through taxation, welfare payments and social infrastructure, but they are similarly limited by legislation and policies that reflect the prevailing norms of social justice. It appears that Honneth is being accused of claiming that his theory of recognition can explain the workings of the free-market, but it is not clear that he does make that assertion, or that he needs to. Claiming that norms are part of what establishes market distributions (or might be used to judge or change them) is not the same as claiming that norms are identical to market processes.[38] Even if we were to concede to Fraser and Zurn that recognition theory may not be sufficient to account for the specificity of economic action, Honneth's theory may still be useful for analysing the experience of economic injustice.[39] Even if it cannot fully explain all of the causes of injustice it may be able to effectively critique the effects.

If Honneth's argument is correct, we might expect to be able to find the theoretical apparatus to describe and analyse maldistribution and misrecognition within his framework of types of recognition, and also to have some indication of what a rectified situation might look like. He argues that redistribution and distribution of resources occur through two different mechanisms. Redistribution occurs through various forms of reallocation such as taxation and state welfare systems. This can be understood in terms of Honneth's theory as

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[37] The argument that the free market functions as it does due to social and political decisions and the tacit consent of those who are affected does appear to be supported by the changes in market controls that occurred in response to the global economic crisis of 2008/2009. These restrictions were not entirely "system-driven" but occurred as the result of legislation and other social controls.

[38] Nicholas Smith, 'Recognition, Culture and Economy: Honneth's Debate with Fraser,' in D. Petherbridge (ed), *The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, forthcoming manuscript).

[39] This distinction is drawn by Jean-Philippe Deranty in 'Critique of Political Economy and Contemporary Critical Theory: A Defence of Honneth's Theory of Recognition' in H.C. Schmidt am Busch and C. Zurn (eds), *The Philosophy of Recognition* (Lexington Books, forthcoming manuscript).

a form of legislatively regulated respect for persons that seeks to ensure universal access to a minimum level of goods. Honneth also argues that distribution occurs through the achievement principle and he suggests that this could be described and understood as a type of recognition that occurs through mechanisms of esteem.

Honneth's theory thus appears to be able to describe at least certain aspects of the mechanisms of redistribution and distribution, and it also has the potential to illuminate the normative framework that chooses not to prevent some of the foreseeable results or to redress some of the affects of unconstrained market forces. But can his theory help us to make judgements about whether these circumstances ought to be changed and demonstrate what a rectified situation would look like? Within Honneth's framework we can evaluate whether all members of a society have the access to a minimum level of goods that has been agreed upon and enshrined in legislation (understood as a form of universal "respect" in Honneth's terms), and analyse the debates that occur on whether the agreed level is adequate or whether it ought to be adjusted or increased in some way. An assessment could be made of whether everyone has access to the goods that they have a legal right to claim and re-evaluation of the norms that underpin the assessment and redistribution processes could occur.

We can also evaluate the sphere of esteem by analysing how contributions, attributes and abilities are valued and whether everyone has a fair opportunity to contribute and reap the benefits. An assessment could be made of whether different types of achievements are adequately valued and whether everyone has a fair opportunity to obtain adequate social esteem.   Some types of work are not afforded a high degree of social recognition and this is closely connected to the level of remuneration that these workers receive. Many social

struggles are about issues of work such as wages and the recognition framework can identify and explain these. Wages can be perceived as a reward for making a contribution to society and experiences of injustice can stem from the feeling that the wage does not adequately reflect that contribution (or, I would suggest, that other people's wages appear to be overly generous in relation to their contribution).[40] Recognition theory can specifically highlight just what might be unjust in these economic interactions – considerations that would not necessarily be explainable in purely instrumental terms.

Within this theoretical framework there could be at least two types of prevention of injustice that could occur. Firstly, the effects of maldistribution could be prevented or circumvented through mechanisms of redistribution such as taxation, welfare payments or provision of necessary social infrastructure such as public education, roads and hospitals. Secondly, foreseeable maldistribution could be constrained or avoided through regulation and control of the processes of distribution.

Section Three - Honneth's Evaluation of Modern Processes of Distribution

In his article with Martin Hartmann "Paradoxes of Capitalism" Honneth uses the framework of his theory of recognition to describe and augment Talcott Parson's account of the evolution of modern societies.[41] Honneth and Hartmann present a description of the evolution of modern capitalist systems through the institutionalisation of individualism and the development of egalitarian forms of justice through legal forms of government. They also describe the growth of the idea of achievement as a basis for assigning status, and of a

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[40] For a comprehensive analysis of this issue see Jean-Philippe Deranty, *Ibid.*
[41] Martin Hartmann and Axel Honneth, 'Paradoxes of Capitalism,' *Constellations* Vol. 13: 1 (2006), pp. 41-58.

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romantic idea of love that promises a degree of transcendence from the economic pressures of "day-to-day instrumentalism".[42] The authors contend that occupations are now understood as revisable steps in experimental self-realisation. They argue that the private and professional-public spheres are blurred. Well-paid jobs require extra creative and biographical indeterminacy because people need to be prepared to constantly change their skill base and/or move their home and personal life to another city or even to another country if required.

Production has been concentrated through less structured and more flexible work processes in order to increase profits, even though the market may have become saturated. This results in intensification of work for individuals and associated pathologies. Emotional skills are included in utility-based work processes (friendship-like relationships are expected in the work place) and economic imperatives intrude into informal relations (friendships are viewed in instrumental terms).[43] Hartmann and Honneth also contend that project-based work situations do not fully recognise individual achievements.[44] They go on to contend that the universal right to real income that in the past was not solely linked to the market value of the claimant is now eroded with the "work for the dole" mentality. Welfare state benefits are no longer seen as rights based claims and the unemployed are subject to arbitrary intrusive bureaucracy.[45]

Honneth and Hartmann argue that each of the types of recognition possesses a "normative potential" because the ideas that they contain can always be expanded to include more claims and obligations. The tension between the reality or facts of our existence and the

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[42] *Ibid.,* p. 42.
[43] *Ibid.,* p. 49.
[44] *Ibid.,* p. 50.
[45] *Ibid.,* p. 51.

normative ideas can drive claims for broader recognition of wider (although sometimes

conflicting) aspects of individuality, such as more equality for those who are not currently

equal, validation of the contribution of one's labour towards social reproduction, and more

attention to the needs that are fulfilled by intimate relationships. Honneth and Hartmann

contend that the "moral progress" of the social-democratic era of the late 1960s can be

seen in experimental self-realisation for more of the population, in legal prohibitions on

discrimination and expansion of citizens' and cultural rights, in women's demands that the

"achievement principle" include traditionally female roles such as child rearing and

housework, and in the freeing of intimate relationships from social and economic

engineering so that they focus on emotional value rather than economic security or

children.[46]

These developments are contrasted with the "neo-liberal revolution" of the 1980s. Whilst

freely admitting that capitalism might be described, "as an economic system that follows

its own laws of motion"[47] Hartmann and Honneth proceed to analyse the transformation of

economic processes and "the expansion of evaluative standards ... that, in the 'social-

democratic era', could still restrict or at least channel unmediated economic pressures".[48]

They describe the resulting weakening of welfare-state safeguards, the spread of

shareholder-oriented management that constrains or negates the needs of other

stakeholders such as employees, and the "project-oriented" workplaces peopled by

"entreployees" who are required to have high levels of personal application, flexibility and

self-motivation and to assume responsibility for their own fate. This is not an analysis of

the workings (or *causes*) of the "free-market" mechanisms that generate these empirical

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[46] *Ibid.,* p. 44.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Ibid.*

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circumstances, nor is it intended to be. It is a detailed and potent analysis of the effects of

what might appear to be purely market mechanisms, although Honneth would argue that

changes in the norms of recognition have played a key role in permitting these effects.

Honneth and Hartmann go on to offer a substantial critique of these circumstances, arguing

that previous emancipatory norms and values have been paradoxically eroded. A brief

reiteration of their main critical arguments reveals a potential for critique of the effects of

the free-market and the injustices that can result from this economic system that does not

appear to require the specifically "economic" supporting data that might be required by

Fraser's theoretical model. They argue that these new circumstances are as problematic as

those that pre-dated the developments of the 1960s because individuals are still required to

assume responsibility for states of affairs for which they are not in fact responsible. The

relationship between the misfortune of some and the good fortune of others is still ignored.

"Efforts, successes, and failures are individualized"[49], but this is not the result of a fair

application of the achievement principle. The just application of the achievement principle

relies on there being universal pre-conditions such as adequate education and this is not, in

fact, the case. Class still plays a role in the potential for achievement and market success

can become the only criterion for rewarding achievement.[50] Initiation and maintenance of

intimate relationships have become increasingly dependent on consumption and new forms

of unlimited work require demands on time and increased mobility and relationships are

increasing a matter of utility and compatibility with future mobility demands.[51]

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[49] *Ibid.,* p. 52.
[50] *Ibid.,* pp. 53-54.
[51] *Ibid.,* pp. 55-56. This is a problem in terms of the recognition that is given and received
through love relationships which illustrates that problems of inadequate distribution are not
necessarily solely connected to issues of work-based self-esteem.

As this analysis shows, Honneth's model allows him to identify and acknowledge the intensity of real suffering, thus tying critical theory to real life experiences. Although the esteem that is acquired via the "achievement principle" might appear to only focus on the recognition of a person's contribution to the society's labour, it can also give us access to the role of work for the individual. The suffering and injustice that is identified by Honneth's analysis would not necessarily be revealed by an analysis that focuses on redistribution (or economic analysis alone). Workers may be reasonably well paid (not needing redistribution of resources as such) and still be subjected to injustices of recognition, because of the impact of their working life on their family life or other intimate relationships and the unreasonable demands of being expected to be an "entreployee". This suggests that there is far more to questions of justice that relate to mechanisms of distribution than solely the issue of remuneration.

Whilst Honneth and Hartmann's empirically verifiable or disprovable arguments seem to be able to clearly describe and criticise the broader effects of what might appear to be solely economic injustices, they might still remain problematic for Honneth's critics. Zurn argues that Honneth's justification of fair economic distribution as necessary for participation-promoting self-esteem means that he has to be committed to a theoretical assumption that no aspects of life other than work can fulfil this goal. This "empirically distorting sociological theory"[52] is problematic for Zurn because he argues that Honneth would need to expand the field of work so that it encompasses the other relevant areas. But even if Honneth is committed to the view that work is an important area for obtaining this type of recognition this does not necessarily mean that he has to say that there are no

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[52] Christopher Zurn, 'Recognition, Redistribution and Democracy: Dilemmas of Honneth's Critical Social Theory'; p. 107.

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other situations where self-esteem is promoted or that other parts of life must be subsumed within the world of work.

Honneth actually argues that esteem is also given or withdrawn on the basis of group membership via the wider society's evaluation of the perceived attributes of the particular group. This type of esteem is problematic for Honneth for a number of reasons, but regardless of his concerns he does appear to be aware that there are more ways of obtaining esteem than solely through participation in the work force.[53] To argue that one arena is important does not automatically mean arguing that others are not. However, compared to the other sites that Zurn identifies for generating mechanisms of esteem such as "bowling leagues, reading groups, neighbourhood crime watch groups" it does appear to be a fairly uncontroversial claim that the esteem that is acquired through paid work is more likely to have an impact on the distribution of resources than these mainly voluntary unpaid activities (as Zurn would probably agree).

I have argued that Honneth's theoretical framework is able to describe and analyse the problems of maldistribution that Fraser seeks to address with her "perspectival dualism". I will now contend that it can be particularly insightful, because it actually allows us to comprehend different types of redistribution and distribution in terms of the different types of recognition. This means that Honneth's theory can demonstrate not only why redistribution is important, but also why some types of distribution may be inadequate if

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[53] Honneth considers and rejects the possibility of a fourth principle of recognition that would involve social recognition of cultural groups. See *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; pp. 161-162. Honneth also argues that demands for recognition that might appear to have a communal basis actually have a hidden individualistic character. See p. 163.

they do not address all of the problems that stem from a lack of recognition in one of the types of recognition.

In order to illustrate this point I will return to Fraser's example of a white male skilled worker who becomes unemployed as a result of a speculative corporate merger. Fraser offers these circumstances as an example of a type of injustice of maldistribution that has "little to do with misrecognition" because it is caused by the economically driven profit motive and not by "cultural value patterns" of recognition.[54] Zurn also argues that this worker has "not suffered a recognition injustice" because "he is not a victim of any form of identity-based disrespect or status subordination".[55] While we might concede to Fraser and Zurn that economic considerations have played a major *causal* role in bringing about these particular circumstances, fully comprehending the injustice of this situation and adequately remedying the injustice has not "little", but in fact "a great deal" to do with (mis) recognition in Honneth's terms. Workers in this situation do, in fact, experience their circumstances as an *injustice* that has to do with a lack of recognition of their contribution and needs. This can have severe consequences for their self-respect and self-esteem. The responses of workers to economically driven enforced unemployment (such as the lengthy and ultimately unsuccessful UK miners' strike of 1984-1985) can be understood as struggles for recognition.

The need for recognition that Honneth describes within the sphere of "respect" could motivate a case for legislative controls on an employer's capacity to retrench workers without providing adequate levels of short term financial support, offering redeployment

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[54] Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 35.
[55] Christopher Zurn, 'Recognition, Redistribution and Democracy: Dilemmas of Honneth's Critical Social Theory'; p. 109.

within the new corporation or providing assistance in finding alternative employment. As Honneth argues, the welfare benefits that may be available to support retrenched workers might be understood as an attempt to provide a form of recognition within the sphere of respect and we can question whether such benefits constitute an adequate expression of respect for the members of a society. However, unemployment benefits do not necessarily provide recognition within the sphere of esteem. This helps to explain why unemployment can result in inadequate recognition even if basic physical necessities are being met via the welfare state. Honneth's theoretical framework could also help to explain why schemes such as "work for the dole" may not have the positive effects on the self-esteem of participants that are claimed for them if they do not lead to "real" work or if participation is coerced.[56] Honneth's theory helps to illustrate that self-esteem is at least as important as self-respect when questions of unemployment are being considered, and that the wrong of unemployment may not be entirely a question of maldistribution.

There are other reasons to think that Honneth's theoretical framework can address the broader impact of injustices of distribution that initially appear to occur within the sphere of esteem and to stem from inadequate work circumstances or unemployment. This is not necessarily achieved by "expanding the field of work" as Zurn contends, but by understanding the relationship between the types of recognition in a particular way. Honneth suggests that the types of recognition overlap and sometimes conflict. He argues that this is important because justice need not be restricted to sphere specific appeals, it "can also encompass the innovative examination of the demarcation between the ...

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[56] See Ed Carson, Anthony H. Winefield, Lea Waters, and Lorraine Kerr, 'Work for Dole: a pathway to self-esteem and employment commitment, or the road to frustration?' *Youth Studies Australia* Vol. 22: 4 (2003), pp. 19-26; particularly p. 25 for empirical research that suggests that self-esteem is not enhanced by these schemes, particularly if participation is not voluntary.

spheres".[57] As Honneth points out, the types of recognition not only overlap and sometimes conflict, they actually occur simultaneously within the life of each person and community. Consequently, understanding the full impact of injustice in one sphere may be best achieved not by examining the demarcations between spheres, but by comprehending that there may, in practice, be few demarcations that are not almost entirely porous.

Contrary to Zurn's assertion, this does not mean that one type of recognition has to subsume the other types in order to have an effect on them. The recognition that is given or denied through work (through mechanisms of esteem in Honneth's theoretical framework) necessarily has an impact on the level of recognition that can occur through love and respect. When a worker is compelled to work long hours this may limit the time and energy that is available for intimate relationships and child rearing (recognition through love) regardless of the level of remuneration or esteem that the work generates. If the level of remuneration and/or esteem for particular work is poor this is likely to influence a worker's capacities to have access to the law and demand her or his rights (recognition through respect). Even workers who earn too much to qualify for free legal aid may still be unable to afford to engage top solicitors or barristers to argue their case in court. Financial success and esteemed work status do appear to enhance the ability to influence the process of law making and the political and institutional framework that sustains and implements the law. This is most apparent in the areas of lobbying and political donations.

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[57] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition and Justice'; p. 361.

The permeability of the types of recognition means that employment without any opportunity for socially recognised achievement may be problematic, even if the level of remuneration or share of social goods might appear to be adequate. This is an important consideration because it means that there can be misrecognition in Honneth's terms even if there is no apparent maldistribution. However, this does not mean that recognition and redistribution ought to be understood as analytically distinct aspects of a perspectival dualism. Misrecognition can occur without maldistribution, or in spite of what might be considered to be adequate distribution. But, as I have previously argued in relation to Fraser's example of a retrenched white male skilled worker, maldistribution is closely linked to issues of recognition. Adequate recognition requires the prevention or rectification of maldistribution.

The recognition that is given or denied through love and respect may also influence the possibility of obtaining adequate esteem through work. Suffering abusive personal relationships is unlikely to make it easy for individuals to function effectively at work. Inadequate parenting is connected to poor educational outcomes for children, and this in turn influences the possibility of them going on to obtain work that is fulfilling and economically sustaining. Equal rights legislation makes it possible for more people to have access to work and to claim their right to fair remuneration. Consequently, recognition through respect in Honneth's terms interacts very directly with the recognition that occurs through esteem. As Honneth argues, the welfare state was an attempt at economic redistribution via the recognitive sphere of respect, but this has not been entirely successful. This is partly because the welfare state has been wound back, but also (I would suggest) because recognition through respect without adequate levels of esteem does not

fully resolve the problems of injustice. Human beings require adequate levels of recognition in all three forms. Consequently, unemployment may remain problematic even if material benefits are provided via the mechanisms of the welfare state on the basis of rights. This is because people who are unemployed are denied the necessary opportunities for acquiring self-esteem. Some forms of employment may also fail to provide adequate opportunities for self-esteem regardless of their level of remuneration.

The question for Honneth is not only whether free-markets are a matter of social and political choices, but also if this form of market mechanism is problematic. If Honneth is correct that self-esteem relies largely on the "achievement principle" and achievement for the adult population is judged primarily in terms of involvement in norm-free markets that do not always provide adequate opportunities for esteem, then this is a substantial social justice problem. As Nicholas Smith argues "the issue is not only the indifference of market mechanisms to norms of mutual recognition, but their tendency to subvert those norms". As Smith contends, it is important to identify whether this self-subversive nature is a necessary or accidental feature of the market.[58] If markets necessarily subvert the norms of mutual recognition then there appears to be no hope of achieving adequate recognition in the sphere of esteem for many of the people who must interact in the market. If the subversion of the norms of recognition is accidental then there is a possibility of changing the way that markets are structured and perhaps providing a better opportunity for adequate recognition for people who participate through work.

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[58] Nicholas Smith, 'Recognition, Culture and Economy: Honneth's Debate with Fraser'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have argued that Honneth's theory of recognition can effectively describe and criticise the multiple forms of injustice that arise through inadequate distribution and redistribution of resources. Honneth claims that the current relatively unfettered economic structures are a product of certain social and political decisions including the tacit consent of those who are affected. This does not mean that he has to argue that the norms of non-interference can actually explain the workings of the free-market. Even if his theory cannot fully explain the workings of the economy he has, in fact, used recognition theory to provide a comprehensive critique of the unjust effects of the economic system. This critique highlights forms of injustice that might not be apparent if the focus was purely on economic factors such as the wage levels or buying power of workers.

Honneth's highlighting of the importance of work for understanding economic injustices does not commit him to the assumption that no other aspect of life can provide self-esteem, or that the field of work must be expanded to encompass other relevant areas. In fact, as I have argued, his theoretical framework can help us to comprehend how economic injustices fit within a broad framework of justice and injustice because distribution and redistribution necessarily impact on all types of recognition and all types of recognition impact on the mechanisms of distribution and redistribution. Focusing on Honneth's broad account of "recognition" not only ensures that "redistribution" is given due consideration, it helps to explain what "due consideration" might be and why it is so important.

Chapter Four - Problems with the Achievement Principle

Honneth argues that in addition to loving care and legal recognition, human beings need "a form of social esteem that allows them to relate positively to their concrete traits and abilities".[1] He also argues that self-esteem depends on the existence of a "shared value-horizon" where members of a society "share an orientation to those values and goals that indicate to each other the significance or contribution of their qualities for the life of the other".[2] So mechanisms of social esteem do not necessarily recognise all of the "qualities that characterize people in their personal difference".[3] These qualities are measured in terms of "social worth" by the "degree to which they appear to be in a position to contribute to the realization of societal goals ... because their abilities and achievements are judged intersubjectively".[4]

Honneth contends that the qualities that are valued by any given society are historically variable. Pre-modern societies were structured in terms of "status" groups where the esteem that was awarded to individuals from the broader society depended on their group membership, and not on their own abilities or contributions (although there was an opportunity for individual talents to be recognised within the group).[5] For example, a peasant could expect a reasonably low level of esteem and the lord of the manor a relatively high level of esteem, regardless of their own particular talents or abilities. Although such systems were relatively stable because of the pre-established levels of status for members of social groups, they relied to a great extent on what Honneth terms "a

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[1] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 121.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 122.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 123.

religious or metaphysical heritage" which anchored ethical values and made them

relatively uncontentious and shared throughout the society.[6]

Honneth maintains that modern societies are less hierarchical and more open to different

values. This is a positive development for Honneth, because modern societies are more

likely to provide opportunities for esteem for members who have a variety of different

modes of self-realisation. However, he admits that including this diversity of personal

goals is problematic, because there is no agreed "objective" evaluation system (i.e. a

system that reflects a human independent objective reality) that can be used to measure the

plurality of values that has ensued. The interpretations of the dominant members of the

community still tend to carry more weight, and the achievements of dominant groups

continue to be more publicly lauded.[7] Honneth points out that having an opportunity to

acquire esteem depends on certain pre-conditions. If individuals can be freed from being

"collectively denigrated" this will increase the possibility of them being esteemed for their

own accomplishments and abilities.[8]

If the members of a society are able to have their achievements recognised because they

are of value to the other members of the society this creates relationships of solidarity in

which "subjects mutually sympathize with their various different ways of life because,

amongst themselves, they esteem each other symmetrically".[9] If every member of a society

is able to have self-esteem this is a condition of stable social solidarity. Honneth contends

that social solidarity requires much more than mere toleration of others in the society, we

must actively care about what is individual and particular in others, and be concerned

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[6] *Ibid.,* p. 124.
[7] *Ibid.,* pp. 126-127.
[8] *Ibid.,* p. 130.
[9] *Ibid.,* p. 128.

about the development of their characteristics. Freedom from disrespect is a pre-requisite for these relationships of social solidarity.[10]

This account of the importance of acquiring esteem through personal achievements, and of the connections between esteem, achievements and social solidarity raises a number of questions. In the first section of this chapter, I will focus on Honneth's account of the mechanisms that generate esteem in contemporary societies. I argue that there are at least two different mechanisms of esteem and contend that Honneth's theory can help to show how these different types of esteem can have the potential to be either mutually supportive or conflicting. In the second section, I consider Honneth's account of the role of achievement and ask whether it is broad enough to encompass all of the activities that can count (or ought to count) as achievements. I contend that different types of activities cannot be easily divided into "achievements" and "contributions" and that there are elements of competition and cooperation in most of the activities that generate esteem. In the third section, I focus on social solidarity and argue that the recognition that occurs in the field of paid work can potentially have a broader "value-horizon" than other forms of recognition. This means that the role of achievement in connection to social solidarity is particularly strong. I conclude that esteem, achievement and social solidarity are connected, but a broad account of each of these facets of human interaction is required to fully comprehend these connections.

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[10] *Ibid.,* p. 130.

Honneth's account of the recognition that occurs through esteem focuses on the recognition of individual differences, and whether these differences are valued (that is, positively recognised) or not by a society. However, human differences can operate on at least two levels. Differences may be the different capacities that can be developed throughout our lives such as the traits, abilities and achievements that Honneth wants to prioritise, but they may also be what might be termed "innate" characteristics. These innate characteristics are usually understood as "given", or at least hard to change. They are features that we have (or are deemed by other to have) and not things that we necessarily chose to have or develop.

This "given-ness" works on two different levels. Firstly, we are born with some "innate" features such as skin colour, genitalia and congenital physical or mental (dis) abilities. These characteristics are "given" because they are not chosen by us. Secondly, there is the value (or lack of value) that is attached to these "innate" features. A child is born with particular skin colour, genitalia and (dis) abilities into a particular social context. The esteem (or lack of esteem) that these differences attract from the broader society is also "given" because it is beyond the control of the individual. In these circumstances, a social "identity" and its associated levels of recognition can be, and frequently is, bestowed by others (often by dominant groups) along with a pre-ordained positive or negative evaluation.[11] Members of groups may also share (or be presumed by others to share) characteristics such as social class (and its associated wealth or poverty), ethnicity,

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[11] It is not my intention to condone this form of "essentialism" which views identities as fixed, given or beyond individual control. My intention is to differentiate this way of allocating social esteem from the mechanisms that Honneth seeks to prioritise.

nationality and religion. A person or group member has these qualities, but they often do not choose to have them. We might describe this type of recognition of identity(ies) as recognition of our "being" rather than the recognition of our "doing".[12]

Honneth may be correct in his assertion that hierarchical "class-specific' criteria are no longer the primary way of allocating social esteem in many modern societies. But supposedly objective "innate" personal and group characteristics do play a major part in pre-ordaining and controlling the possibilities for social esteem. Lack of recognition or misrecognition on the basis of innate or supposedly innate differences such as gender, "race", ethnicity or sexual orientation is the focus of many social struggles that are characterised as "identity politics". These struggles for adequate recognition of identity or identities have tended to be addressed in many contemporary societies (to the extent that they have been addressed) by legal sanctions that seek to prohibit behaviour such as sexual discrimination, racial discrimination or discrimination on the basis of disability.

In terms of Honneth's theoretical framework he reinterprets the problem of lack of esteem on the basis of "innate" characteristics as a problem of lack of respect. He argues that many of the demands for recognition of cultural groups aim to eliminate the social discrimination that prevents members of the group from "making use of universal basic rights".[13] But, even if this response could adequately address a lack of recognition of individuals or groups on the basis of supposedly "innate" identities this would not resolve the question of achieving adequate esteem. As Honneth argues, seeking esteem for

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[12] Jean Philippe Deranty, Danielle Petheridge and John Rundell, 'Themes and Dialogues in Contemporary French Critical Theory' in Jean Philippe Deranty, Danielle Petheridge, John Rundell and Robert Sinnerbrink (eds), *Recognition, Work, Politics: New Directions in French Critical Theory* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007); p. 9.
[13] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 163.

individual modes of self-realisation requires more than a framework of legal equality.[14]

Adequate recognition of some types of difference can require affording different, and not

equal, levels of recognition.

Honneth wants to resist the tendency to understand struggles for recognition solely in

terms of identity politics. He focuses on the esteem that is given for individual

contributions to societal goals through the application of our particular traits and abilities.

This has been criticised as being too "narrow", because it does not appear to adequately

deal with the recognition of cultural identity.[15] But what appears to be a narrowness of

focus may actually allow us to comprehend that social esteem has at least two distinct

dimensions and that these dimensions can support each other or conflict. Firstly, there is a

dimension of the struggles of numerous individuals and groups for adequate recognition of

their cultural/ethnic/gender/racial/religious/sexual identity within a framework where some

modes of being are automatically privileged and others automatically denigrated.

Secondly, there is the dimension of the recognition (or lack of recognition) of particular

achievements or contributions of the members of a society that could have the potential to

support the "shared value-horizon" of that society, regardless of the "innate" differences

that may be present in personal or group identities. Honneth argues that freedom from

denigration in the first of these dimensions is a pre-requisite for having the possibility of

being adequately recognised for our own accomplishments and abilities.[16] So having equal

universal respect as a human being is a pre-requisite for acquiring adequate esteem for our

different individual talents and abilities.

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[14] *Ibid.,* p. 166.
[15] Simon Thompson. *The Politics of Recognition: A Critical Introduction*; p. 94.
[16] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*;
p. 130.

As Honneth recognises, these two dimensions of esteem are problematically interwoven in contemporary society. This means that the particular achievements of socially denigrated individuals or groups can be hidden or demeaned, regardless of their actual level of achievement and/or its contribution to social solidarity. Social values and goals dictate not only which forms of identity are privileged or denigrated, but also which traits and attributes will count as achievements. As Honneth contends, within the framework of "loose-knit social relations" a "one-sided interpretation of the achievement principle" is allowed to dominate.[17]

Section Two - Achievement

Honneth's description of the achievements that are generated by our particular abilities and traits appears to have changed from a broad framework that encompassed a variety of socially valid achievements to a narrower focus on paid work and questions of the division of labour. The broader account reflected concerns about the "degree of social acceptance forthcoming for a person's method of social-realization within … a given society" and pointed out that there is a hierarchy of societal values that "downgrade individual forms of living and convictions for being inferior or deficient".[18] This account also highlights that individuals can be robbed of the potential for positive social acceptance of their abilities.[19] The narrower description of achievements is concerned with "any kind of contribution to society, which counts as work" and with the "dimension of social struggles over the

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[17] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 142.
[18] Axel Honneth, 'Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition,' *Political Theory* Vol 20: 2 (1992), pp.187-201; p.191.
[19] *Ibid.,* pp. 194-195.

question of what counts as work".[20] For Honneth, this is an important clarification because

he does not want the concept of achievement to include some of the sources of esteem that

depend on the identity that we have (our "being") as opposed to the things that we achieve

(our "doing"). For Honneth, the cultural identities of individuals and group should not be

the source of esteem, although he maintains that disrespect and denigration on the basis of

a cultural identity needs to be overcome before individuals can obtain adequate esteem for

their own achievements. This does not mean that lack of recognition for our "being" is

unimportant, but rather that it is an issue of disrespect that is addressed by universal

respect and not by esteem in Honneth's terms.[21]

Honneth's focus on the achievements that are attained within the field of paid work

provides significant insights. The world of work has enormous impact on the possibilities

for self-esteem for those who are in paid work. Honneth maintains that work is not solely

about economic subsistence and he rejects Habermas's classification of work (or labour) as

an instrumental activity that is focused only on meeting material needs. For Habermas, the

instrumental acts of work are norm-free, although they are regulated by the communicative

interactions that occur via cultural spheres and discourses. For Honneth, Habermas's

understanding of work is conceptually too thin because it does not include a moral

dimension. This means that Habermas loses the ability to distinguish between different

types of work that offer more of less initiative and self-direction. Honneth argues that

Habermas needs to be able to differentiate between meaningful and non-meaningful

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[20] Axel Honneth, 'An Interview with Axel Honneth'; p. 274.
[21] Jean-Philippe Deranty argues convincingly that Honneth's model does not lose the
capacity to address these struggles of "identity politics" because they are encompassed
with the sphere of respect as issues of universal and special rights. See *Beyond
Communication. A Critical Study of Axel Honneth's Social Philosophy*; pp. 222-223.

work.[22] In Honneth's theoretical framework there needs to be an opportunity for workers to use and develop their own abilities and traits and to be adequately recognised for their achievements. Achievements need to be based on more than "simple economic luck" that creates wealth via speculation on stocks and shares.[23] The importance of having adequate esteem also means that being denied an opportunity to work is as much a problem of lack of social esteem as it is a problem of economic hardship.

However, Honneth's narrower focus on work means that many of the achievements that can generate self-esteem might appear to be omitted or inadequately emphasised by a superficial reading of his account. Many members of contemporary societies are not in paid employment because they are too young, too old, unable to find paid work, or choosing not to work for a number of reasons.[24] An account of the role of achievement and its connections to self-esteem and social solidarity needs to be wide enough to explain how the members of a society who are not in paid employment might acquire recognition in the sphere of esteem. This is important, because a theory of society should be able to describe a whole society and provide a diagnosis of social injustice that takes account of the activities of all members of the society.

Many of the abilities and traits that are essential for achievement in unpaid activities such as parenting and caring for the sick or the elderly are in fact undervalued and inadequately

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[22] Axel Honneth, 'Work and Instrumental Action: On the Normative Basis of Critical Theory' in Charles W. Wright (ed), *The Fragmented World of the Social, Essays in Social and Political* Philosophy, (Albany: State University of New York Press,1995); p. 45-46.

[23] See Honneth's account of these problems in 'An Interview with Axel Honneth'; p. 267.

[24] For example, in January 2009 the total Australian population was more than 21, 580,000, but the number of employed persons in December 2008 was 10,747,400, only around fifty percent of the population. See http://www.abs.gov.au/. The number of people in paid employment in many developing countries is, of course, much higher because many children and older people are in paid work because there is no state provision of education, retirement pensions or unemployment benefits.

recognised, but this is a reflection of a "one-sided interpretation of the achievement principle" that Honneth identifies.[25] As Honneth suggests, the interpretations of the dominant members of a society carry more weight, and the achievements of dominant groups are more publicly lauded.[26] This is the first of two problems that Honneth recognises as inherent in the interpretation of "achievement" in contemporary societies. I will begin by discussing the question of what counts as an achievement, and then go on to consider the problem of lack of recognition for those who do not (or cannot) achieve according to the socially accepted norms.

Firstly, Honneth points out that the principle of achievement is narrowly construed so that some accomplishments are not counted as work.[27] He argues that this can be understood as a type of "naturalistic thinking" where the efforts of particular groups are not considered to be achievements because they are assumed to be part of an "innate" nature.[28] For example, the achievements of child rearing and managing a household are undervalued on two levels. Firstly, these achievements are not really a result of a woman's own effort because it assumed that women are naturally like that, so they are just part of the "innate" nature of women. Secondly, what women are like is allegedly not very valuable, so the achievements are undervalued because they are associated with the presumed lower social status of women.[29]

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[25] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 142.
[26] Axel Honneth*, The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; pp. 126-127.
[27] Axel Honnneth, 'An Interview with Axel Honneth'; p. 274.
[28] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 148.
[29] *Ibid.* For further discussion of this issue see, Iris Marion Young, 'Recognition of Love's Labour' in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds), *Recognition and Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. pp. 189-214, particularly pp. 200-201, and Honneth's reply in the same volume, *Ibid.* pp. 361-363.

Jonathan Seglow explores this type of separation of the activities that count as achievements in some depth. He distinguishes "achievement" and "contribution" as two different modes of esteem and argues that Honneth puts these forms of esteem together without recognising the difference between them. Seglow contends that the esteem that is earned through social "achievements" such as science, business and the arts has recognised standards of attainment and grading, and is intrinsically competitive. However, Seglow contends, the esteem that stems from social "contributions" such as childcare, domestic labour and voluntary work need not involve graded judgements of performance.[30] Seglow contends that Honneth "doesn't see the tension between the two modes of esteem", but it appears that Honneth is well aware of the "naturalistic thinking" that currently undervalues parenting and care work.[31]

Although Seglow's separation of esteem into competitive and graded "achievement" as opposed to uncompetitive and ungraded "contribution" is intended to explain how contributions could foster social solidarity (even if "achievements" may not always do so), it is problematic on a number of grounds. The fields of science, business and the arts do involve a high degree of competition between individuals, and between organizations or corporations, but they also rely on a degree of co-operation and facilitation of the activities of others. In many instances, co-operation actually enhances the possibilities for achievement of all of the participants. Science relies on academic and industry-specific sharing of knowledge. The benefits of co-operation for businesses are so substantial that they are curtailed by legal prohibitions of activities such as industry cartels. Individual

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[30] Jonathan Seglow, 'Rights, Contributions, Achievement and the World: Some thoughts on Honneth's Recognitive Ideal,' *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 8 (2009), pp. 61-75; p. 69.
[31] *Ibid.,* p. 70.

advancement in all of these fields also relies at least to some extent on skill sharing, mentoring and mutual support. The proliferation of scientific, industry, and arts associations and organizations suggests that collaboration is widespread in the activities of science, business and art.

The fields of childcare, domestic labour and volunteering may appear to be less competitive. However, the skills of childcare and domestic workers are appraised in the same way that skills are assessed in other workplaces, and their career advancement and associated remuneration also depends on having superior skills, or competing for supervisory positions or jobs in more prestigious workplaces. Volunteering is not directly connected to financial rewards, but voluntary and not-for-profit organizations compete for donations and government grants and volunteers often play an active part in these competitive environments. The most skilled volunteers are awarded the highest levels of esteem within voluntary organizations and the wider community. The lack of appropriate social esteem and associated remuneration for care workers (such as those who care for the elderly) does not necessarily mean that their duties involve "a modicum of skill".[32] In fact, the multiplicity of complex physical, mental, emotional and social skills that are involved in care work mean that many workers experience "burn out".

Seglow argues that our society does not publicly grade parenting as we do paid occupations.[33] This contention may reflect a prevailing perception that underestimates the importance of parenting, but it fails to recognise that parenting is the subject of substantial social meritocracy and sanctions (although they may be less overt than the more obviously competitive grading that occurs within paid occupations). Poor parenting can result in the

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[32] *Ibid.,* p. 69.
[33] *Ibid.,* p. 70.

temporary or permanent removal of children from their parents in the same way that poor work performance in paid occupations can result in dismissal. In fact, as Seglow admits, successful parenting is viewed as an achievement.[34] Parents compete to provide the best opportunities for their children in order to enhance the social esteem of both parent(s) and child(ren). By choosing the most prestigious schools many parents seek a competitive edge for their offspring not only to attempt to ensure academic success, but also to secure a place for them in the upper echelons of the established social hierarchies. This seems to be as much, if not more, of a reflection of the "meritocratic ethic that achievement involves" than it is of a "communitarian ethos of contribution".[35] Seglow is correct in his assertion that there are competing moments of meritocratic achievement and communitarian contribution within the current frameworks of social esteem. But, these meritocratic and collaborative tensions do not appear to map as clearly on to particular activities as he suggests. Science, business and art are not all about achievement. Care work, volunteering and parenting are not all about contribution. There are aspects of competitive achievement and communitarian contribution in all of these activities.

Although Honneth wants to focus on the importance of individual achievements, it may not be currently possible to entirely separate the assessment of the "achievements" or "contributions" that Seglow identifies from the social interpretations that are attached to particular identities. The tendency to valorise the "achievements" of paid work and undervalue the "contributions" of poorly paid care work and unpaid volunteering and parenting indicates that the recognition that is attached to different forms of activity is, as Honneth recognises, closely interwoven with the recognition that is attached to particular identities. However, this is a problem of contemporary society's interpretation of

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[34] *Ibid.*

[35] *Ibid.*

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achievements and not necessarily a flaw in Honneth's theoretical framework. It indicates that much of the interpretation of what counts as an achievement may depend on the success or failure of some of the struggles of "identity politics". As Honneth maintains, being free from systematic denigration on the basis of some aspects of identity (such as female gender) does appear to be a pre-requisite for having an equal possibility of attaining social esteem for some types of achievements.

Honneth raises a second problem with contemporary interpretations of the achievement principle that addresses the issues of meritocracy and competition even more directly. Even if particular achievements are recognised and awarded social esteem there is no guarantee that every member of a society will be able to achieve. If esteem is granted on the basis of personal attributes and traits this can be (and has been) used to justify the lack of recognition of those who do not (or cannot) achieve according to the socially accepted norms. Honneth contends that the extreme inequalities that could be justified in this way were controlled in the past at least to some extent by state welfare programs that provide some protection (via the sphere of equal respect) from the outcomes that would ensue from an unfettered application of the achievement principle.[36] However, if human beings require recognition in all three of the spheres that Honneth describes, offering recognition within the sphere of respect may not provide adequate recognition within the sphere of esteem. Having an adequate amount of respect may often be necessary for establishing an adequate level of esteem, but it is not sufficient.

Although the achievement principle offers an increase in possibilities for acquiring esteem because the limits of "estate" based esteem can be overcome, it also offers an increase in

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[36] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; pp. 148-149.

possibilities for failing to achieve.[37] This is not only because the rigid models of the past had clearly limits to what was possible, but also because the circumstances of contemporary society have meant that some individuals are required to achieve success in more activities. For example, many women who were previously required to primarily be successful mothers, partners and homemakers are now also expected to achieve in the world of paid work. This increases the opportunities for success, but also increases the possibility, and probability, of failure. For workers who also have care responsibilities, being formally recognised (in the sphere of respect) by legal "equal opportunities" legislation that attempts to prevent workplace discrimination only provides a partial response to broader problems of lack of esteem.

Individualising the failure to achieve is problematic. But there are some occasions where individualising the successful achievements that stem from individual traits and abilities appears to be able to counteract or even overcome the prevailing patterns of social denigration that are the subject of identity politics. Success in fields of work that are esteemed can mean that individuals are able to acquire high levels of social esteem regardless of the lack of respect that may be more generally targeted towards their gender, "race", ethnicity, sexual orientation or other supposedly "innate" characteristics. For example, female politicians and business executives can be awarded high levels of social esteem, particularly if any care activities that they may do outside of their working role are underplayed or non-existent. Others who may risk denigration on the basis of their ethnicity or sexual orientation can avoid some of the more general approbation if they are successful in socially esteemed professions such as medicine or the law. So the relationship between the spheres of recognition may not always be a two-step process

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[37] Nicholas Smith, 'Work and the Struggle for Recognition,' *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 8 (2009), pp. 46-60; p. 57.

where equal respect is a pre-condition for adequate esteem. Esteem may generate, or at least enhance, the opportunity for equal respect.

The possibility of failure to achieve in the workplace is particularly important in Honneth's description of the problems of recognition in contemporary societies. He argues that there have been changes in the way that work is structured and managed which make it harder for individuals to achieve social esteem, and harder for their work to be understood as a contribution to social solidarity.[38] For example, since the 1980s, there has been increasing focus on shareholder-oriented management that constrains or negates the needs of other stakeholders. Work places have become more project-oriented and workers are required to have more self-responsibility. As Honneth and Hartman put it, workers have become an "entreployee" rather than an employee.[39] These "entreployees" have to assume responsibility for their own fates. This supports new justifications for social inequality, injustice, or discrimination. If workers fail, it is assumed to be their own fault and not a failure of workplace organization or managerial processes. Honneth points out that class-theoretical reconstructions of workplace injustices are no longer accurate because higher-level employees are also affected. This is an important observation because it highlights that even highly paid work can provide an inadequate level of recognition.

The detrimental impact on recognition of these changes in the workplace does not only occur in the sphere of esteem. The private sphere of love and professional-public sphere of esteem have become blurred. Emotional skills are included in utility-based work processes because friendship-like relationships in the work place are encouraged.[40] But economic

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[38] See Martin Hartmann and Axel Honneth, 'Paradoxes of Capitalism'; pp. 41-58.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[40] *Ibid.*,

imperatives also intrude into intimate relationship because friendships come to be viewed in instrumental terms. This problematic blurring is further exacerbated because the initiation and maintenance of couple relationships have become increasingly dependent on consumption. Unlimited work requires demands on time and increased mobility and relationships are increasing a matter of utility and compatibility with future mobility demands.

Honneth and Hartmann argue that new forms of project-based work situations do not fully recognise individual achievements. They also point out that prior to the 1980s there was a universal right to real income that was not linked to the market value of the claimant, but that is now eroded with the work for the dole mentality. Welfare state benefits are no longer seen as rights based claims (within the sphere of respect in Honneth's theoretical terms).[41] The relationship between the misfortune of some and the good fortune of others is ignored because "efforts, successes, and failures are individualised".[42] There are pre-condition for the just application of the achievement principle, such as providing an adequate standard of education for everyone, but this is not available for all members of society. Although class barriers might appear to have become less relevant, class still affects the possibility of being able to achieve. Market success is the dominant criterion for rewarding achievement and this means that many less lucrative but very important achievements are undervalued.

This account clearly emphasises that there are substantial barriers to the possibility of acquiring adequate esteem for the traits and abilities that could be used in the workplace. It also illuminates the potential for these barriers in the sphere of esteem to result in lack of

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[41] *Ibid.,* p. 51.
[42] *Ibid.,* p. 52.

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recognition in the spheres of love and respect. Conditions of employment make a difference to the capacity and opportunities that individuals might have to be effectively involved in the family and love relationships. This can happen because work leaves little time for close personal relationships, but inadequate recognition at work can also have far reaching and damaging psychological affects that reduce a person's capacity to love or be loved. Success in highly esteemed work activities is likely to influence our capacity to obtain legal rights and to dictate what those rights will actually be. This is partly because of the wealth that success may bring, but also because of the social esteem that is generated through achievements. As Honneth and Hartman contend, lack of welfare safeguards (in the sphere of respect) can further erode the possibilities for obtaining adequate esteem.

This argument in support of these strong connections and overlaps between the different types of recognition is important at a number of conceptual levels. Firstly, in terms of the individual, the recognition or lack of recognition that each person acquires in any one sphere is likely have some impact on all of the aspects of their life. Successful recognition in one sphere appears to result in more likelihood of successful recognition in other spheres. Lack of recognition or misrecognition in one sphere seems to increase the chances of inadequate recognition in other spheres. This appears to apply to both the recognition that a person gets and the recognition that they are able to give. Secondly, in terms of a whole society and its various activities, inadequate structures of recognition in family and close relationships, legal rights, or work and other cooperative activities appears to have a flow-on effect in other spheres. These connections between the types of recognition are important for understanding what ought to count as an achievement, and why all members of a society need to have the opportunity be able to achieve and to

acquire an adequate level of esteem for their achievements. The relationship between the different forms of recognition is also important to the issue of social solidarity.

Section Three - Social Solidarity

Honneth argues that "solidarity" between members of a group arises because there is an "all-dominating agreement on a practical goal that instantly generates an intersubjective value-horizon, in which participants learn to recognise the significance of the abilities and traits of the others to the same degree".[43] This explains how cooperation towards a common goal (or threat) might generate and sustain social solidarity but, as Honneth admits, this does not explain how solidarity arises in a situation where there are multiple individual goals. He argues that individual achievements can only be awarded mutual esteem in relationships where they "appear to be significant for shared praxis".[44]

The possibilities of agreement within a shared value-horizon and the issue of where such a horizon might fall can appear to be different for each of the types of recognition. In many standard accounts, the boundary of the sphere of love appears to fall around a family, a group of friends or other small social group. Few ethical theories expect that our love could be extended equally to everyone in a particular society, or that we might be capable of loving everyone in the world. The possibility of maintaining "solidarity" in this sphere ends at the boundary of family and friends.

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[43] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 128.
[44] *Ibid.,* p. 129.

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In Honneth's theory, and in many other accounts, the sphere of respect should apply universally to everyone because respect is given on the basis of shared human dignity, and the sphere of esteem applies within particular communities that have a shared value-horizon.   But, on reflection, the actual boundaries of these types of recognition appear to be inverted. In terms of respect, moral rights are closely tied to legal rights. The possibility of having legal rights is bound to nations where these rights are established and enforced, and these rights end at the borders of the nation where they cease to function and other forms of legislation might take over. The territory where a state has power is in practice more restricted than the whole realm of persons and respect applies only to co-nationals. Of course, there are a number of international agreements on universal rights that are intended to apply regardless of state borders, but they are based on each state's willingness to comply and international enforcement is limited. In the main, the possibility of maintaining "solidarity" in the sphere of respect ends at the boundary of the state. The challenges of multiculturalism and the legislation that seeks to alleviate the struggles of "identity politics" also appear to mainly be addressed (if they are addressed) within the bounds of state borders.

Esteem (if it is understood to be limited to the achievements of the workplace) might initially appear to have a boundary that falls around a particular workplace, or perhaps around an industry or profession where the standards of achievement for that type of work are decided and policed. However, the field of work also has the capacity to offer a particularly wide value-horizon that can far outreach the boundaries that appear to circumscribe the spheres of love or respect. Recognised achievements in work can expand the possibilities for individual recognition so that they reach beyond the laws and institutions of a particular state. Work can be the springboard that allows those who have

the desired work abilities and traits to emigrate to a different society that has more legal

rights, and/or offers better support for the relationships of mutual recognition that occur in

the sphere of love. This means that the sphere of esteem may have a greater claim to

universality and a particularly powerful capacity for generating recognition and expanding

the value-horizons of the spheres of love and respect. The possibility of there being such a

wide boundary to the value-horizon of the field of esteem accentuates the problem of

understanding work as a value-free activity that is concerned only with instrumental goals.

The concept of "social solidarity" appears to imply some form of social inclusion, and to

involve notions of belonging and communality. This raises a problem for Honneth's

account of social progress. Honneth contends that progress in the conditions of recognition

takes place "along the two dimensions of individualization and social inclusion".[45] But

how could the individualisation that occurs through the competitive field of the

achievement principal possibly be compatible with increased social inclusion? On the face

of it, competition does not seem to foster inclusion and relationships of solidarity. In fact,

social solidarity and cooperation might seem to require some suspension of the most

individualistic and self-serving aspects of competition. As Seglow argues,

individualisation and social solidarity seem to result in quite different visions of a good

society.[46] A focus on individual achievements suggests a society where the achievers

acquire social esteem and those who do not achieve must be resigned to accepting that

outcome. In contrast, a focus on social inclusion or social solidarity suggests that

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[45] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*;
p. 186.
[46] Jonathan Seglow, 'Rights, Contributions, Achievement and the World: Some thoughts
on Honneth's Recognitive Ideal'; p. 70.

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individual activities and achievements are viewed as contributions to the "common needs and interests" of the society.[47]

It is difficult to evaluate the role that recognition plays in social inclusion within established societies. As I have previously argued, the forms of esteem that generate and support social inclusion, attachments and belonging are not always the result of individual choices or decision. We do not initially choose to be born within a particular culture, ethnicity, nationality, gender or religion. People do not usually decide to be included in a society; they already belong (or are excluded) because of criteria that are not necessarily a matter of choice.[48] It can be difficult to separate the social inclusion/exclusion that results from "innate" factors from the social inclusion/exclusion that results from personal achievements. However, in the process of immigration people make a conscious decision to join a particular society, and the members of established societies chose to include or exclude particular individuals according to certain criteria.

I contend that Honneth's theoretical framework of spheres of recognition can provide particular insights into the processes of immigration and the mechanisms that foster or discourage social solidarity. This is an important contribution of Honneth's theory, because an analysis of the attributes that are recognised by a society can reveal a great deal about a society's values and goals. This has substantial ramifications for the notion of "social solidarity", and for understanding the importance of achievements and esteem.

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[47] *Ibid.*
[48] Bart van Leeuwen, 'A formal Recognition of Social Attachments: Expanding Axel Honneth's Theory of Recognition,' *Inquiry* Vol. 50:2 (2007), pp. 180-205, p. 188.

Conclusion to Part Two - Major Challenges to Honneth's Theory

I will conclude Part Two of this thesis by summing up the major objections to Honneth's theory that I have considered in Chapters Two, Three and Four and the responses that I have argued we should make to them.

1.   That Honneth's theory of mutual recognition is empirically unrealisable because most individuals do not currently have the capacities that reciprocal recognition seems to require.

Although I concede that creating and sustaining intersubjective relationships of adequate recognition is a complex and difficult task, this does not mean that these relationships cannot be realised. Many individuals do not currently have adequate recognition or are incapable of giving it, but that is a problem that stems from particular social and political circumstances and not an indication that better relationships of mutual recognition are an unattainable goal. The capacities that are necessary for adequate reciprocal recognition may be dormant or repressed and social circumstances of domination and oppression do appear to play a large part in perpetuating this situation. However, these circumstances are not, as Markell argues, "irreducible conditions of social and political life",[49] they may well be, as Honneth contends, pathologies that might someday be overcome at least to some extent. Markell argues that the root cause of oppression of others is unrealistic expectations of the possibility of sovereign agency. Even if that were the case, the circumstances of domination and oppression are unlikely to change without some attempt at establishing relationships of mutual recognition, which in turn might give us a more realistic sense of

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[49] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*; p. 4.

the actual circumstances of our existence and the possibilities for more fully realised recognition relationships.

2.	That even if the goal of mutual recognition is possible, it is undesirable because it requires the recognition of pre-formed identities and because it might cause more suffering.

Honneth's theoretical model does not depend on recognition of pre-formed identities. In fact, he consciously resists the tendency to base relationships of mutual recognition on who we are, as opposed to what we do. This does not mean that Honneth is oblivious to the struggles of the "politics of identity" that seek to overcome the established structures of disrespect for particular individuals or groups on the basis of their "innate" (or supposedly "innate") qualities. Honneth argues that freedom from this type of lack of recognition is a pre-requisite for obtaining adequate recognition for our particular traits and abilities.

Struggles for recognition do often result in suffering for those who are compelled to struggle in this way. However, the cause of this suffering is the circumstances that prompt the struggle and not a pathological need for recognition that only arises for people who are oppressed. Honneth's theory explains both the difficulties of establishing and maintaining adequate mutual recognition and the circumstances that may arise when these difficulties are not overcome. He highlights the importance of struggles for recognition and argues for a better understanding of the moral motivations for these struggles. This does not mean that he argues that the need for adequate recognition necessarily obliges people who are oppressed to seek recognition from those who perpetrate their oppression. Nor does it mean that conflict is at the root of all relationships of mutual recognition, even if it may be

part of overcoming inadequate recognition or misrecognition in some circumstances. Honneth's theory highlights that it is important to pay attention to the struggles that stem from inadequate recognition and to avoid misinterpreting these struggles (as motivated by self-interest or as an amoral struggle for self-preservation), and demonising or dehumanising those who struggle.

3.   That even if mutual recognition is possible and desirable, conflictual struggles are not the best instrument to generate mutual recognition.

Conflictual struggles may not be the best or only way of generating mutual recognition, but they may be the inevitable outcome of neglecting to provide more constructive mechanisms for social improvements. Overcoming oppression does require those who oppress others to acknowledge their own finitude and the impossibility of a certain kind of sovereign agency. This type of self-knowledge requires genuine interaction in relationships of mutual recognition with those who are being oppressed in order to foster self-reflection and responsibility for one's own actions.

If there is no other way of overcoming oppression conflict may be the only available avenue of seeking justice. Oppressed people require the capacity to be able to articulate their circumstances in order to obtain compassion and retribution, and to be properly heard. Where this does not happen, conflictual struggles for recognition may occur. This conflict may be an invaluable indicator of injustice.

4.   That even if mutual recognition is possible and desirable, and Honneth is right about the role of social struggles in bringing it about, mutual recognition may not be the only thing that is required for addressing injustice.

Distribution and redistribution of material goods are vital components of establishing and sustaining relationships of adequate mutual recognition for everyone. Critics have argued that Honneth's theory cannot deal adequately with many types of economic injustice that occur through the mechanisms of distribution and redistribution of material wealth. They also question whether mutual recognition is the best means of making all of the changes that are needed.

Honneth's theoretical framework helps to explain the moral basis that underpins the need for adequate and fair allocation of material goods in two ways. Firstly, the need for adequate recognition in the sphere of respect (via social rights that guarantee a minimum of essential goods) explains the moral motivation for a fair redistribution of basic resources on the basis of universal rights. Secondly, the need for adequate recognition of our achievements in the sphere of esteem explains the moral (and not merely self-serving) underpinnings of the need for adequate distribution through fair remuneration. If injustice in redistribution or distribution is not understood as merely a matter of bad luck or self-inflicted inadequacy, but actually (as Honneth argues) as an "institutional expression of social disrespect"[50] this provides good reason to question the social and political circumstances that foster and perpetuate these injustices.

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[50] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 114.

The possibility of using Honneth's theoretical framework to describe and criticise the injustice of inadequate distribution and redistribution of resources depends upon comprehending the types of recognition in a particular way. As Honneth argues, each of the three spheres of recognition contains a "normative potential" and the spheres can overlap and conflict. I contend that this is particularly important in relation to the sphere of esteem, which Honneth argues relies on the achievements that are the result of the application of our particular abilities and traits. Despite Zurn's assertion that Honneth overemphasises the field of work so that it encompasses other relevant areas, there appears to be good reason to pay attention to the special capacity that work has to influence the mechanisms of esteem and social solidarity. This brings us to another set of challenges to Honneth's theory:

5.   That Honneth's theory gives a misleading account of social esteem in modern
         societies.

This objection entails a number of other subordinate issues or objections that concern the mechanisms of esteem, Honneth's account of achievements, and whether esteem and achievements are connected to social solidarity in the way that Honneth claims. As I have argued, there are at least two different mechanisms of esteem in contemporary societies. The mechanisms of esteem that are connected to the supposedly "innate" characteristics of who we are appear to be the subject of many of the struggles that concern the "politics of identity". These struggles involve challenging the socially pre-determined level of value that is attached to characteristics such as religion, ethnicity, gender, and "race", which are not entirely a matter of personal choice. In Honneth's terms, the struggles of "identity politics" involve claims for universal rights that would be understood within the sphere of

respect. Honneth wants to emphasise a second type of mechanism of esteem, which is connected to our achievements, or what we do. He points out that freedom from denigration (in the sphere of respect) is a pre-requisite for the possibility of acquiring adequate recognition for our achievements (in the sphere of esteem). This suggests that the recognition in terms of respect and esteem may overlap almost entirely for many individuals and groups, because questions of esteem can be inseparable from questions of respect.

Honneth points out that many of the struggles that attempt to broaden the definition of what counts as an achievement revolve around the undervaluing of the abilities and traits that are brought to the fore in parenting and care work, which (I contend) might be categorised within the sphere of love. Here the issue of lack of recognition for achievements in the sphere of esteem becomes an issue of undervaluing the type of recognition that happens within the sphere of love, and the overlap between recognition or lack of recognition in the spheres of esteem and love becomes strongly apparent. When Honneth highlights the problem of lack of recognition for those who do not (or cannot) achieve according to socially accepted norms his account emphasises that much more than remuneration (distribution) is at stake here, although remuneration can be an important indicator of esteem. Although the sphere of respect (redistribution through welfare payments and other centrally provided infrastructure) may step in when the sphere of esteem (distribution through paid work) fails, it cannot fully meet the need for the recognition that has been lost. Both esteem and respect are necessary for adequate recognition and the spheres of recognition are strongly connected in these circumstances.

Honneth's account of social solidarity raises significant questions for the possibility of generating and sustaining shared value-horizons because of the plurality of values and the culture diversity of modern societies. As I have argued, the assumptions that are commonly made about the boundaries of love (at the extent of the family and other loved ones), respect (universally applicable to everyone), and esteem (within a community of shared values) are not necessarily always correct. Respect is closely connected to legal rights and the boundaries that are circumscribed by the borders of the state. Respect appears to be a matter of the rights and responsibilities of co-nationals and not the basis of universal rights that apply to all humans. Esteem actually has the capacity to go beyond the borders of individual communities or states because the achievements that happen through paid work can reach across state borders via processes of migration (both legal and "illegal"). Love relationships can also transcend localised nuclear family and state borders when they are expanded and sustained through migration. I contend that Honneth's theoretical model may be particularly helpful in illuminating the shared (or contested) value-horizons that either support or reduce social solidarity via the formal processes of social inclusion or exclusion that are articulated in immigration policies, practices and procedures.

I have argued that Honneth's theory of recognition includes many of the important ethical insights of the ethics of care, liberalism and communitarianism and is able to avoid some of the criticisms of each of these theories. I have also argued that many of the legal rights that might be understood as a method of enacting Kantian universal respect are not, in fact, universally applied but are circumscribed by state borders. In contrast, the shared value-horizons that are the focus of communitarian theories and the family and other intimate relationships that are the concern of the ethics of care appear to have the capacity to be

extremely broad, much broader than the extent of a local community or even the borders of a state. The implications of this contracting and expanding of value-horizons are particularly clear in the immigration policies and procedures that seek to control the borders and boundaries that traditionally supported shared value-horizons and social solidarity.

Honneth argues that social progress takes place along the two dimensions of individualisation and social inclusion. Individualisation allows "new parts of the personality [to be] opened up to mutual recognition" which broadens "the extent of socially confirmed individuality", and "social inclusion involves including more people into existing recognition relations" so that the circle of subjects who recognise one another grows.[51] Honneth points out that the possibility of progress in either of these dimensions is limited in modern capitalist societies because of a "tripartite recognition order".[52]

In the final part of the thesis I will show how Honneth's theoretical framework can be used to analyse the process of inclusion (or exclusion) that takes place through the implementation of immigration policies. I will also argue that Honneth's theory can illuminate the moral relevance of the struggles that occur in the context of such policies.

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[51] *Ibid.,* p. 186.
[52] *Ibid.*

Part Three: Recognition and Immigration

Chapter Five - Australian Immigration

I have suggested that the scope of Honneth's theory of recognition may be problematically
limited, because the theoretical framework can appear to be unduly focused on the
questions of recognition or lack of recognition that arise within the boundaries of a nation
state. I also contend that the actual boundaries of each of the types of recognition may, in
fact, be different from the boundaries that might be commonly assumed by Honneth and
his interpreters or critics. The sphere of respect (which is usually understood as a
"universal" regard for everyone based on human dignity) is, in fact, generally enacted and
policed within national borders and applied to co-nationals. The sphere of esteem, as it
applies to the abilities and aptitudes of paid work, has the capacity to stretch beyond the
boundaries of particular communities (or national borders) because it is a major factor in
promoting migration (both legal and "illegal"). The sphere of love can also reach across
national boundaries when family members and loved ones migrate across national
borders.[1] I have argued that the three types of recognition are not separate and mutually
exclusive. This is because each of the forms of recognition has an affect on all aspects of
our lives, and because a lack of recognition in any of the spheres can affect the possibilities
of having adequate recognition in other spheres.

In this chapter, I will examine the implications of Honneth's theory for understanding the
international processes of social inclusion and exclusion that are controlled by immigration
policies, procedures and practices. But before doing so, I want to address a distinction
which has been implicit in my discussion up to this point. I have assumed that the

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[1] Volker Heins argues that love is a "scale-neutral" form of "recognition without borders"
because of a Weberian "ethic of brotherliness" or universalistic love ethos that extends to
all people in need. See 'Realizing Honneth: redistribution, recognition, and global justice,'
Journal of Global Ethics Vol. 4: 2 (2008), pp. 141-154; pp. 146-147.

immigration legislation, policies and procedures of democratic states reflect, at least to

some extent, the forms of recognition or lack of recognition that are currently deemed to be

appropriate by the majority of voters who have supported the existing political structure.

This is not intended to suggest that individual citizens or politicians actually comprehend

particular laws or policies in terms of the three types of recognition, or that other factors

that may appear to be primarily economic or pragmatic are not usually cited as the

motivational force for particular legislation and controls. However, I contend (following

Honneth) that the prevailing relationships of recognition or lack of recognition constitute

an underlying "moral grammar" that motivates particular legislation and policies.

I have also assumed that institutions such as government departments of immigration can

mediate relationships of recognition or lack of recognition between individuals or groups

and the community as a whole. Even though institutions are not individuals, they do

appear to 'sanction, promote and prevent certain types of self-relations and intersubjective

attitudes".[2] Institutional forms of recognition are often more covertly communicated than

those that occur in direct personal relationships and they can hide behind a veneer of legal

regulations or be couched in terms of pragmatic considerations. But institutions are social

constructed and they rely on social rules, identities and norms.

I have thus been assuming that recognition can exist at the institutional level as well as the

interpersonal level. But what entitles us to that assumption? Honneth specifically

addresses this point and he identifies three different types of recognition that happen at an

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[2] Arto Laitinen, "Social Equality, Recognition and Preconditions of the Good Life" paper
presented at the Social Inequality Today Conference at Macquarie University, 12
November 2003, p. 19.

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institutional level.[3] Firstly, he argues that the rules and practices of institutions can

articulate and enforce particular conceptions of which human qualities should be awarded

recognition and how this ought to be done. For example, the institution of modern law

explicitly expresses and seeks to enforce particular norms of recognition, in this case the

expectation that all members of a society are supposed to be awarded equal respect as free

and equal subjects. Honneth contends that the current norms of recognition of the value of

an individual with needs are similarly expressed in the institution of the modern nuclear

family.[4] This means that legislative frameworks can be understood as the institutional

embodiment of the recognition that happens through respect and the family can be

understood as a form of institutional embodiment of the recognition that happens in terms

of love. As I will go on to demonstrate, particular immigration policies and practices can

also be understood as the institutional embodiment of some (and in some cases all) of the

types of recognition that Honneth identifies.

Secondly, Honneth argues that other institutional frameworks (such as workplace

regulations) which might appear to be less directly concerned with expressing and

enforcing particular types of recognition are in fact "crystallisations" of patterns of

recognition that are the result of social struggles for recognition that have established

particular practices.[5] For example, particular wage rates and levels of health insurance for

workers are the result of social struggles that have established the rules and regulations that

control these benefits in specific industrial settings. Honneth argues that organisational

practices such as these can be understood as "sediments of practices of recognition in the

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[3] See Axel Honneth, "Recognition as Ideology" in Bert van den Brink and David Owen
(eds), *Recognition and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); pp. 334-
335.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 335.
[5] *Ibid.*

real world".[6] I will argue that immigration policies and practices also "crystallise"

particular established patterns of recognition and that we can identify the specific changes

in various policies that have resulted from struggles for recognition at different times.

Thirdly, Honneth argues that recognition can be a part of institutional policies and

practices when an institution or organization seeks to create or discover new evaluative

qualities of recognition before they are expressed in the practices of a particular society.[7]

He also contends that this institutionally created type of recognition is particularly relevant

to the question of the moral basis of particular patterns of recognition and whether some

forms of recognition have what Honneth terms an "ideological character"[8] that can support

social frameworks of domination and subordination.

The three different types of institutional recognition mean that the policies and procedures

of an institution can be powerful mechanisms that express and sustain existing patterns of

recognition, acknowledge previously unacknowledged or undervalued types of recognition

and/or introduce and foster new types of recognition.   This ability of institutions to

express and support various forms of recognition can be a positive force that supports

individual autonomy through processes of mutual recognition. But institutionalised forms

of recognition can also be particularly problematic because institutions have a powerful

capacity to produce or reinforce relationships of social domination and subordination by

supporting and reinforcing processes of misrecognition and lack of recognition.

Institutional forms of recognition can be used as particularly effective methods of control

that work to subjugate and dominate individuals in ways that do not contribute to their

autonomy. In terms of Honneth's examples of the three forms of institutional recognition,

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[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.* p. 336.

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legislative frameworks can embody and enforce unjust laws such as those that permitted slavery or support racial discrimination. The institution of the modern nuclear family arguably supports gender stereotypes and the subordination and domination of mothers and others who undertake care work.[9] Workplace regulations can crystallise various patterns of domination and exploitation of workers in sweatshops and reinforce practices of recognition which dictate that certain activities are not classified as work.[10] Political organisations such as the German Nazi Party can introduce and reinforce "ideological" forms of recognition that seek to deny the basic humanity of some members of a society. Circumstances such as these show that it is not only legitimate but also essential to consider institutions and not just interpersonal relations as expressions of recognitive attitudes.

With the notion of institutional recognition now in place, we can move on to discuss how immigration laws and policies can express and reinforce patterns of recognition and misrecognition. I will proceed as follows.

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[9] Iris Marion Young presents a comprehensive critique of the way that structures of recognition can support gender inequalities and the subjugation of women. See 'Recognition of Love's Labour' in Bert van den Brink and David Owen (eds), *Recognition and Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. pp. 189-214. For Honneth's reply to Young see 'Rejoinder' in *Ibid.* pp. 361-363.

[10] Beate Rössler argues convincingly that providing payment for the "family work" of raising children cannot solve the problem of inadequate recognition for this type of work. See 'Work, Recognition, Emancipation' in *Ibid.* pp. 135-163. For Honneth's reply to Rössler see 'Rejoinder' in *Ibid.* pp. 357-360.

1.   In Section One, I contend that Honneth is correct to assert that there is a "tripartite recognition order"[11] in modern capitalist societies (at least in terms of immigration policies), and I argue that this recognition order is evident in the "tripartite" ordering of particular types of immigration.

2.   In Section Two, I analyse the policies in more depth in the light of Honneth's contention that the principles of justice or injustice are different for each type of recognition.[12]

3   In Section Three, I consider how these principles might provide a guide for how policy ought to be conducted and I argue that recognition theory helps to clarify the "moral grammar" that is at stake.

I will focus on Australian immigration policies for a number of reasons. Firstly, Australia has clearly articulated policies and annual quotas for immigration, and Australia is not part of a wider group of nations (such as the European Union) that have more lenient border policies for citizens of member states (although there are some special arrangements for New Zealand citizens). This makes is easier to describe the policies that are enacted and to identify the criteria that are used to select the individuals who are included in (or excluded from) Australian society. Secondly, because of geographical isolation (Australia is an island so crossing the border necessarily happens by sea or by air) and relative wealth the Australian state has the capacity to secure its borders and to maintain pre-ordained quotas for immigration, which is not the case for many other less wealthy states who have limited

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[11] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 186.
[12] *Ibid.*

resources and/or land borders that are more difficult to police. Thirdly, Australia has a clear articulation of three types of immigration that prima facie map on interestingly to Honneth's theory.

It should be noted that some aspects of the selection criteria apply to all categories of immigration. For example, the "Character Requirement" excludes potential migrants if they have a substantial criminal record, or are associated with individuals or groups who have been or are involved in criminal conduct.[13] The "Health Requirement" is intended to minimise public health and safety risks to the Australian community and to exclude applicants on the basis of the cost of an existing medical condition to the Australian community in terms of health care and community services, although a "waiver is available if an application is based on humanitarian considerations (such as refugees), or a very close family relationship (such as a spouse or child) and exercised on a case-by-case basis".[14]

As a general policy, "Australia's Migration Program does not discriminate on the basis of race or religion. This means that anyone from any country can apply to migrate, regardless of their ethnic origin, gender or colour, provided that they meet the criteria set out in law".[15] In terms of recognition theory, this means that current policies are not meant to take account of some of the mechanisms of esteem (or lack of esteem) that relate to the "innate' aspects of an applicant's "being". Since 2007 all provisional, permanent and a small number of temporary visa applicants are required to sign an Australian Values Statement which confirms that they will respect:

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[13] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/79character.htm Accessed 28 April 2009.
[14] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/22health.htm Accessed 28 April 2009.
[15] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/01backgd.htm Accessed 28 April 2009. The intention of current policies differs from previous policies in this respect.

"the freedom and dignity of the individual; the equality of men and women; freedom

of religion; commitment to the rule of law; parliamentary democracy; a spirit of

egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for

those in need and pursuit of the public good; and equality of opportunity for

individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background".[16]

This appears to imply that applicants must have certain attitudes and opinions that have

"broad community agreement and underpin Australian society and culture", or a least be

prepared to undertake that they will have them.[17]

There are three major steps in the process of inclusion into Australian society for new

migrants. Firstly, applicants are either permitted to enter or denied entry at the borders of

the state. Secondly, applicants may obtain either temporary or permanent residency, and

thirdly they may then be permitted to become Australian citizens. Each of these steps is

controlled in different ways depending on the immigration category that is applied to

particular applicants. My main focus is on current Australian immigration policies, but I

will also draw some comparisons with the policies that were in place in the recent and

more distant past. I do this in order to evaluate these historical changes as progressive or

admissible or not, in the light of Honneth's two dimensions of social progress, which are

increased individualisation and increased social inclusion.

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[16] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/07values.htm Accessed 28 April 2009.
[17] *Ibid.*

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Section One - The Tripartite Recognition Order

As I have already mentioned, there are three main Australian immigration categories and there is a pre-set yearly quota for entry for each of these categories. The first two categories are classified as the "Migration Program" and the third category as the "Humanitarian Program". The planning level for the Migration Program in 2008-2009 was set at 171,800 places. The first and largest migration category of 115,000 places is for "skilled" migrants who gain entry essentially because of their work or business skills. The second migration category of 56,500 places is for "family" migrants who are sponsored by family members who are already in Australia. The Humanitarian Program of 13,500 places is for refugees from overseas and other applicants who are subject to violation of human rights in their home country under what is termed the "Special Humanitarian Program".[18] So skilled migration is more than sixty two percent of the total number that will be admitted, family migration is more than thirty percent, and the humanitarian program is less than eight percent. In terms of the number of applicants that are admitted there is a "tripartite" order that prioritises skilled migrants, followed by family migrants and then a much smaller amount of humanitarian migrants. I will consider each of these categories in turn and highlight the specific types of recognition that are reflected by their selection criteria in order to reveal the "tripartite recognition order" that is reflected in the immigration policies.

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[18] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/20planning.htm Accessed 28 April 2009. Statistics as at 28 April 2009. The quota for skilled migrants was reduced from the original level of 190,300 in response to the global financial crisis of 2008-2009.

a)   Skilled migration

The majority of applicants for skilled migration must demonstrate that that they have specific "skills or outstanding abilities that will contribute to the Australian economy".[19] They may apply independently or be sponsored by an Australian employer or an Australian regional government initiative. There is also a small sub-category of Business Skills migrants who are business owners, senior executives and investors who enter Australia initially on a provisional (temporary) visa for four years and, after satisfactory evidence of a specified level of business or investment activity, may apply for permanent residence.[20] Applicants for skilled migration are assessed according to a "Points Test" that allocates points for particular attributes and abilities, as long as their qualifications or skills are accepted by the appropriate Australian or international authority.[21] There is a list of the occupations of professionals, associated professionals, trades-persons and related workers that are accepted, and the points that are awarded to qualified applicants in each of these occupations.[22]

Almost all of the assessment criteria relate to the type of work abilities and attributes that Honneth argues are awarded social esteem via the "achievement principle". However, the policy gives preference to applicants who are under forty-five years of age and points are awarded for English language ability. This appears to favour potential migrants who

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[19] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/24overview_skilled.htm Accessed 28 April 2009.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] This is a contentious issue because professional qualifications must be recognised by an Australian or international accreditation body. Applicants can be considered to be insufficiently qualified by the relevant authorities even though they are qualified in their home country.

[22] http://www.immi.gov.au/allforms/booklets/1121i.pdf Accessed 28 April 2009. This list can be updated at any time to reflect the changing needs of the Australian labour market.

happen to be relatively young and to be born into English speaking families (which would be "innate" aspects of their "being"), although individuals who have the aptitude and educational opportunity could acquire the required language skills. Successful applicants for skilled migration are awarded permanent residency.[23]

This current policy focus on accepting the majority (more than sixty two percent) of applicants on the basis of their work skills appears to prioritise the type of recognition that would be related to esteem within Honneth's theoretical framework. Although the skilled migration program appears to emphasise the type of recognition that occurs through esteem, the other spheres of recognition are also relevant to an analysis of this category. As I have already mentioned, the universal form of recognition that occurs in terms of respect has been enacted, at least to some extent, to ensure that the denigration of "innate" characteristics (such as race, religion, ethnic origin, gender or colour) does not prevent the recognition of the particular skills and achievements of applicants. So, at the first stage of inclusion into Australian society many immigrants who are currently afforded recognition in terms of esteem have already been afforded recognition in terms of respect. Individuals who have the pre-requisite skills to qualify for the skilled migration program are also well placed to obtain and maintain adequate levels of recognition in the sphere of love. This is because it is comparatively easy for them to bring their loved ones with them to Australia and/or sponsor family members to join them at a later stage.

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[23] There is also a category of temporary visas that are issued to skilled migrants who wish to work or study in Australia for a period of three months to four years. I have not discussed these temporary residents in my analysis because my focus is on those who wish to be included in Australian society on a permanent basis.

b)   Family migration

Applicants for family migration must be "immediate family members of Australian

citizens, permanent residents or eligible New Zealander citizens, such as spouses or fiancés

and dependent children. Places are also available for other family members including

parents, orphan relatives, aged dependent relatives, carers and remaining relatives".[24] All

family migrants must be sponsored by an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident

or eligible New Zealand citizen who is a close family relative, partner or fiancé (as

applicable for the category). The existence of the Family Migration category suggests that

there is some acknowledgement of the importance of the recognition that is given and

received through love relationships. However, family migration (recognition in terms of

love) is afforded second and much lower priority after skilled migration (recognition in

terms of esteem) in the tripartite recognition order.

I have argued that skilled migration and family migration appear to reflect two types of

recognition. The selection criteria for skilled migration are related to the work skills of

applicants that are needed by Australian society, reflecting the application of the

"achievement principle" which could be understood as recognition in terms of esteem.

The selection criteria for family migration reflect the types of intimate and family

relationships that would be recognition in terms of love. However, the relationship

between the Humanitarian Program and the sphere of respect and is not so apparent.

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[24] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/01backgd.htm#c Accessed 28 April 2009.
The term "Spouse" includes defacto partners.

c)   Humanitarian migration

Honneth argues that respect applies to everyone on the basis of the equal worth of persons and their entitlement to equal dignity, because of their fundamental humanity. But the selection criteria for the Humanitarian Program are not designed to apply to everyone equally. The Humanitarian Program applies only to individuals who have been subjected to what could be understood as a particular type of lack of respect (i.e. persecution) and the program is intended to rectify situations where this type of recognition has been denied. This is the first of many important differences between the Humanitarian Program and the Migration Program. Where the selection criteria for the Migration Program might be understood as affording recognition to work skills or love relationships that already exist (and are already valued by Australian society), the Humanitarian Program is intended to identify applicants who lack a type of respect and to generate or restore this form of recognition that should exist for everyone. The Humanitarian Program also differs from the Migration Program in another particularly significant way. The selection criteria for skilled and family migration reflect the work skills that are needed by Australian society and the personal needs of Australian citizens and permanent residents. But the selection criteria for humanitarian migration are intended to protect the needs of asylum seekers (and of some other people who have been subjected to a violation of their human rights), which do not necessarily coincide with the needs of the members of the receiving state.

The Australian Humanitarian Program plans to admit 13,500 in the year 2008-2009. Of these, 6500 places are for refugees from overseas and 7000 places are for the Special Humanitarian Program. The majority of applicants who are admitted under the refugee category are identified and referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR) to Australia for resettlement. The Special Humanitarian Program

(SHP) is "for people outside their home country who are subject to substantial

discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country. A

proposer who is an Australian citizen, permanent resident or eligible New Zealand citizen,

or an organisation that is based in Australia, must support applications for entry under the

SHP."[25] These applicants do not necessarily need to fulfil the criteria for refugee status.

The allocation for the Special Humanitarian Program includes "places required for onshore

needs" (i.e. applicants who enter or attempt to enter Australia in order to claim asylum).[26]

In recent years, more than eighty percent of the places in the Humanitarian Program have

been allocated to refugees and SHP applicants under the offshore component. This means

that a relatively small number of successful asylum seekers (around 2,000 per year) had

entered Australian territory without prior permission in order to make a request for

asylum.[27]

The Australian Humanitarian Program reflects the fact that Australia is one of 147

signatory countries to the United Nations 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating

to the Status of Refugees. The Convention was initially designed to protect European

Refugees after World War II, but the Protocol removed the geographical and time limits

which considerably widened the scope. The Convention defines refugees as people who

are "outside their country of nationality or their usual country of residence", and "are

unable or unwilling to return or to seek the protection of that country due to a well-founded

fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a

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[25] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.
[26] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/20planning.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.
[27] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.

particular social group, or political opinion".[28] As the Australian policy points out, "the Convention does not oblige signatory countries to provide protection to people who *do not fear persecution* and have left their country of nationality or residence on the basis of war, famine, environmental collapse or in order to seek a better life for themselves or their family".[29]

In terms of the "tripartite recognition order" the recognition that is afforded on the basis of respect for universal human dignity appears to be afforded the lowest priority because the places that are allocated for this type of immigration represent only a very small proportion (around eight percent) of the total. There seems to be a fairly close correlation (or symmetry) between existing and fairly widely accepted forms of recognition in terms of esteem and love and the policies of skilled migration and family migration. However, there appears to be a much wider gap (or asymmetry) between the recognition that is protected by the international agreements that underpin the humanitarian program and the interests of the state and its citizens as they have been articulated. In the following section, I will analyse the policies that control the skilled, family and humanitarian migration programs in more depth. I contend that the policies raise particular questions about the selection criteria for each category, the policies that police them, and how justice is measured in terms of each type of recognition.

Section Two – Migration and the Principles of Justice

Honneth maintains that there are three equal-ranking principles of social justice that are relative to each of the three types of recognition, and that justice is measured differently

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[28] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/61asylum.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.
[29] *Ibid.* My emphasis.

for each type of recognition. In cooperative relationships that are founded on social esteem the principle of merit has priority. In love relationships the principle of need has priority, and in legally shaped relationships the principle of equality takes priority.[30] As I have discussed, there are different mechanisms for controlling the skilled, family and humanitarian migration categories. If each of these categories were to be subject to the principles of justice that Honneth describes, merit would have priority in skilled migration, need would have priority in family migration, and equality would have priority in the humanitarian program. I now will analyse each category of migration in terms of the principles of justice that Honneth identifies.

a)   Skilled migration and merit

In the skilled migration category, the policies have the affect of prioritising particular professions and work skills, which reflects the abilities and aptitudes that are needed (or considered to be socially useful) and thus currently warrant "merit" in Australian society. In the current historical context, it is the esteem that is acquired for particular work skills (or "doing") that is the major factor that facilitates inclusion into Australian society and not the type of esteem, or lack of esteem, that relates to race, religion, ethnic origin, gender or colour (or "being").[31] This has not always been the case in Australian immigration policy. From the implementation of the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1901 until the abolition of the "White Australia" policy in 1966 a number of measures were used to ensure that non-European migrants were excluded. They included the requirement that potential migrants pass a written test in a language that was nominated by an immigration officer, which was

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[30] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition and Justice'; p. 358.
[31] Although, as I have previously indicated, a commitment to "Australian Values" is a prerequisite for successful applicants.

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not necessarily their own language or English.[32] It is important to note that some of the

original motivation for the "White Australia" policy stemmed from resentment of white

Australian workers against Chinese workers in the mining industry and indentured

labourers from the South Sea Islands during the nineteenth century, because Australian

workers feared that their jobs and associated standard of living would be threatened. These

factors reflected concerns about the application of the "achievement principle". But the

outcome of the "White Australia" policy clearly reflected the type of esteem that was

associated with the "innate" characteristics of white skin and particular ethnicity, rather

than the esteem that is acquired via the "achievement principle".

Honneth argues that freedom from denigration on the basis of "innate" characteristics is a

pre-requisite for having the possibility of being adequately recognized for our own

accomplishments and abilities.[33] It does appear that the majority of potential migrants are

now admitted on the basis of their work skills regardless of their race, religion, ethnic

origin, gender or skin colour. This would constitute social progress in Honneth's terms

because people are included because of their abilities and attributes and not excluded

because of a lack of esteem for their "innate" characteristics. However, it should be noted

that not all work skills are recognised by the current policies. Manual labour such as that

which was undertaken by the nineteenth century Chinese miners and the South Sea

Islanders who worked on the sugar and cotton plantations is not listed amongst the

qualifying work skills for skilled migration. This is not necessarily because these types of

work skills are not in demand. In fact, there is currently a pilot program to bring

temporary workers from the Pacific Islands to work in the horticultural industry because

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[32] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.
[33] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 130.

many crops are left to rot due to a lack of workers to pick them.[34] However, these types of work skills are not considered to be sufficient to facilitate permanent residency. This reflects the internal recognition order of the skilled migration category (esteem) and suggests that highly skilled labour is recognised as making a greater contribution to the social good.

The policies that control the skilled migration program appear to measure the "social worth" of applicants by the "degree to which they appear to be in a position to contribute to the realisation of social goals" in the way that Honneth describes the application of the "achievement principle". Esteem is only afforded to achievements (skills and aptitudes) that are expected to make a contribution to Australian society because they "appear to be significant for shared praxis".[35] Applicants are also required to demonstrate their commitment to the "shared value horizon" that is articulated in the Australian Values Statement. This could be interpreted as an attempt to reinforce the type of common conception of the "good life" that is emphasised by some communitarian accounts, perhaps reflecting a concern that a core of commonly held values may be required in order to foster social solidarity.

There are a number of questions of justice and injustice that could be raised about the skilled migration program. For example, skilled migration could encourage the receiving state to neglect to provide opportunities for existing members of society to acquire the work skills that are afforded merit (and esteem), because it could be easier and cheaper to admit migrants who already have the training and experience that is required. There are

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[34] http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/pacific-seasonal-worker.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.
[35] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 129.

also broader questions of the justice or injustice of supporting a "brain drain" of skilled workers from less developed countries where their skills may be more needed. In these circumstances, it appears that the justice or injustice that is involved in esteem (or lack of esteem) might need to be evaluated within a wider international value horizon and not just within the borders of the Australian state.[36]

As I have previously argued, applicants who have met the criteria for merit in terms of their work skills will already have been afforded a degree of equal respect which attempts to prevent the injustice that can be perpetrated by exclusion on the basis of "innate" characteristics. Most skilled migrants are also able to maintain the love relationships that afford recognition on the basis of need. However, there are some questions of justice that can be raised about the way that need is addressed in the family migration category.

b)   Family migration and need

The family migration policies endorse a processing order that favours applications that relate to heterosexual love relationships and nuclear family ties. In recent years, the definition of "partner" has been expanded to include "a person in an interdependent relationship with an Australian partner involving a mutual commitment to a shared life together. Generally this visa is for same-sex partners."[37] This change in policy appears to reflect a more general change in the recognition of same-sex partnerships by the Australian population, although same-sex partners cannot currently be legally married in Australia. This would constitute social progress in Honneth's terms because these applicants are no

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[36] I will return to this issue in the next chapter.

[37] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/29overview_family.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.

longer excluded on the basis of aspects of their "being".   However, same-sex partners are

not afforded the same priority in processing as heterosexual spouses. The number of

applications for the spouse and dependant child categories is not restricted, but all other

categories are, or can be, subject to "cap and queue". The "cap and queue" system limits

the number of visas that can be granted that year in a particular visa subclass and

applicants must wait in a queue for visa grant consideration in a following year, subject to

places becoming available.[38] Same-sex partner, fiancé, aged dependant relative, remaining

relative and carer visas may be subject to "cap and queue". All parent visas are subject to

"cap and queue".

All visa applicants apart from spouses and dependant children also need to provide an

Assurance of Support before their visa application can be granted. This is a legal

commitment by a person (not necessarily the sponsor) to repay to the Australian

Government certain welfare payments paid to migrants during a particular period, which is

two years for most visa holders but ten years for "Contributory Parent" visa holders.[39] This

has the effect of restricting some types of family migration to those members of Australian

society who are wealthy enough to arrange to financially support their family member(s).

Parent visa policies also favour applicants or Australian sponsors who are wealthy enough

to pay for the privilege of quicker processing. The "Parent" and "Contributory parent"

visa categories are both for parents of Australian citizens or permanent residents and both

categories have the same eligibility criteria. However, the parent visa costs AUS$3890

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[38] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/21managing.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.
[39] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/34aos.htm Accessed 30 April 2009.This
applies to all parent, aged parent, dependant relative and remaining relative visa holders,
but only some spouse, fiancé and inter-dependent partner visas at the discretion of the
Department of Immigration.

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and the contributory parent visa costs AUS$35,560. The 2008-2009 yearly quotas are currently set at 2,000 for Parent visas and 6,500 for Contributory parent visas.[40] Based on current planning levels and category queues, parent applicants can expect approximately a ten-year wait and contributory parent applicants a wait of between eighteen months and two years before visa grant consideration.[41] So, in this visa category less wealthy applicants may only secure a place in a much longer queue, whilst applicants who can pay a much higher processing charge will join a shorter queue and be included into Australian society much quicker.

All of these processing priorities appear to reflect the internal recognition order of family migration (recognition in terms of love), but some also reflect recognition of contribution to society (recognition in terms of esteem). Some aspects of this ordering might be relatively uncontroversial. For example, giving priority to the needs of children to be cared for by their parents or other primary carers, which is considered to be the most primary form of recognition by Honneth. However, giving preferential treatment to applicants in the Contributory parent visa category and requiring an Assurance of Support for some applicants seems to reflect the wealth of the applicants or their sponsors and not their degree of need (although I concede that degree of need might be difficult, though perhaps not impossible, to assess).[42] Ability to contribute financially appears to fit more readily with the contributions that would warrant merit in terms of esteem, and not the criteria of need that would be appropriate in terms of love. The recognition that occurs in love relationships is also highly relevant to an analysis of the humanitarian migration policies.

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[40] http://www.immi.gov.au/allforms/990i/parent.htm Accessed 1 May 2009.Visa processing costs as at May 2009.
[41] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/21managing.htm Accessed 1 May 2009.
[42] Virginia Held might also raise similar objections to these policies due to the inappropriateness of allowing market forces to override the needs for love and care of some applicants. See *Ethics of Care*; p. 122.

c)   Humanitarian migration and equality

There are a number of ways in which the selection criteria for the Humanitarian Program are restricted so that they are not, in fact, a reflection of universal respect on the basis of shared human dignity. Some restrictions stem from the historically and culturally contingent international agreements that are the basis of the Australian policy. A second set of restrictions relate to state-based mechanisms that control the application of the international agreements in order to restrict the possibility of seeking asylum. Until very recently, there was also a third layer of Australian policy restrictions that further reduced the possibility of adequate recognition for asylum seekers and those who had been deemed to be refugees. I will use the framework of recognition theory to comment on each of these layers of restrictions, including those that have currently been revoked or curtailed, and to question the "moral grammar" that underlies these restrictions and policy shifts.

Australian policy asserts that the "primary responsibility for the protection of an individual lies with their country of nationality", and "only where their country is not able or is unwilling to provide that protection, the system of international protection is activated".[43] The international Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees recognises that people who are at risk of persecution have a right to flee their country and seek refuge elsewhere, but it does not give them the right to enter a country of which they are not a national.[44] This means that there is, potentially, a universal right to seek asylum if necessary, but there is no corresponding responsibility to fulfil that right. Rather "Governments who are parties to the Refugees Convention and 1967 protocol have

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[43] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm Accessed 1 May 2009.
[44] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/61asylum.htm Accessed 1 May 2009.

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accepted joint responsibility for resolving refugee problems".[45] This appears to generate a rather puzzling vacuum where the first step towards avoiding persecution (escape) is guaranteed, but the process of ensuring protection (affording refuge) is not necessarily guaranteed. This vacuum means that states such as Australia may chose whether to accept the responsibility to provide asylum for particular refugees or attempt to avoid that responsibility.

The internationally agreed selection criteria of the UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees specifically protect the right to freedom from *persecution* on the basis of mainly "innate" characteristics including race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, and political opinion (although political opinion is not "innate"), but do not necessarily protect the right to avoid the mortal peril that can occur as a result of war and natural disasters, or to escape starvation.[46] The circumstances of mortal peril might appear to have little to do with recognition, because events such as earthquakes, tsunamis or crop failures can be understood as accidents of nature and not as the social suffering of humiliation and disrespect that stems from inadequacies in intersubjective relationships of recognition. If that were the case, Honneth's theory might appear to be unable to interpret these forms of suffering as a lack of recognition. However, failure to monitor for the warning signs of natural disasters and avoid the consequences where possible, and failing to respond rapidly and appropriately to address the needs of those who are affected can be understood as a reflection of a lack of recognition for particular

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[45] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm Accessed 1 May 2009.
[46] It should be noted that the right to asylum is not a right to escape poverty or a right to claim adequate material resources. It is not redistribution that is at stake here.

individuals and groups.[47] As Amartya Sen has argued convincingly, "no famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy".[48] The nature of the relationships between the government and citizens of a state (or lack of effective government) does appear to affect the likelihood of famine, regardless of the level of poverty in that state.

The possibility of entering Australian territory to make a request for asylum is or has been restricted by a number of mechanisms. There are, of course, passport and other border controls at airports and seaports that apply to everyone who wishes to enter Australia. But since the early 1990s, the Australian parliament has gradually introduced a number of measures that were designed to deter and restrict claims for asylum in particular circumstances. These measures include: policies of mandatory detention for asylum seekers; excision of parts of Australian territory in order to restrict the possibilities for claiming asylum; issuing temporary protection visas to refugees; forced repatriation of refugees when the Australian government declared their home country to be safe; and expecting detainees to pay a "detention debt" to cover the cost of their mandatory detention. I will briefly describe each of these policies and then analyse all of them in terms of Honneth's principles of justice.

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[47] For example, the failure of the federally built levee systems to contain the floods that engulfed much of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the communication problems that hampered evacuation procedures and the delays in the relief effort all arguably either failed to prevent or exacerbated the effects of a natural disaster.

[48] Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); p. 16.

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Section 3 – An Assessment of Australian Immigration Policies

a)   Mandatory Detention and Detention Debt

Since 1992, all "unauthorised" asylum seekers (those who entered Australian territory

without a valid visa or other documentation) have been held in detention centres either on

the Australian mainland or off shore while their application is considered. In practice,

many of these detainees are the so-called "boat people" who attempt to land in Australia in

order to make a claim for asylum. Between 1992 and 2005 children who were asylum

seekers in these circumstances were also detained.[49] Detention Centres are in remote and

inhospitable locations and detainees may be held for many years without resolution of their

claim. In 2008, there were attempts to make policy changes so that mandatory detention

after initial health and security checks would only apply to people who are deemed to pose

a risk to the Australian community. However, many hundreds of people remain in

detention. People who had been kept in detention facilities were expected to pay for the

cost of their detention after they were released, even if they had been found to be genuine

refugees.[50] An Australian government plan to abolish this policy was announced and

implemented in 2009, despite the efforts of the opposition party to attempt to block this.[51]

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[49] Children are now with their families in "Immigration residential housing" which is
independent family-style housing in a community setting while still formally being
detained.
[50] http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2009/ce09031.htm
Accessed 1 May 2009. Only 3.3 per cent of the debt was recovered as those applicants who
were not admitted had no reason to pay, and it was unlikely that those who were admitted
would be able to pay.
[51] http://www.alp.org.au/media/0909/msimmc080.php Accessed 8 September 2009.
Liability for detention costs remains as a deterrent for illegal foreign fishers and convicted
people smugglers.

b)   Excision and off shore processing

In August 2001, the MV Tampa (a merchant ship that happened to be in the vicinity) rescued more than 400 asylum seekers from a sinking fishing boat. The Australian government refused permission for the ship to enter Australia's territorial waters and subsequently transported most of the asylum seekers to the small Pacific Island of Nauru for offshore processing as part of what was termed the "Pacific Solution". Under this policy, a number of Australian islands were "excluded from the migration zone for the purposes of prohibiting people who arrive at such places from making a valid visa application".[52] The legislation also allows for people who are intercepted before they reached Australian territory or who arrived on an excised offshore island to be taken to the "declared countries" of Manus Island in Papua New Guinea or Nauru to be detained whilst their application is processed.[53] Detention and processing in other countries was discontinued in 2008 after the last refugees left Nauru[54], but "unauthorised" asylum seekers are now diverted to Christmas Island (which is in the Australian exclusion zone) for processing. Off shore processing means that asylum seekers do not have the same recourse to legal representation and opportunity to appeal if their application is refused.[55] They are denied the right to appeal decisions to the independent Refugee Review Tribunal, as well as being denied the right to access the Australian court system. Off shore processing is very expensive due to the additional infrastructure, maintenance and

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[52] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/65humanitarian.htm Accessed 28 April 2009.
[53] Australian border protection and navy forces undertake this interception in a border protection operation initially known as Operation Reflex and now known as Operation Resolute.
[54] This development was welcomed by UNHCR. See http://www.unhcr.org.au/pdfs/NewsreleaseUNHCRwelcomesendofpacificsolution.pdf Accessed 1 May 2009.
[55] The UNHCR has criticised the discriminatory nature of off shore processing.   See http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=18450&Cr=australia&Cr1 Accessed 1 May 2009.

operating costs that are required to establish and maintain the off shore facilities. There were also additional transportation costs for sending asylum seekers to Nauru or Manus Island and flying them to the mainland if they require medical treatment. This inflated the detention debts that detainees were required to repay.[56]

c)   Temporary Protection Visas and Involuntary Deportation

In 1999, the Government introduced Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) for asylum seekers who had arrived "unauthorized" but were found to be refugees. This meant that they received only a temporary and reversible recognition of refugee status.   TPV holders were reassessed every three years, but they could not access a Permanent Protection Visa if "since leaving their home country, they have resided for at least seven days in a country where they could have sought and obtained effective protection".[57] If they were considered by the Australian government to still be in need of protection they might receive a further TPV. If not, they were required to leave within 18months.[58]

This situation of temporary and revocable recognition created uncertainty, insecurity, powerlessness and health problems.[59]   TPV holders were not permitted to bring family members into the country or to visit their overseas family without losing the right to return.

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[56] On shore processing would cost around three and a half percent of the cost of off shore processing. See Kazimierz Bem, Nina Field, Nic Maclellan, Sarah Meyer, Tony Morris, *A Price Too High: Australia's Approach to Asylum Seekers*, August 2007. http://ajustaustralia.com/resource.php?act=attache&id=213 p. 4. Accessed 1 May 2009.
[57] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/64protection.htm Accessed 28 March 2007.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] F. Mansouri, 'Politics of Social Exclusion: Refugees on Temporary Protection Visas in Victoria' (2002), cited in Research Note no 51 2003-4 Temporary Protection Visas, Parliament of Australia Parliamentary Library, http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/RN/2003-04/04rn51.htm Accessed 28 March 2007.

They were permitted to work, but adults received no English language tuition.[60] In 2004, a number of new measures were introduced to encourage TPV holders to return home, including providing cash grants and airfares.[61] In practice, refugees were deported when the Government considered that it was safe enough for them to return home, even if they disagreed with this assessment.[62] TPVs were abolished in August 2008. This means that all asylum seekers who are found to engage Australia's protection obligations currently receive a permanent visa.[63]

All of these policies have been the subject of controversial debate in Australian society that has resulted in policy changes that have currently abandoned some policies and curtailed others. The criticisms have been raised on a number of levels that can be interpreted in terms of the different types of recognition. Firstly, some current and recent policies appear to disregard the principle of equality that applies to recognition in terms of respect. Many policies arguably contravene various international human rights agreements that have been adopted by Australia. These agreements specifically protect the right to equal treatment for all asylum seekers regardless of whether their entry or presence is considered to be "illegal". For example, Article 14 (1) of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states, "Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."[64] Article 31 of the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* states:

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[60] Amnesty International Australia, http://www.amnesty.org.au/Act_now/campaigns/refugees/factsheets/temporary_protection _visas_-_fact_sheet Accessed 28 March 2007.
[61] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/64protection.htm Accessed 28 March 2007.
[62] This included deportation to Iraq and Afghanistan.
[63] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/61asylum.htm Accessed 28 April 2009.
[64] http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a14 Accessed 28 April 2009.

"Contracting States shall not impose penalties, on account of their illegal entry or presence, on refugees who, coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened in the sense of article 1, enter or are present in their territory without authorization, provided they present themselves without delay to the authorities and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence. The Contracting States shall not apply to the movements of such refugees restrictions other than those which are necessary and such restrictions shall only be applied until their status in the country is regularized or they obtain admission into another country."[65]

Mandatory detention, off shore processing, TPVs and detention debt policies all arguably appear to be in breach of this undertaking of equal treatment for all refugees by penalising some asylum seekers on the basis of their mode of arrival. There are other established rights that have also arguably been breached. Article 33 of the *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* prohibits expulsion or return ("refoulement") of refugees to a situation where their "life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion".[66] The policies of forcible or coercive repatriation of TPV holders appear to disregard this undertaking.

There appears to be good evidence that many of those who have been denied refugee status have been returned to situations where their life is in danger. Some have been killed by the forces of persecution that they sought to escape and many others have been rendered

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[65] http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf Accessed 5 May 2009.
[66] *Ibid.*

stateless or remain in danger because of the inadequate travel documentation that was
provided by the Australian authorities.[67]

Article 9 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and Article 37 of the
Convention on the Rights of the Child both prohibit arbitrary detention and recognise a
right to take legal proceedings to challenge detention.[68] Article 10 of the *International
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and Article 37 of the *Convention on the Rights of
the Child* require that detained persons be treated with humanity and respect for human
dignity.[69] This appears to prohibit the policies of mandatory detention and lack of recourse
to established legal frameworks. The prison-like detention facilities that are provided also
appear to preclude the basic degree of respect that is usually given to people who have
committed no crime.

All of these rights are framed in the terms of the type of recognition that occurs in legally
shaped relationships where equality would be the principle of justice that applies. This
would appear to support equal treatment for all asylum seekers regardless of their mode of
arrival, to prohibit the forced expulsion of some refugees into conditions of persecution, to
protect freedom from prolonged arbitrary detention and to support the general right to be
treated with humanity and respect for human dignity. However, as Honneth has argued in a
slightly different context, there are presuppositions and limits to a politics of human rights
because "individual governments are the primary addressees of the claims that follow from

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[67] See the research reports of the Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community
Education at "Deported to Danger" and "Deported to Danger II"
http://www.erc.org.au/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAG
E_id=80&MMN_position=83:79
[68] http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm and http://www.unicef.org/crc/
Accessed 5 May 2009.
[69] *Ibid.*

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the existence of human rights".[70] Individuals have limited abilities to protect human rights

on their own and this means that "nations certainly do bear the obligation to protect and if

necessary enforce human rights worldwide".[71]

In terms of the "moral grammar" of recognition theory, the system of universal rights

appears to be (as Honneth's account suggests) historically and culturally contingent and

also somewhat arbitrary in nature. International human rights are voluntarily adopted by

states and there is no mechanism for enforcing compliance, even from those states (such as

Australia) that have signed the various declarations and conventions that are intended to

protect human rights. Australia has, in fact, been criticised by the United Nations High

Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) on a number of occasions with regards to elements

of Australian refugee policy, such as off shore processing and returning asylum seekers to

Indonesia, which is a state that is not a signatory to the Convention and has no policy of

recognising refugees.[72] The UNHCR has also welcomed the recent policy changes that

discontinued the Pacific Solution.[73] However, these comments serve only to shame or

praise the Australian state and legislation and policies can be implemented or discontinued

regardless of the system of international human rights.

It should be acknowledged that similar criticisms of the curtailing of existing rights to

asylum have also been made in terms of liberal theories of justice. For example, Seyla

Benhabib argues convincingly for a Kantian form of "just membership" based on moral

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[70] Axel Honneth, 'Is Universalism a Moral Trap?' in *Disrespect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); p. 209.
[71] *Ibid.,* p. 210.
[72] http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/4444cb662.html and http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/3fb0ec9b4.html Accessed 5 May 2009.
[73] http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/47ac3f9c14.html and http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/434f837515.html Accessed 5 May 2009.

universalism and cosmopolitan federalism, which would recognise the moral claim of

refugees and asylees to first admittance.[74] Christina Boswell provides a credible argument

for the way that a communitarian account of the self might help to explain the apparent

failure of universalistic values to protect refugee rights (as recognised in international law),

and motivate a better commitment to liberal rights.[75] Jürgen Habermas has argued that

there are good grounds for states to implement liberal immigration policies in general, and

refugee rights in particular.[76] However, as I will go on to argue, Honneth's theory can

provide a broader account of the types of injustice that can occur in the humanitarian

program and his recognition theory is particularly helpful in illuminating the struggles for

recognition that are happening and the policy changes that have occurred.

The policies of mandatory detention and TPVs are problematic not only in terms of

disrespect (because of the lack of equal rights), but also in the context of the recognition

that is acquired through love relationships. When children were held with their parents in

detention centres this severely hampered the capacity of parents to adequately care for their

children. As visiting psychiatrists observed, "Immigration detention profoundly

undermines the parental role, renders the parent impotent and leaves the child without

protection or comfort in already unpredictable surroundings where basic needs for safe

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[74] Seyla Benhabib, *Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); p. 3. Benhabib points out that justice cannot be restricted to schemes of just distribution on a global scale because it involves the moral claim that "permanent alienage" is not compatible with the inalienable rights of human beings that are pre-conditions of a liberal-democratic understanding of human community.
[75] Christina Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). pp. 128-129. Boswell also acknowledges that Honneth's theory of recognition offers a useful account of the way that struggles for recognition can change community values and lead to new forms of legal recognition that reject existing practices.
[76] Jürgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State" in Amy Gutmann (ed) *Multiculturalism; Examining the Politics of Recognition*; pp. 107-148; p. 141.

play and education are unmet".[77] There was also clear evidence of the psychological

trauma that was experienced by children who witnessed the physical and emotional

distress of their fellow detainees.[78] They acquired the perception of defencelessness and

lack of trust in others that Honneth describes as symptomatic of a lack of recognition in

love relationships. TPV holders were unable to visit loved ones overseas without losing the

temporary protection that they had been afforded and they could not sponsor loved ones to

join them in Australia. This meant that they were expected to live without access to the

recognition that stems from love relationships. Although the stated intention of the TPV

policy was to deter further asylum seekers the affect was to encourage the wives and

children of those who had been accepted as asylum seekers to attempt to reach Australia in

order to be reunited with them. Many died in the attempt.[79] Detention debts also impacted

on the ability of refugees to sponsor loved ones by limiting their capacity to provide the

required guarantees of financial support.

Each of these policies denies the need that has priority in love relationships, which would

constitute an injustice in Honneth's theoretical terms. The theoretical framework of the

ethics of care could raise similar questions about the injustice of these policies. Failure to

protect the physical, emotional and social needs of vulnerable and frequently traumatised

children would hardly constitute adequate care. Understanding that individuals are not

isolated, self-contained autonomous agents would raise questions about the ethics of

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[77] Sarah Mares, Louise Newman, Michael Dudley and Fran Gale, 'Seeking refuge, losing hope: parents and children in immigration detention,' *Australasian Psychiatry* Vol. 10: 2 (2002), p. 91.

[78] http://www.hreoc.gov.au/HUMAN_RIGHTS/children_detention_report/summaryguide/8_mental.htm Accessed 5 May 2009.

[79] 353 people were drowned when the boat known as "SIEVX" tipped over and sank. Of these, 146 were children and 146 were women. Many of them were on the boat because their husbands and/or fathers had come on ahead to Australia. See http://www.sievxmemorial.com/about-sievx.html Accessed 5 May 2009.

policies that hamper the capacity of asylum seekers to adequately care for their children, force refugees to exist without access to loved ones, and fail to consider their compelling motivation to be reunited with their partners and children. These problems of injustice in love relationships are not fully addressed by thinking exclusively in terms of the rights of individual asylum seekers to escape from persecution, although the Convention on the Rights of the Child does recognise the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life which could be construed as a protection of a right to adequate love relationships.[80]

Need plays another role in the policies that control the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP), which accepts "people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country" who do not necessarily qualify for refugee status.[81] Applicants for the SHP must have a proposer who is an Australian citizen or permanent resident, or an organisation that is based in Australia. This means that personal relationships and the needs of members of the Australian society are considered as well as the protection of some aspects of equal respect for these applicants. This can create a tension between the principle of need that is fulfilled via the SHP and the principle of equality that is called for in the legally shaped relationships that are reflected in universal human rights. This tension is exacerbated by the way that the humanitarian program is implemented because places from the SHP are used for "unauthorized" asylum seekers who are found to be refugees (which leads to allegations of "queue jumping"), rather than maintaining separate programs and quotas for

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[80] http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm Accessed 5 May 2009.
[81] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/60refugee.htm Accessed 5 May 2009.

SHP applicants and asylum seekers who approach Australia directly without the aid of an Australian proposer.[82]

The standards of justice based on merit that apply to recognition in terms of esteem are also relevant to an analysis of the criteria that are used to control the Humanitarian Program. Most asylum seekers do not have the work skills that would meet the selection criteria for skilled migration and allow them to be admitted into Australia with relative ease. Many asylum seekers who have been subjected to lengthy periods of mandatory detention experience emotional and psychological trauma that might reasonably be expected to hamper their capacity to apply their particular abilities and aptitudes in paid work.[83] This situation of on-going trauma and its probable side effects was exacerbated for TPV holders who lived in a state of perpetual uncertainty about their future security. Many refugees lack the English language skills that might assist them in gaining employment. Some TPV holders were denied access to the English language tuition that could have enhanced their employment prospects. This severely restricted their access to the sphere of esteem that prioritises work skills. Honneth argues that the principle of merit would have priority in cooperative relationships that generate social esteem, but it appears that the policies that have controlled and currently control the humanitarian program may well hinder the capacity of refugees to contribute to Australian society according to the "achievement principle".

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[82] There is no enroute "queue" for many asylum seekers who attempt to enter Australia without prior authorisation either because there is no Australian embassy or UNHCR facility in their home country and the countries that they pass through, or because approaching such a facility would exacerbate their risk of persecution.

[83] See Derrick Silove, Patricia Austin, & Zachary Steel, 'No Refuge from Terror: The Impact of Detention on the Mental Health of Trauma-affected Refugees Seeking Asylum in Australia,' *Transcultural Psychiatry* Vol. 44: 3 (2007), pp. 359-393.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In summary, for many asylum seekers, the standards of justice that apply in all three spheres of recognition have not been met. "Unauthorised" asylum seekers are not treated equally in terms of the rights that are supposed to apply to everyone, their access to love relationships has been hindered or curtailed, and their possibility of applying the work skills that warrant merit in Australian society has been restricted. This group of people who lack recognition in terms of human rights (respect) are afforded only partial and sometimes temporary respect, and they may also be denied adequate recognition in terms of love and esteem. As I have argued, aspects of this situation would also (arguably) be problematic in terms of liberal rights and the ethics of care (and probably for some communitarian accounts of the importance of social solidarity). But the plight of asylum seekers can be understood as a much more complex and multi-dimensional problem that encompasses a range of forms of social suffering when it is analysed in terms of recognition theory.

I have argued that Honneth's theory of recognition can provide a particularly comprehensive analysis of the types of injustice that occur in Australian immigration policies. In the next chapter, I will revisit the challenges to Honneth's theory that have been raised by Markell, Oliver and Fraser and consider how their alternative frameworks might address the questions of justice and injustice that arise in immigration policies. I also revisit the problems that I have raised with Honneth's account of the connection between achievement, esteem and social solidarity and reconsider them in relation to Australian immigration. I argue that the conflicts that arise in this context can be understood as particular kinds of struggles for or struggles over recognition.

Chapter Six - Revisiting the Challenges to Recognition Theory in the Context of Immigration

In Chapters Two and Three, I defended Honneth's theory against a number of challenges that have been raised by Markell, Oliver and Fraser. In the first section of this chapter, I will return to these objections and reconsider them in the context of the Australian immigration policies. I defend Honneth's theoretical framework against many of the problems that are identified by his critics. I also concede that some issues that are raised by the challengers can help to highlight particular aspects of the multi-dimensional problems of recognition that are raised by Australian immigration policies.

In the second section of this chapter, I return to the problems with Honneth's account of the connection between esteem, achievement and social solidarity that I discussed in Chapter Four and I reconsider them in the context of Australian immigration. I argue that many of the conflicts that arise with regards to immigration should be understood as particular kinds of struggles for (or struggles over) recognition. I contend that recognition theory allows us to comprehend the relationship between these struggles in different and useful ways that are not so apparent from other theoretical viewpoints. In the third section I conclude that Honneth's account of the role of struggles for recognition and their connection to social progress could provide invaluable additional resources for understanding the "moral grammar" and issues of justice that are at stake in immigration.

a)   Markell's challenges

As we have seen, Markell argues that mutual recognition is an appealing but impossible

goal. In the context of Australian immigration policies it does seem that a goal of adequate

levels of recognition is difficult to achieve. But it appears that skilled migrants and some

family migrants do have the opportunity to have adequate levels of recognition in terms of

esteem, love and respect. For these migrants recognition appears not only possible, but

also quite probable. However, as Markell might argue, having adequate levels of all three

types of recognition appears to be highly unlikely (perhaps impossible) for "unauthorised"

asylum seekers in the circumstances that are generated by many current and past policies.

This could pose a problem for Honneth's theory if he did not argue that there are

"historical processes" that are not mere events but "stages in a conflictual process of

formation, leading to a gradual expansion of relationships of recognition".[1]   As I have

highlighted, the forms of recognition that are expressed in various immigration policies

have expanded. Skilled migration is no longer subjected to the mechanisms of the White

Australia Policy that ensured a lack of recognition on the basis of "innate" personal

attributes such as skin colour or ethnicity.   Family migration has been expanded to include

same-sex partnerships, although the policies still give priority to heterosexual partnerships.

The policies of mandatory detention for asylum seekers who are children, Temporary

Protection Visas and detention debt have been revoked, although legislation is still in place

that would permit some of these policies to be reinstated. All of these changes accord with

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[1] Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*;
p. 170.

Honneth's account of social progress because they involve acceptance of a wider range of forms of "individualisation", increase "social inclusion", or promote both of these outcomes. The changes also indicate that the goal of mutual recognition may not always be as unreachable as Markell suggests, and that there appears to be evidence of some progress towards a goal of more adequate levels of recognition in the context of Australian immigration.

Markell argues that injustice may actually result from social arrangements that allow some people and groups to enjoy a semblance of "sovereign agency" at other people's expense.[2] Markell does not present this argument as an account of the role of the sovereignty of national states in questions of justice/injustice, but this issue of sovereignty does appear to be highly relevant in the context of Australian immigration policies. When the policy of off shore processing for asylum seekers was introduced in 2001 "the protection of our sovereignty, including Australia's sovereign right to determine who shall enter Australia" was given a high priority in the reasons that were presented for the policy changes.[3] This understanding of state sovereignty as a "right to exclude" is far too broad to be adequately addressed in the context of this discussion.[4] But state sovereignty may also be understood (as Honneth suggests) in more positive terms as the locus of the joint obligation of all states to protect (and therefore to include) people whose rights have been violated.[5] This obligation to acknowledge and address the plight of those who are subjected to persecution

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[2] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*; p. 5.

[3] Phillip Ruddock, Australian Minister for Immigration, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 18 September 2001, pp. 30872.
http://www.aph.gov.au/Hansard/reps/dailys/dr180901.pdf Accessed 7 May 2009.

[4] See Katharine Gelber and Matt McDonald, 'Ethics and Exclusion: Representations of Sovereignty in Australia's Approach to Asylum-Seekers,' *Review of International Studies* Vol. 10 (2006), pp. 269-289 for a comprehensive critique of this limited conception of sovereignty.

[5] Axel Honneth, 'Is Universalism a Moral Trap?'; especially pp. 210-211. As Honneth argues, individual citizens have limited capacity to fulfil this obligation.

does appear to depend on restricting the possibility of entirely independent sovereign agency for receiving states. However, the processes that drive the acknowledgement that international obligations may (at least on some occasions) override sovereign agency do not appear to have come about by the unilateral self-reflection that Markell advocates when he argues for a politics of non-reciprocal "acknowledgement" which is self-directed and not other directed.[6] Relationships of mutual recognition, circumstances of denial of recognition, and struggles for recognition all seem to have influenced the conflict between external obligation and sovereignty (construed as the right to exclude non-nationals). Both the existence of current international rights to claim asylum and the changes that have occurred in Australian immigration policies appear to have been influenced (at least in part) by particular struggles for recognition and not solely by self-reflection on the part of signatories to the international conventions or the members of the Australian community.

Markell argues that recognition theorists problematically assume that individuals have a pre-formed identity that precedes their actions. As I contended in Chapter Two, Honneth's theoretical model does not assume that identity is pre-constituted in this way. In fact, Honneth argues that personal identity is an on-going, but inherently fragile, project that is dependent on our interactions with other people. These questions of identity are highly relevant to issues of immigration because the process of categorisation of applicants appears to bestow what might be understood as a type of identity that brings together individuals who are otherwise quite diverse in their particular characteristics and attributes. Although asylum seekers are categorised as a group with regards to policy implementation they are, in fact, only a group in terms of their shared circumstances. They appear to become a group of necessity because they have similar needs to escape oppression. They

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[6] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*; pp. 34-35.

have very limited capacity as individuals to overcome the various mechanisms of deterrence such as border surveillance, off shore processing, and limiting of legal assistance that are implemented to thwart their struggle to claim asylum.

Although asylum seekers often struggle together as a group (and in that limited sense can be said to share a group identity), the recognition of refugee status that may or may not be given to each asylum seeker is allocated on an individual basis according to their particular life circumstances.[7] Some aspects of identity that are expressed in the immigration categories do exist prior to the application (e.g. having particular work skills or family relationships, or being a victim of persecution) but this does not mean that mutual recognition necessarily requires the recognition of pre-formed identities. In fact, the need for adequate levels of recognition in all three spheres could promote a much broader understanding of individual applicants that did not view them solely as a skilled worker, a family member or an asylum seeker but considered the many other aspects of their lives.

Each of Markell's objections of the impossibility of mutual recognition, the role of sovereign agency and the problem of recognition of pre-formed identities appears to have some relevance in the context of justice/injustice Australian immigration policies. However, none of his objections appears to undermine the capacity of Honneth's theory to address the questions of justice and injustice that arise.

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[7] There have been some occasions when group membership has been a criterion for admission to Australia or for being granted permanent residency. For example, many Chinese students who were already in Australia were afforded special protection after the Tiananmen Square massacres of 1989. Kosovars and East Timorese were afforded special temporary protection in 1999 and current policy provides 500 addition places for Iraqis.

b)   Oliver's challenges

Oliver's account of the experiences of oppressed peoples and her concerns about the role of conflict can help to shed light on some aspects of immigration policy and on the processes that have driven policy changes. But Honneth's theory can encompass Oliver's account of witnessing (although it may be underemphasized by Honneth) and also explain the importance of conflict in overcoming oppression. Oliver argues that the struggle for recognition inevitably produces pathological relationships of dependency for oppressed people because they are compelled to seek recognition from their oppressors. The "unauthorised" asylum seekers who undertake long journeys over land and then risk their lives at sea on unseaworthy boats certainly appear to be engaged in a substantial amount of struggle in order to escape from persecution or other undesirable life circumstances. A number of people who have been kept in mandatory detention for long periods of time have gone on hunger strike or sewn up their lips in protest against their incarceration. These actions also appear to reflect a struggle against the lack of recognition that is manifest in denial of universal human rights and intensified by prison-like living conditions and prolonged uncertainty. But are these actions the struggles for recognition that Honneth describes?

Honneth suggests that experiences of inadequate recognition may generate a struggle for recognition, if political and cultural circumstances make this a possibility. Most "unauthorised" asylum seekers in Australia have been found to be legitimate refugees who are claiming the right to protection from persecution. They are aware that this right exists by international agreement (i.e. "political circumstances") and they are compelled to claim

this form of recognition even though it may require a substantial struggle to do so.[8] This does not mean (as Oliver has argued) that these oppressed people are forced to direct their struggle for recognition towards their original persecutors or oppressors. In fact, they redirect their struggle for recognition and attempt to enter a state where they expect to escape the original persecution and be afforded an adequate level of respect. But the Australian state has formulated specific immigration policies to deter asylum seekers and reduce the possibilities for seeking asylum. In some instances, these policies appear to result in what could be construed as new circumstances of oppression where people are held indefinitely in mandatory detention, only given temporary protection, or required to repay the cost of their own detention. Even in these circumstances, many potential asylum seekers are not deterred. They continue to struggle in order to escape oppression and achieve an adequate level of recognition.

Oliver could contend that asylum seekers who are in mandatory detention are actually compelled to seek recognition from their oppressors in these circumstances. But an important part of Oliver's own theory can help to explain the multiple dimensions of mutual recognition that are relevant here. This aspect of Oliver's theory may not be (as she suggests) an alternative to intersubjective recognition, but could in fact be a form of facilitation of mutual recognition that may be under emphasised by Honneth's account. Oliver stresses the importance of opportunities for oppression to be articulated or revealed in some way through processes of "witnessing". Asylum seekers are required to bear witness to the circumstances of their oppression in interviews with the representatives of

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[8] In general, "84 per cent of all asylum seekers arriving in Australia without proper documentation are found to be legitimate refugees and are able to stay". See http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/comments/20598/ Accessed 7 May 2009. I will address the issue of "illegal" "economic" immigrants who are not eligible for refugee status in the next section.

the Department of Immigration in order to have their claim for asylum assessed. But the opportunities for asylum seekers to interact with the wider community are specifically curtailed by mandatory detention, particularly when detention facilities are situated in remote off shore facilities that are difficult for supporters and the media to access.

This effective silencing has been partially breached by the intervention of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the Refugee Council of Australia, which represents non-government organizations such as Amnesty International, A Just Australia, Oxfam, and other advocacy groups who support refugee rights. This provides a wider opportunity for asylum seekers to articulate their experiences of persecution, and to draw attention to their circumstances of mandatory detention, temporary protection and/or detention debt. Advocates play an important role in recording and collating these first person accounts and publicising them to the wider Australian community and policy makers.

I have suggested that social justice is not necessarily achieved unilaterally or bilaterally and multi-faceted relationships of recognition do appear to play a role in these circumstances. Recognition in this context is not just a bilateral interaction between asylum seekers and the institutions of the state that control immigration policies and procedures. The role of the advocacy bodies who intervene and lobby on behalf of asylum seekers appears to be tremendously important in the processes that have driven policy changes.[9] Advocacy groups and to some extent the media have been able to facilitate the process of asylum seekers bearing witness (in the way that Oliver has described) to the

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[9] Volker Heins also argues that groups of people assuming the role of advocates can influence the course of conflicts in a multiplicity of ways. See 'Realizing Honneth: redistribution, recognition, and global justice'; p. 149.

circumstances of their original persecution and also to the impact of the additional trauma that they suffer because of the circumstances of indefinite detention, temporary protection and forced repatriation. It appears that this articulation of experiences of oppression has had some impact on public opinion and this in turn has led to changes in legislation and government policy. As in Oliver's own account of the witnessing of holocaust survivors the listeners are people who are not hostile or disinterested. They are not the original perpetrators of the oppression, or those who are responsible for maintaining the circumstances that may be experienced as perpetuating the oppression.[10] So witnessing is highly relevant in this context, but it is not opposed to recognition. In fact, witnessing appears to be needed to facilitate recognition.

Although Oliver is concerned that recognition theorists overemphasise the importance of conflict, the struggles that arise in the process of seeking asylum do appear to be closely connected to moral reactions and based on perceptions of injustice. The struggles of "unauthorised" asylum seekers may involve high levels of conflict with border detection agencies, Department of Immigration officials and detention centre staff, but the alternative may be to remain in circumstances of oppression.[11] In these circumstances, conflict may be (as Honneth might contend) both an important indicator of these experiences of injustice and a mechanism for claiming adequate recognition. If there is no other way to escape oppression it seems that conflict may be inevitable.

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[10] In Oliver's example of "witnessing" the listeners are not the architects of the Holocaust or the prison guards. The listeners are Yale University Professors. See *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*; p. 17.

[11] Violent conflict is also a genuine risk for many asylum seekers who opt for the more "authorised" route of waiting in UNHCR refugee camps to have their claim assessed. See http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,IRIN,,PAK,4809b9991e,0.html and http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,IRIN,,THA,49705107c,0.html Accessed 7 May 2009.

Although none of Markell's and Oliver's objections appear to pose an insurmountable problem for Honneth's theory in the context of immigration policies, Fraser poses a different set of challenges that might appear to be somewhat more difficult to address.

c)   Fraser's challenges

Fraser argues that issues of social justice cannot be adequately addressed solely by theories of recognition because the recognition paradigm focuses exclusively on cultural injustices such as cultural domination, non-recognition or disrespect, to the neglect of socio-economic injustices such as exploitation or economic marginalisation, which require analysis through a paradigm of redistribution. In the following discussion I will explore these assertions by using Honneth's theory of recognition to consider the issues of "economic" migration. I contend that Honneth's theoretical framework has the potential to provide an interesting and revealing analysis of the economic dimensions of immigration that does not require the perspectival dualism that Fraser advocates.

The issues of redistribution, distribution and maldistribution of material resources are certainly very relevant to any analysis of the processes that drive and control immigration. In fact, these "economic" issues underpin Australian immigration policies in a number of obvious and not so obvious ways and this could suggest that Fraser's dual perspective might be needed to adequately conceptualise the full range of issues that are involved. As I argued in Chapter Five, the tripartite recognition order of Australian immigration policies ensures that the majority of applicants are admitted on the basis of their work or business skills. These work-based achievements and attributes are closely connected to distribution

of resources because they enhance material wealth for both the skilled migrants and the broader Australian community. I also highlighted that Australian family migration policies are influenced by patterns of wealth distribution because wealthier applicants are able to sponsor loved ones and (in the case of parent visas) to ensure that applications will be processed more rapidly. The Australian Humanitarian Program and the deterrents and controls that target potential asylum seekers are specifically designed to ensure that so called "economic migrants" who "seek a better life for themselves or their family" (but are not eligible for refugee status) are not admitted in this category. In all of these instances it seems evident that apparently "economic" factors can, and do, influence the outcome and/or intent of immigration policies.

The question of "illegal" economic migrants is a somewhat hidden subtext of all of the Australian (and probably all) immigration policies. The multiple layers of border controls and deterrents are intended not only to protect the Australian population from threats to physical security such as those that that might be caused by admitting criminals and terrorists, but also to protect a type of economic security by controlling the surge of comparatively cheap labour that could be expected to enter Australia if the borders were not controlled. All of the controls are designed to avoid admitting migrants who come to Australia to work but do not meet the skilled, family or humanitarian migration criteria. There are also numerous policies and procedures of the immigration, taxation and welfare agencies, and policing authorities that are designed to identify and remove those who have been able to enter without permission and/or stay and work without the appropriate working visa.[12]

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[12] Official estimates suggest that 47,800 people were working illegally in Australia at the end of 2008. See http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/87illegal.htm Accessed 14 September 2009.

Fraser might maintain that a specifically "economic" analytical perspective is required to fully comprehend the socio-economic injustices of exploitation or economic marginalisation that are embedded (sometimes covertly) in these immigration policies. But, as I shall argue in this section, a specifically economic analysis is inadequate in these circumstances and it may actually be misleading. This does not mean that the economic factors are not highly relevant, sometimes appearing to be overwhelmingly so, but it does suggest that recognition is always sufficiently relevant that it cannot be disregarded or put to one side (even at an analytical level). In fact, Honneth's theory can be usefully employed to reveal the "moral grammar" that underpins a number of the aspects of "economic" and economically influenced Australian immigration policy and also international redistribution and distribution policies.

As I previously demonstrated, each of the categories of Australian immigration maps on in a prima facie interestingly way to the types of recognition that Honneth describes but all of the categories are influenced by all of the types of recognition. Many questions of "economic" justice or injustice are closely connected to issues that relate to multiple forms of adequate/inadequate recognition and how they are interrelated in the lives of individuals. For example, under the "white Australia" policy, some migrants were excluded on the basis of their "innate" characteristics of race, skin colour or ethnicity (a problem of lack of respect in Honneth's terms). These factors were not necessarily connected to the issues of social "class" that are traditionally the focus of questions of economic injustice (and analytically connected to the economic perspective for Fraser). However, they underpinned the inclusion/exclusion of immigrants in ways that may not have been solely "economic" in intent but were certainly "economic" in outcome. The

outcome was to enable people from the UK and some other European countries to achieve better working conditions and remuneration. Of course, although this group were better off others were excluded and were arguably made worse off. The economic imperatives that drove this program were clearly bound up with the "recognition" order of the country at the time. There were complex cultural and economic issues that were involved in these circumstances, but it is not clear why any of them would require the adoption of two distinct analytical perspectives to consider their moral relevance. These issues of distribution and recognition are not only empirically interwoven (as Fraser might agree) but also difficult to distinguish analytically.

Indeed it is arguable that attempting to separate issues of distribution and recognition may actually obscure the broader questions of justice that are at stake. For example, the question of justice for asylum seekers is frequently asked from the perspective of the economic interests of migrants and those who are able to benefit economically from that. It is argued that asylum seekers who can afford to travel to Australia and/or pay "people smugglers" are unworthy applicants who should not be admitted. This analysis is highly questionably when the issue is considered in terms of recognition. Refugee status (a form of respect in Honneth's framework) is determined on the basis of escaping from persecution and not on the basis of lack of material wealth (poverty is not actually one of the criteria that are considered to be acceptable grounds for seeking asylum). The positing of distinct economic considerations, distinct, that is, from moral/recognition ones lends itself to regressive forms of analysis that demonise certain groups and disables us from seeing the moral basis of their claims.

The recognition framework can also help to illuminate the economic justice/injustice that occurs in redistribution and distribution at a broader international level. There appear to be two main mechanisms that can control the flow of material wealth from the more prosperous "first world" to the members of the less prosperous developing states and they can be understood in terms of the types of recognition that Honneth articulates. Firstly, the processes of direct foreign aid from individual states or funding from international organizations such as the World Bank might be understood as forms of redistribution that stem from universal respect on the basis of universal human rights (recognition as a form of respect in Honneth's terms).[13] The funds and resources that flow via NGOs such as Oxfam, the Red Cross, WorldVision and Care Australia might also be interpreted in this way as an attempt to channel a redistribution of resources on the basis of shared humanity, particularly in times of crisis such as famine and natural disasters.[14] This can be made sense of as a kind of recognition (on the basis of universal respect) in Honneth's framework without needing an external "economic" standpoint.[15]

But there is also a second type of mechanism that is less obviously to do with recognition, and this might seem to pose a greater challenge to Honneth's theory. This mechanism involves the flow of material wealth via processes of distribution (rather than redistribution). It could be argued that this is the outcome of what are usually understood as the relatively unfettered processes of international trade, or "market forces" as Fraser

[13] Although it must be conceded that other more self-serving motivation such as a desire to maintain relative stability in neighbouring countries and other strategically important states may well be a large motivational factor in these arrangements.

[14] These arrangements appear to mirror the types of redistribution that occur through state-based welfare payments or charitable donations that happen at a more local level.

[15] These activities could also be interpreted as the type of Weberian ethic of brotherliness or universalistic love ethos that extends to all people in need that has been identified by Volker Heins, particularly perhaps where these organizations have a religious motivation. See 'Realizing Honneth: redistribution, recognition, and global justice'; p. 147.

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would term them. These factors can be interpreted (following Habermas) as a part of an

ontologically distinct sphere of material reproduction that is purely instrumental and

system driven.[16]

Fraser certainly appears to embrace this type of interpretation when she argues that the

distinguishing feature of capitalist societies is "a quasi-objective, anonymous, impersonal

market order that follows a logic of its own".[17] For Fraser, the market order is "culturally

embedded ... but it is not directly governed by cultural schemas of evaluation".[18] Although

she concedes that the principle of achievement has some impact on the mechanisms that

distribute wealth, she argues that this is overridden by "impersonal system mechanisms,

which prioritise maximisation of corporate profits".[19] But it could be argued that

Honneth's theory can also understand the processes of distribution from a recognition

point of view because even these mechanisms are not solely the outcome of market forces.

I argued in Chapter Three that Honneth does not claim that his theory can explain the

working of free-market capitalism and it is certainly not within the bounds of my own

expertise to even attempt that task. But Honneth does argue that his theory can reveal the

moral constraints that underlie various social interactions including those that appear to be

primarily in an "economic" sphere and that it can critique the effects of economic injustice.

This is because "even seemingly 'anonymous' economic processes" are actually

determined by underlying normative rules, tacit consent and legislation.[20]. In terms of

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[16] Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press,1984).
[17] Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; p. 214.
[18] *Ibid.*
[19] *Ibid.,* p. 215.
[20] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* p. 254.

Honneth's theoretical framework the wealth distribution that occurs via economic immigration does appear to be very closely connected to the recognition (or lack of recognition) that occurs through the established mechanisms of esteem. This means that recognition theory can be used to interpret the policies and processes that control international immigration and perhaps to shed some light on the justice or injustice of these mechanisms of wealth distribution.

The questions that are commonly raised about the justice or injustice of market forces often appear to be focused on the forces of globalisation, such as the actions of multinational corporations or the mechanisms for international movement of capital and whether there should be a greater role for state legislative controls in policing these activities. The actual experiences of many workers and their problems of exploitation and economic marginalisation can be somewhat overlooked or overshadowed by these broader debates. The "free" market does appear to be relatively free for multinational corporations who wish to establish operations across state borders and the movement of capital is also relatively free.[21] But there are underlying norms and regulations (i.e. immigration policies and legislation) that regulate the possibility of movement of certain types of labour across borders. If economic immigration was primarily influenced by "impersonal system mechanisms, which prioritise maximisation of corporate profits",[22] we might expect that easy access to relatively cheap labour would be a beneficial outcome for market-based considerations of profit maximisation. In fact, the movement of workers is constrained by state policies that decide who may or may not be admitted. It is a state-based recognition

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[21] It should be noted that even the transfer of capital is not entirely free from constraints of "recognition". It is subject to legal norms and, therefore, of moral significance. There are also some legislative controls on multinational corporations that are applied by their home states.
[22] Nancy Fraser, *Ibid.,* p. 215.

order that attempts to control the international labour market and not "a quasi-objective, anonymous, impersonal market order that follows a logic of its own".[23] So even the "market-driven" distribution of resources cannot be analysed independently of the recognition framework at play. This conclusion is further supported by the assertion that even "economic" migrants are engaged in a morally motivated social struggle at some level.

Migrants are not usually considered to be a "social movement" that articulates specific political or social claims, but they do certainly constitute a highly mobilised and massive social movement of people on a worldwide basis. If the flow of "economic" migrants is even partly to do with a morally motivated struggle for recognition (to have better opportunities to have adequate esteem) this poses the possibility that this type of immigration may be not entirely without a moral basis. Honneth suggests that distribution struggles are a particular form of conflict over the interpretation and evaluation of the principle of achievement.[24] Perhaps the struggles of "economic" migrants are aimed at overcoming an existing unjust international distribution of wealth by gaining access to the better working conditions and fairer remuneration that are more widely available in "first world" economies?

In the course of his debate with Fraser, Honneth argues for the importance of attending to "everyday conflicts in which those affected attempt by their own symbolic and practical efforts to alter a distribution order that they feel is unjust".[25] He also stresses the importance of reconstructing what might be understood as primarily distribution struggles

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[23] *Ibid.,* p. 214.
[24] Axel Honneth, *Ibid.,* pp. 141-142.
[25] *Ibid.,* p. 151.

so that they are not solely a matter of state redistributional measures but encompass "non-state spaces where the initial efforts to delegitimize the prevailing distribution order are undertaken".[26] These assertions appear to be very pertinent to the struggles of migrants who make substantial efforts to leave their home state and seek out better opportunities to access a more just distribution order. These struggles may not be in "non-state spaces" (except for those migrants who are or become stateless in the process) but they are external to the home state and any redistributional measures that it may have. The struggles of "illegal" economic migrants could be construed as an attempt perhaps not to "delegitimize" the prevailing distribution order but certainly to undermine or reject the legitimacy of it.

These questions of distributional and redistributional justice are also very relevant to the issues of esteem, achievement and social solidarity that I discussed in Chapter Four. In the next section, I will review the problems that I have raised with Honneth's account of the connections between esteem, achievement and social solidarity and reconsider them in the context of Australian immigration. I highlight a number of different types of conflicts and disagreements that arise with regards to immigration and argue that they can be understood as particular kinds of struggles for (or struggles over) recognition. I contend that recognition theory allows us to comprehend the relationship between these struggles in ways that are not so apparent from other theoretical viewpoints. This means that Honneth's account of the role of the struggle for recognition and its connection to social progress provides invaluable additional resources for understanding the complex "moral grammar" and multiple issues of justice that are at stake.

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[26] *Ibid.*

Section Two - The Challenge of Problems with the Achievement Principle

Honneth argues that esteem, achievements and social solidarity are closely interconnected and that self-esteem is fostered by the members of a society contributing towards the realisation of social goals within the framework of a shared value-horizon. In the context of Australian immigration esteem, achievements and social solidarity appear to be connected in some circumstances but uncoupled in others. This is partly because of the way that esteem and achievement are interpreted in these circumstances, but also because there are disagreements and conflicts about the interpretation of the achievement principle within the shared value-horizon(s) that are involved. In this section, I begin by discussing the mechanisms of esteem and achievement that are reflected in the immigration policies, I focus on some of the problems of connecting esteem, achievement and social solidarity and I consider whether they can be interpreted by Honneth's theoretical framework. I conclude that Honneth's account of the role of struggles for recognition has the capacity to provide a particularly useful framework for understanding the various conflicts that arise in the context of immigration.

I argued in Chapter Four that there are at least two different mechanisms of esteem. Esteem can be attached to "innate" personal or group characteristics or it can be attached to the particular achievements or contributions of the members of a society. Both of these types of esteem are present in the policies that have controlled or currently control immigration to Australia. Esteem on the basis of "innate" characteristics such as skin colour and ethnic origin played a significant role under the White Australia Policy leading to automatic exclusion for some potential immigrants regardless of their achievements or ability to contribute to the society. The immigration policies no longer automatically

exclude non-white/non-European applicants on the basis of what can be understood as a form of collective denigration that is tied to ethnic origin or skin colour (a lack of recognition in terms of respect). In theory, achievements, accomplishments and abilities are the key factors that are recognised for the majority of immigrants.[27] Most immigrants are admitted on the basis of the work achievements, traits and abilities that Honneth argues are historically variable qualities that are valued by a given society. This might appear to be a positive outcome in terms of Honneth's theory because many immigrants are able to achieve recognition (and consequently inclusion into Australian society) on the basis of their achievements. But the questions of justice that relate to esteem and lack of esteem in the context of immigration are actually much more complex.

Honneth concedes that the connection between social esteem and achievements can be problematic because some work-based achievements are not afforded esteem. The abilities and traits that are a prerequisite for skilled migration certainly seem to generate a positive outcome for successful applicants. But the focus on individual achievements can also work negatively to legitimise particular patterns of distribution of material wealth and life opportunities. The established mechanisms of esteem support a system where skilled workers are encouraged and included whilst less skilled or unskilled workers are deterred and excluded. The abilities and traits of some potential migrants are not publicly valued and so they are denied the opportunity to contribute to Australian society and improve their own life circumstances.

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[27] As Honneth points out, the opportunity to acquire esteem depends on certain pre-conditions that free individuals from being "collectively denigrated". See *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*; p. 130. It should be noted that the ethnic origin of asylum seekers does appear to be a highly relevant factor for some of the opposers of the humanitarian program.

Seglow's account of the separation of "achievement" and "contribution" into two different modes of esteem could appear to be relevant to these issues but the connection between "achievement" and "contribution" in immigration is quite complex and it appears to work in a different way than Seglow suggests. However, Seglow does raise a problem with expecting competitive achievements to foster social solidarity that is germane in these circumstances. Seglow contends that achievement and contribution are two different forms of esteem and he argues that Honneth conflates both types of esteem in his account without recognising the differences between them. This is problematic for Seglow because achievements (in the fields of science, business and the arts) are intrinsically competitive but contributions (in fields such as childcare, domestic duties and voluntary work) are not.[28] Seglow contends that it is difficult to see how the self-serving aspects of competitive achievements could foster social solidarity in the way that uncompetitive contributions do.[29]

The expectation of contribution to Australian society is a major factor in assessing whether particular achievements are included in the selection criteria for immigration. But this expectation of "contribution" from skilled immigrants is not connected to the work skills of childcare, domestic labour or voluntary work that Seglow identifies as uncompetitive social contributions that might be expected to foster social solidarity.[30] It is actually "achievements" (as Seglow categorises them) in meritocratic and competitive professional and business endeavours that are expected to result in contributions to Australian society,

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[28] Jonathan Seglow, 'Rights, Contributions, Achievement and the World: Some thoughts on Honneth's Recognitive Ideal'; p. 69.

[29] *Ibid.,* p. 70.

[30] The skilled migration categories do not include childcare or domestic workers, although nurses and senior managers of childcare facilities would qualify for consideration. Many of the "illegal" immigrants in countries such as the US are employed in domestic work or care work, which suggests that these skills are needed even if they are not afforded the level of social esteem that is reflected in the selection criteria for "legal" immigration.

even though (as Seglow argues) competition might seem to be an unlikely framework for fostering social inclusion and relationships of social solidarity. Attempting to immigrate is a competitive environment, particularly for skilled migrants but also for family and humanitarian migrants to some extent. Quotas are limited in every category and applicants must compete either on merit (as defined by the selection criteria) or on a first-come-first-served basis. In the case of skilled migrants, potential immigrants are competing not only with other applicants but also with existing members of the Australian community.[31] As Seglow's argument suggests, this element of competition may in fact work against the possibility of social inclusion. Achievement and social solidarity can be opposing forces in these circumstances.

Honneth is aware that there are problems with connecting individual achievements, social esteem and social solidarity. However, (as he points out) the concern is not necessarily that esteem and achievements occur in a competitive environment but that the ground rules of the competition are not fair for everyone. If esteem is connected to achievements this can be used to justify a lack of recognition of those who do not achieve according to the socially accepted norms. Honneth points out that the principle of achievement can be narrowly construed so that some achievements (such as childcare and domestic labour) do not count as achievements and are not viewed as productive contributions to society. He suggests that the current application of the achievement principle is distorted by a combination of "older worldviews" and the way that achievements are judged in capitalist

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[31] Australian employers must demonstrate that there is no suitably qualified applicant for a job within the Australian community before they can sponsor a particular skilled immigrant.

society.[32] It is this distortion of the achievement principle makes it possible to justify extremely unequal distribution of life chances and goods.

This argument suggests that the problems of connecting competitive achievements and social solidarity in Australian immigration may not be a reflection of an error in Honneth's theory per se. In fact, his theory might be able to illuminate some of the problems with the way that the achievement principle is applied in these circumstances. Exclusion on the basis of lacking the work skills that are currently esteemed might appear to be more equitable than exclusion on the basis of "innate" characteristics, but the possibility of acquiring certain skills, abilities and traits is actually highly circumstantial. There is no free access to education and training in many parts of the world and there is limited access in most places. Where an applicant was born and raised, where they currently live, and the relative wealth of their family circumstances can have as much impact on their possibility of acquiring esteem via the "achievement principle" as "innate" qualities such as skin colour had on acquiring esteem or being denigrated in the past. The competitive environment of immigration is not necessarily a fair competition for all potential applicants or for all the members of a receiving society. This issue of lack of fair opportunity in the current mechanisms of esteem and achievement can have major ramifications on the possibility of achieving and maintaining social solidarity.

There are also circumstances where esteem (as generated through work-based achievements) and social solidarity are clearly disconnected in the context of immigration because immigration legislation and policies influence the possibility of social inclusion for particular categories of immigrant. Honneth's account suggests that this type of radical

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[32] Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political Philosophical Exchange*; pp. 147-148.

disconnect would be problematic and this does appear to be the case. For example, work-based achievements and social solidarity appear to be entirely uncoupled for illegal "economic" immigrants. Inclusion in the workforce does not facilitate inclusion into the society in these circumstances.[33] If illegal "economic" immigration is even partly motivated by a struggle to acquire adequate recognition via the "achievement principle" then it appears that this struggle may often be in vain. There is little likelihood of most illegal immigrants achieving an adequate level of recognition with regards to their work. Many illegal immigrants are compelled to work in areas of employment that are considered to be menial tasks, such as care work or low-skilled hospitality jobs that are not highly valued as achievements or contributions to society. Illegal "economic" migrants may be able to achieve a higher level of self-esteem than was previously possible in their country of origin and to contribute some financial support to loved ones who remain behind in less adequate circumstances,[34] but this self-esteem and these forms of contribution are unlikely to be linked to social solidarity in the receiving society. This disconnect between achievements, esteem and social solidarity should not be seen as a refutation of Honneth's theory, rather recognition theory would suggest that the lack of opportunity for esteem would give rise to social conflict if the circumstances permit.[35]

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[33] This separation of esteem on the basis of work-based achievements and social solidarity is also a significant problem for "guest workers" such as the Turkish "Gastarbeiter" who remained as workers in Germany without full citizenship rights for many years.

[34] This could be understood as a way of maintaining social solidarity with members of the home society.

[35] The possibility of undertaking a struggle for recognition in these circumstances is usually curtailed by the social and political circumstances because "illegal" immigrants need to avoid being detected by the immigration authorities. However, in the US in 2006 there were substantial protests against proposed measures to criminalise "illegal" immigration. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4961734.stm Accessed 9 September 2009.

There are also broader problems of recognition and lack of recognition that interfere with the possibility of esteem, achievements and social solidarity being connected in circumstances of immigration. I have focused on the question of recognition or lack of recognition for immigrants, but the issue of maintaining adequate recognition for the existing members of receiving societies is also highly relevant and would perhaps be considered to be more important in terms of Honneth's own interpretation of his framework. Many Australians are concerned that the immigration program (particularly skilled immigration) could disadvantage them. This issue is generally understood solely in economic terms but it could also be interpreted as a concern about a lack of recognition because some Australians may have fewer opportunities to develop and use their own abilities and traits in order to contribute to society (and therefore have less access to social esteem).

Relatively easy access to skilled labour from overseas may act as a disincentive for business or government to educate and train existing members of the Australian society and/or make adequate plans to avoid future skill shortages. So skilled immigration could support the ability to avoid responsibility for addressing existing problems (and attempting to avoid future problems) of lack of recognition. There is also the question of the "brain drain" where skilled emigration can result in skill shortages in the home countries of emigrants. The achievements, attributes and skills of emigrants are no longer available as a means of fostering social solidarity in their home country.[36] If achievements and social solidarity are as closely connected as Honneth suggests, this would also be problematic in

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[36] Skilled emigration actually plays a significant role in generating skill shortages in Australia. See http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/media-releases/2008/ce08098.htm Accessed 16 October 2009.

terms of recognition theory and it might even suggest that there should be restrictions on emigration in some circumstances.

These concerns about maintaining adequate levels of recognition in receiving and home societies can be articulated in political movements that seek to eliminate or restrict immigration. For example, the anti-immigration One Nation political party gained significant support in Australian state and federal elections from 1997 to 2001 with a policy platform that advocated a "zero net immigration program" that would match the number of permanent departures each year.[37] Anti-immigration policies such as this are often supported with arguments that relate to environmental viability, economic sustainability, or the importance of maintaining some notion of social cohesion based on ethnic purity or minimising ethnic diversity. However, concerns that immigrants are taking "our" jobs (i.e. restricting access to work-based achievements and social esteem) are also frequently articulated and they may actually be a highly significant factor in the popularity of these political movements.

All of these issues of competition for social esteem, lack of fair opportunity to compete, disconnection of achievement and social inclusion for some immigrants, and maintaining adequate levels of social esteem for existing members of a society generate considerable tensions and conflicts in the context of immigration. The struggles that ensue from these conflicts can appear to be irresolvable from many theoretical viewpoints. Although Honneth's theory does not provide a solution to these conflicts, it can help to illuminate the opposing positions that are at stake and the role that struggles for recognition and also

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[37] http://www.australianpolitics.com/parties/onenation/immigration-policy-98.shtml
Accessed 16 October 2009.

struggles over recognition (as I will argue in the following discussion) may play in generating and articulating the on-going disputes.

Section Three - The Struggle for Recognition and Social Progress

Honneth does not specifically address the questions of recognition that occur outside of or across state borders. But his focus on the importance of struggles for recognition can provide a useful account of the multiple types of conflict that arise with regards to immigration. Honneth argues that his "recognitional-theoretical concept of justice" could be used for two critical tasks. Firstly, he suggests that recognition theory might provide an "advocatory defence of moral progress *in* the respective spheres of recognition" and, secondly, he argues that his theory might provide "constant reflexive examination ... of the borders that have respectively become established *between* the various recognition principles' sovereign territories".[38]

As I argued (in Chapter Five and the first sections of this chapter), the struggles for recognition in the circumstances of Australian immigration do appear to raise questions about moral progress *in* each of the types of recognition with regards to a number of existing norms that relate to respect (e.g. universal rights), love and esteem (e.g. the achievements that are valued and expected to contribute to social solidarity and shared value-horizons). A second set of struggles for recognition appears to question the relevance and significance of the norms that apply *between* the types of recognition. These questions appear to challenge not only the borders between "the various recognition

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[38] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition and Justice'; p. 362. My emphasis.

principles' sovereign territories"[39] but *also* the physical borders between the sovereign territories of nation states.

Many of these conflicts can also be articulated in different terms by other theoretical frameworks such as liberal theories of justice, the ethics of care and communitarianism. Honneth's account of recognition in terms of respect stresses the importance of autonomy and of universal respect that stems from the basic humanity of all persons. This could arguably coincide with the views of some liberal cosmopolitans and form the basis of a stance to argue for open (or more open) borders on the grounds that individual rights should not be subject to unreasonable coercion. This type of argument provides strong support for a general right to migrate and also for the particular rights of refugees to seek asylum. The need for recognition in love relationships might also support fairly unrestricted immigration if it enabled family reunion or helped to maintain other love relationships.[40]

Honneth's account of the importance of social solidarity through mechanisms of achievement-based esteem could arguably coincide with the views of some communitarians who could contend that unrestricted immigration would lead to social fragmentation because it jeopardises the opportunities for social esteem of existing community members and for social solidarity within existing shared value-horizons. This could generate equally strong arguments for focusing on providing adequate access to recognition for existing members of a society and, perhaps, for minimising emigration and immigration. These pro and anti immigration positions are clearly in tension and can

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[39] *Ibid.*
[40] The ethics of care could provide a similar argument for a right to immigrate on this basis.

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appear to be entirely in opposition.   Honneth's theory can explain the motivation for both of these positions and perhaps illuminate some of these seemingly irresolvable antagonisms that can occur between other theoretical viewpoints in the context of immigration.

These opposing positions and their related struggles and antagonisms might be interpreted by recognition theory in at least two ways. If the struggles for recognition that take place within the context of immigration are understood from a "theoretical" perspective they can be construed as struggles "for" a type of recognition that is spelt out in terms of a particular theory of justice or of ethical life.[41] The claims that are raised could be evaluated in abstraction from the context in which they were raised by assessing the claim in relation to the particular standards that apply in a specific theoretical framework. For example, the struggles that relate to seeking asylum might be evaluated in terms of claims for universal rights (in a liberal theoretical context), but the struggles of some existing community members for recognition in terms of social esteem might be evaluated as claims that relate to achieving or protecting particular forms of self-realisation (in a communitarian theoretical context). Many of the struggles that are a part of the immigration process do appear, in fact, to be articulated in a similar way to these different and often conflicting theoretical points of view by opposing political and social activists, protagonists and commentators.

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[41] David Owen and James Tully, 'Redistribution and recognition: two approaches'; pp. 266-267. Owen and Tully draw the distinctions (following Anthony Simon Laden) of "theoretical" and "political" perspectives in the context of their discussion of the issues of redistribution and recognition and the democratic deliberations of citizens, but these distinctions are arguably equally pertinent to the conflicts of immigration that involve both citizens and non-citizens.

Honneth argues that justice is measured differently for each of the three types of recognition. In legally shaped relationships the principle of equality takes priority, in love relationships the principle of need has priority and in relationships that are founded on social esteem merit has priority.[42] If his model was applied from a "theoretical" perspective, each type of recognition could appear to call for a different response and this could arguably produce similarly irreconcilable antagonisms to those that can be generated between other theoretical viewpoints. In this "theoretical" perspective the struggles of immigration can be understood as struggles "between" the types of recognition. The conflicts might relate to the question of whether universal respect, esteem for particular achievements, or love relationships should be considered to be more important (or to have any relevance) in particular circumstances.

Honneth does not provide a "theoretical" way to resolve the conflicts of immigration or suggest that there might be a way for a theoretician to resolve these multiple conflicts in abstract theoretical terms. Rather he presents his theory as an explanatory and critical concept and suggests that issues of recognition actually underpin many of the social struggles that are commonly misinterpreted as being solely about self-interest. Although Honneth's theory of recognition might appear to be subject to similar limitations as other theoretical viewpoints if it were to be applied from a "theoretical" perspective, it could arguably provide a broader and perhaps more useful diagnostic framework if it was used in a different way.[43] If the struggles for recognition that take place within the context of

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[42] Axel Honneth, 'Recognition and Justice'; p. 358.

[43] Owen and Tully suggest that Honneth has a "theoretical" approach. But Honneth does not actually provide a prescriptive theoretical framework that would offer definitive answers to the multiple questions of justice that are raised by struggles for recognition. I see no reason why Honneth's theory could not be used as a descriptive and diagnostic theoretical framework, which might be applied to the "political" perspective that is proposed by Owen and Tully.

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immigration are viewed from what Owen and Tully term a "political" perspective they could be understood as struggles "over" recognition in which the various protagonists are able to challenge and modify the existing norms of reciprocal recognition through public processes of deliberation and contestation.[44]

Owen and Tully argue "struggles over recognition are struggles over the inter-subjective norms of mutual recognition through which the members ... of any system of action co-ordination (or practice of governance) are recognized and governed".[45] "Members" is intended here as a description of the citizens of a democratic state but perhaps "members" could also be construed in a broader sense to denote all those who are involved with regards to the conflicts about recognition (in particular, social inclusion and solidarity) that surround immigration. Some of the norms that are codified in immigration legislation and policies are continually reviewed, debated and sometimes modified in the course of what can be understood as complex "multilogues"[46] of recognition that involve not only citizens but also non-citizens. However, as Owen and Tully point out, this "political" perspective focuses on the field of interaction in which the conflict arises and needs to be resolved. The possibility of adopting this type of approach to struggles "over" recognition relies on conditions of public reasoning and implies the capacity to question and modify the existing forms of reciprocal recognition of others.[47] This approach might require a type of "dialogical civic freedom"[48] that allowed those who struggle for recognition in the context of immigration (including asylum seekers and "illegal" "economic" immigrants) to be able

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[44] David Owen and James Tully, 'Redistribution and recognition: two approaches'; pp. 266-267.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] James Tully, 'Struggles over recognition and distribution', *Constellations* Vol. 7: 4 (2000), pp. 469-482; p. 475.
[47] David Owen and James Tully, 'Redistribution and recognition: two approaches'; p. 267.
[48] *Ibid.,* p. 291.

to actually articulate the motivations, reasons and circumstances of their struggle in a way that is currently not possible.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The goal of this thesis was to use a theory of recognition to analyse immigration laws, policies and procedures, which have not previously been understood in terms of recognition or demands for recognition. I drew upon Honneth's theory for this purpose because it has broader scope than other theories of recognition and it is not vitiated by exclusive focus on organised socio-political movements. The wider theoretical focus of Honneth's approach opens up the possibility of interpreting the circumstances of immigration in terms of a struggle for recognition, which could seem inappropriate from other perspectives since immigrants do not form an organised group with overt political demands.

In my reconstruction of Honneth's "social theory with normative content" I drew attention to other strengths of Honneth's theory that are relevant in this context.   The inclusion of love relationships as a type of recognition that is conceptually and genetically prior to every other form offers distinct advantages for analysing the personal relationships that can be overlooked in theories that concentrate on more political issues such as legal rights. Although Honneth's account shares the emphasis that the ethics of care places on the importance relationships of love and care, his theory also explains the importance of the respect and social esteem that are generated through other types of recognition. Honneth stresses the importance of the individual autonomy and universal rights that are the focus of liberal theories of justice but he is able to provide a better account of the relevance of the social context that makes autonomy and rights a possibility. This emphasis on the importance of social context could be subjected to the criticisms that have been made against communitarianism. But Honneth's account of the mechanisms of social progress is

able to explain the importance of dissensus and the significance of the conflicts that arise when individuals and groups challenge the established social values (or frameworks of recognition in Honneth's terms). This aspect of Honneth's theory is important because it allows us to understand that the social struggles that are involved in immigration can be morally motivated and not solely about self-interest and/or material goods.

I have established that many of the challenges to Honneth's theory are unsuccessful either because they misrepresent or misinterpret his theory or because they do not entirely invalidate the possibility of using his framework in a productive way. Adequate levels of reciprocal recognition for everyone would require that dominant groups acknowledge the impossibility of maintaining their own sovereign agency by subordinating others. Adequate levels of reciprocal recognition would also require that oppressed peoples are able to articulate and overcome the circumstances of their oppression. But both of these outcomes are dependant on the types of struggles for recognition that Honneth describes (at least to some extent) where dominant groups are made aware of their subordination of others and oppressed peoples may be able to change the circumstances of their existence through struggle. As Honneth argues, struggles for recognition can be important indicators of experiences of injustice and struggles can be mechanisms that are used to overcome the injustice of inadequate recognition. Conflict can be an invaluable (but not infallible) indicator of injustice.

Many of the social conflicts that are related to immigration are commonly interpreted solely as claims for material resources, which overlooks the moral dimension that underpins many of the claims of those who struggle. Although Honneth's theory of recognition may not be able to fully explain how resources are distributed according to

market mechanisms it can still be useful for analysing experiences of economic injustice. Undertaking an analysis of the effects of the distribution of resources that occurs through market mechanisms would require a much more substantial interrogation of the way that the "achievement principle" is applied in contemporary society than I have been able to accomplish in this thesis. But what I have said points to the importance of examining the claims that are made by those who experience the effects of economic injustice and seeking to articulate the moral basis for such claims.

The social esteem that is connected to personal achievements and contributions might appear to be less problematic from a normative point of view than the social esteem that was based on social status or the esteem that relates to "innate" characteristics such as skin colour. But we have seen that there are substantial questions to be raised about which types of activities actually count as socially useful achievements and contributions to society. Honneth's focus on paid work appears to overlook some of the achievements and contributions that are not paid, although he is aware of this issue and he does see the need to address it further. We have seen that Honneth's theory can easily be used as a framework for exploring the issues of recognition and lack of recognition that are at stake in claims that relate to the undervaluing of particular activities and types of work. However, the details of such an approach remain to be elaborated.

Applying recognition theory to immigration in the manner undertaken in the thesis shows that the category of skilled migration expresses current interpretations of the achievement principle. The selection criteria for skilled migration to Australia emphasise the work-based achievements that are currently expected to make a contribution or be socially useful. The majority of successful applicants are admitted on the basis of this type of

social esteem, which suggests these achievements are currently considered to be more important for Australian society than other types of recognition. Skilled immigrants are also well placed to have adequate levels of recognition in terms of love and respect because it is relatively easy for them to bring close family members with them and they are not excluded on the basis of "innate" characteristics such as ethnic origin.

The selection criteria for the family migration program, on the other hand, reflect the social norms that are involved in the current mechanisms of recognition in terms of love with the exception of the parent visa category, which also assesses the wealth of potential applicants or their sponsors. The humanitarian program reflects some of the current norms of universal rights (respect in Honneth's terms) although (as I have argued) this type of immigration is not universal in scope. But we were able to criticise the mechanisms that are used to control the humanitarian program by drawing on recognition theory in a number of ways. Mandatory detention, excision of Australian territory, off shore processing in order to restrict the possibility of claiming asylum and offering only temporary protection all constitute a lack of recognition in terms of respect. These policies could also be criticised by liberal theorists on the basis of their lack of adherence to relevant human rights conventions. But recognition theory can highlight the broader problems of lack of recognition in terms of love and esteem that are the result of various policies.

Mandatory detention produces inadequate recognition in terms of love relationships for children who are detained and temporary protection visa holders are denied access to loved ones who remained overseas. The policies of mandatory detention and temporary protection could also be criticised from the point of view of an ethics of care. But

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Honneth's account of the importance of social esteem that is acquired through personal achievements informs another layer of criticism that is not necessarily so clear from the perspective of liberal theories or the ethics of care. The emotional and psychological trauma that is connected to mandatory detention and temporary protection is very likely to hamper the capacity of refugees to be able to successfully apply their abilities and traits in paid work. This lack of opportunity to achieve and (therefore) to be considered to be socially useful severely curtails the possibility of refugees being able to have adequate levels of social esteem. Recognition theory shows that the problems of injustice that arise in the context of immigration are multi-dimensional and not only a question of a lack of human rights, a lack of adequate access to love relationships or a lack of opportunity to contribute to society in terms of socially useful work skills. The injustice can involve some or all of these aspects of mutual recognition at the same time. This capacity of recognition theory to consider multiple questions of justice concurrently is particularly useful because, as Honneth argues, adequate recognition requires adequate levels of love, respect and esteem.

Although I have defended Honneth's theory against the challenges that were made by Markell and Oliver there are some aspects of these other theories that have the potential to enhance the capacity of recognition theory to reveal the moral dimensions of the circumstances of immigration (if these theories were interpreted in a particular way). I have not fully explored the role that Markell's account of unrealisable sovereign agency could play in explaining the motivation for interpreting the sovereignty of the Australian state as a right to exclude, but there are substantial questions that could be raised about the moral basis of this understanding of sovereignty and about the role that particular interpretations of sovereignty can play in fostering injustice. Oliver argues that oppressed

peoples can be effectively silenced and stresses the importance of providing opportunities for them to be able to bear witness to the circumstances of their oppression. There are very limited opportunities for asylum seekers to express their plight to the wider community and the role of non-government and advocacy groups and the media in facilitating this process could be explored in more depth.

The subtext of all of the immigration controls appears to be an attempt to include skilled "economic" migrants and exclude unskilled "illegal" economic migrants whose motivation for coming to Australia is to seek a better life for themselves or their family (i.e. assumed to be solely self-interest). These economic issues might suggest that a specifically economic analytical perspective (of the type that Fraser advocates) is required to comprehend the economically driven injustices that can occur in these circumstances. But a specifically economic analysis is inadequate for capturing the moral dimensions that are at stake and an economic analysis can be misleading. For example, a solely economic analysis is particularly problematic when it is argued that asylum seekers who can afford to travel to Australia with the assistance of "people smugglers" are unworthy applicants. Refugee status is determined on the basis of escaping persecution and not on the basis of lack of material wealth. Poverty is neither a sufficient nor a necessary pre-condition for seeking asylum.

Honneth's theory of recognition can help to explain the mechanisms of foreign aid and funding from international organizations such as the World Bank that redistribute material wealth on an international basis and we could interpret the motivation for this redistribution as a form of universal respect. Recognition theory can also make sense of the relatively unfettered processes of international trade or market forces by highlighting

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the effects of the normative rules, tacit consent and legislation that impacts on these processes. Immigration controls can be understood as a way of controlling the labour market according to norms that are not solely concerned with maximising profitability. "Economic" migrants are subjected to the norms of immigration controls and "illegal" "economic" immigration can be interpreted as a method of challenging or circumventing these norms and obtaining better opportunities to have adequate social esteem and other forms of recognition. If the struggles of economic migrants are understood as conflicts over the application of the principle of esteem then "illegal" economic immigration appears as a way of overcoming the existing unjust international distribution of wealth by gaining access to the better working conditions and levels of remuneration that are available in "first world" economies.

The expectation of contribution to Australian society in terms of socially useful skills is the major factor for most successful applicants in assessing whether they meet the selection criteria for inclusion. The socially useful skills are deemed to be valuable within a competitive meritocracy that includes not only immigrants but also members of the receiving Australian society. This competition for recognition in terms of esteem generates tensions that can work against social solidarity. Those applicants who do not qualify for inclusion according to the established norms of the achievement principle may be able to gain "illegal" admission but their chance of being able to gain adequate levels of social esteem and thus being included in the mechanisms of social solidarity are very limited.

I have shown how Honneth's idea of struggles for recognition can be used to explain the moral dimensions of the way that immigrants and members of the receiving society are

compelled to compete for social esteem according to the current norms of achievement that

apply in the circumstances of immigration. But it has not been within the remit of this

thesis to determine how struggles of this particular kind ought to be resolved.

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