

Equality

Introduction

The debate that has most clearly and decisively shaped feminist theorizing during the 1980s and 1990s has been the 'equality/difference' debate. Equality and difference, both rich, complex and contested terms in their own right, have come to represent distinct and competing perspectives within feminist theory, in which they stand for two fundamentally antagonistic accounts of the nature of gender and of the feminist project. Those interested in delineating ideological positions have mapped the pursuit of 'equality' onto liberal or socialist forms of feminism and the pursuit of 'difference' onto radical or cultural feminism. Those more interested in geographical diversity have mapped equality and difference perspectives onto Anglo-American and French or Italian feminisms respectively.

If one augments the ideological and the geographical frames of analysis with a chronological perspective, one might reasonably depict the trajectory of feminist theory in relation to equality/difference as starting with equality, shifting to difference, and then moving on to resolution of the dichotomy. Some commentators have chosen to label these stages of feminism as waves, first-wave feminism being characterized by the commitment to equality, second-wave by the commitment to difference, and the present third wave by a commitment to diversity. Others see the move from equality to difference as internal to second-wave feminism: Nancy Fraser, for example, argues that the shift occurs within the US women's movement in the late 1970s (Fraser 1997a: 100). While each of these chronological narratives undeniably captures something of the

feeling within feminist debates, each is perhaps overly schematic and itself embedded within a particular normative frame. It is equally possible to characterize the dynamic nature of the equality/difference debate not as a progression from hypothesis, via antithesis to a stable synthesis, but rather as an ever-present and unresolved oscillation between binary opposites, the deconstruction of which is central. The hope of resolution and reconstruction is viewed from this perspective with scepticism.

I shall attempt to map the equality and difference debates from the perspective of current attempts to move 'beyond' equality and difference. It is the 'going beyond' that most clearly characterizes the present moment of gender theorizing. In order to evaluate this project, one will need to understand not only the nature of the dichotomy between the 'equality' and 'difference' perspectives as commonly defined (along with their respective critiques of one another), but also the various strategies adopted for moving beyond dichotomous thinking. The strategies of inclusion, reversal and displacement take the form, in the context of this debate, of endorsements of equality, difference and diversity respectively.

The status of the third diversity perspective is complex. It is not intended to encompass all the various attempts made to 'go beyond' or to synthesize the equality and difference perspectives. These are best understood as complex negotiations of existing archetypes rather than articulations of a new one. However, the particular attempt to 'go beyond' equality and difference that is inspired by a desire to explore the workings of paradox, without the illusion of resolution, can, I think, be seen as a third distinctive archetype.

Equality and Difference

'Throughout its history', argue Bock and James, 'women's liberation has been seen sometimes as the right to be equal, sometimes as the right to be different' (Bock and James 1992: 4). The central tension between these two positions arises from a dispute as to whether a commitment to gender-neutrality can ever be achieved by pursuing a strategy of equality. Some feel that, in the context of a patriarchal society, the pursuit of equality might inevitably result in requiring everyone to assimilate to the dominant gender norm of masculinity. Those who believe the former to be possible fall within the 'equality' perspective; those who are sceptical adopt a 'difference' perspective. Put bluntly, women appear to be faced by a clear choice: in a society where the male is the norm, one can – as a woman – seek either assimilation or differentiation. One can aim to transcend one's gendered particularity, or to affirm it: pursue 'gender-neutrality' or seek 'gender-visibility'.

Equality

Those who approach gender and political theory from an equality perspective firmly believe that gender ought to be politically irrelevant, or non-pertinent. The fact that men and women are commonly understood to be different is insufficient reason to treat them differently within the political sphere. The project of any polity truly committed to liberal principles of equality should be to transcend sexist presumptions about gender difference which have worked to discriminate against women, to grant women equal rights with men and to enable women to participate equally with men in the public sphere. Gender difference is viewed as a manifestation of sexism, as a patriarchal creation used to rationalize the inequality between the sexes. The widespread presumption that women were not fully rational was repeatedly used as a justification for continuing to exclude them from full citizenship. The equality theorist's argument that there is a manifest need to counter such myths is upheld in the face of all evidence which might appear to indicate that there actually are gender differences (such as differing educational aptitudes or vocational ambition). These, they maintain, are simply the result of generations of sexual inequality. If different gender characteristics exist, they are socially constructed in a sexist society to the benefit of men and the disadvantage of women.

Given that the equality theorist believes gender differences to be created and perpetuated in the interests of men, their project is to advocate the transcendence of gender differences. The idea that women 'are different' has been used to exclude women from valued and fulfilling social engagement. The notion that women might not be capable of the rational, abstract, universalizing form of reasoning needed to engage in public arenas of work and politics needs to be countered with an assertion of women's similarity to men. As Fraser notes, 'From the equality perspective, then, gender difference appeared to be inextricable from sexism. The political task was thus clear: the goal of feminism was to throw off the shackles of "difference" and establish equality, bringing men and women under a common measure' (Fraser 1997a: 100). From the equality perspective gender difference is synonymous with inferiority and is to be rejected in the name of a more genuinely inclusive just social order.

Difference

In contrast, difference theorists accept and even celebrate gender differences. Men and women are different, they argue, but difference should

not be read as inferiority. Equality theorists argue that 'gender difference' is either a straightforward myth or a contingent result of social conditioning, but in either case needs to be transcended. Difference theorists, on the other hand, argue that 'gender difference' is either a biological given or a result of social conditioning (see Chapter 2), but in either case needs to be recognized and valued.

Whereas the equality theorist argues for women's integration into the existing social order, the difference perspective seeks to reverse the order of things: to place at the centre that which is currently marginalized, to value that which is currently devalued, to privilege that which is currently subordinated. The nurturing, peace-loving, intuitive and emotional qualities of women are celebrated rather than subordinated. The individualistic, competitive, rational qualities of patriarchal society are viewed with suspicion and hostility rather than admiration and longing. The aim is to lessen the power, not to join the ranks, of the male order. In the specific context of political theory this involves replacing male-ordered thinking with a discourse that privileges women's experiences and women's perspectives. The political task here is the reversal of that proposed by the equality theorist. The goal of feminism is to make clear the fundamental difference between men and women and to enable women to gain a positive sense of their common identity as women. Once this is gained, women can then demand that their distinctive voice is heard and perspective valued.

Ferguson succinctly summarizes this approach. 'The creation of women's voice, or a feminist standpoint, or a gynocentric theory, entails immersion in a world divided between male and female experience in order to critique the power of the former and valorise the alternative residing in the latter. It is a theoretical project that opposes the identities and coherencies contained in patriarchal theory in the name of a different set of identities and coherencies, a different and better way of thinking and living' (Ferguson 1993: 3-4). From the difference perspective the denial of gender difference represses women's authentic nature. A genuinely inclusive just social order will necessarily recognize women's specificity and embody female as well as (or perhaps instead of) male values.

Between equality and difference

The fundamental disagreement between equality and difference theorists centres on the question of neutrality. Equality theorists accept the basic claim underpinning most liberal political theory and its practical political institutions, that the liberal ideal of equality is itself neutral

vis-à-vis gender. If women are in practice not equal with men, this is as a result of contingent distortions of the ideal of neutrality. The appropriate response to the inequality between the sexes is for women to pursue the ideal of neutrality more rigorously: to hold liberalism accountable to its own professed ideals. Difference theorists on the other hand see the ideal of neutrality as itself partial. Rather than perceiving the liberal commitment to gender-neutrality and equality as an inspiring, if sadly unfulfilled, ideal, difference theorists argue that what appears neutral is actually androcentric or male-defined. Appeals to gender-neutrality are therefore complicit with the structures that denigrate the feminine. If there is no genuinely neutral position to adopt with regard to gender, one is forced to choose between assimilation to the dominant male norm or celebration and revaluation of the subordinate female other: inclusion or reversal.

A practical example here should help to indicate the nature of the dispute. When considering how employment legislation ought to be drafted in order to deal with the fact that women may require pregnancy leave and benefits, two distinct strategies both aiming at gender justice have repeatedly emerged. The first approach proposes that pregnancy should be included within general gender-neutral leave and benefit policies. Such policies would be relevant to any physical condition that renders anyone, male or female, unable to work. One formulation of this equality perspective would be simply to apply leave and benefit laws developed for a male workforce to both men and women. Many feminists have been quick to point out that this does not actually constitute the pursuit of gender-neutrality, as it takes male lives as the norm and so disadvantages women (Williams 1983). More genuinely gender-neutral policies would require the adoption of a concept of equality that recognizes and accommodates the specific needs of everyone, not just those of the dominant group. The pursuit of such a gender-neutral advocacy project might entail large-scale reform of existing legislation and a significant restructuring of most workplace policy (Taub and Williams 1986). The equality project might then aim at integration, but in practice this frequently entails quite fundamental transformation of existing practices.

The difference theorist, however, remains unhappy with even this 'radical' rendering of the equality approach. For, as Young argues, 'it implies that women do not have any right to leave and job security when having babies, or assimilates such guarantees under the supposedly gender-neutral category of "disability"'. Such assimilation is unacceptable because pregnancy and childbirth are usually normal conditions for normal women, because pregnancy and childbirth themselves count as socially necessary work, and because they have unique and variable

characteristics and needs' (Young 1990a: 175). The problem is not only that policies claiming to be neutral are actually partial, it is also that the distinctiveness of women's contribution is not positively recognized. In contrast, the difference theorist proposes a gender-differentiated approach that might positively recognize, and give public confirmation of, the social contribution of childbearing.

In response to such a move, critics have argued that, while the importance of pregnancy benefits should not be overlooked, neither should they be overemphasized. Deborah Rhode, for instance, attempts to shift the focus from difference to disadvantage. She argues that: 'Pregnancy-related policies affect most women workers for relatively brief intervals. The absence of broader disability, health, child-rearing and caretaking assistance remains a chronic problem for the vast majority of employees, male and female, throughout their working lives' (Rhode 1992: 154). In other words, to focus exclusively on the differences between men and women may be to misrepresent the complex realities of both women's and men's lives.

The gender-neutrality perspective entails an affirmation of the belief that women are individuals possessed of reason, and that this potentiality entitles them to full human rights. The emphasis is not upon equality of outcome, but on equality of opportunity. Given that women have an equal capacity for reason, they are worthy of equal respect and entitled to equality of opportunity. The argument is not that everyone should be required to be the same in some substantive sense. This is not an end-state approach to the question of equality. It is a procedural approach whereby the concern is that all people – irrespective of gender – are subject to the same procedural rules and formal evaluations in order that they may equally choose to pursue their own ends in their own way. It is not that 'differences' are denied or frowned upon. Indeed the central premise of this approach is that individual autonomy and ability to choose one's 'different' projects and beliefs is vital to a just society.

The difference perspective, on the other hand, would emphasize and seek recognition for that which the equality perspective would transcend. The claim is that what appears to be neutrality within the equality perspective is actually partiality: treating people as equals only in respect to those capacities and needs commonly associated with men. Rather than demanding 'gender-neutrality', this concern about the falsity of a claim to neutrality leads to a call that women's *specificity* be recognized.

In relation to citizenship debates, for example, this has meant that calls to extend the ideal of citizenship to encompass women have been tempered by the insistence that women's citizenship be differentiated from that of men. As Ruth Lister comments in her exploration of feminist perspectives on citizenship:

the most fundamental either/or choice that has faced feminist theorists and activists pressing women's claims as citizens is whether our aim is a genuinely gender-neutral conception of citizenship or a gender-differentiated conception. The former would accord women equal citizenship rights with men and enable them to participate as their equals in the public sphere; the latter would recognise women's particular concerns and contribution and value their responsibilities in the private sphere. (Lister 1997: 92–3)

This second gender-differentiated approach frequently draws on the symbol of motherhood to emphasize the distinctiveness of women's possible contribution to citizenship. The practice of motherhood cultivates, it is claimed, a form of maternal thinking centred around 'attentive love' (Ruddick 1983: 227). The central issue regarding gender and citizenship should not be viewed, difference theorists argue, as a question of how to help women to leave this role and to transcend this form of thinking in order to play a more active role as citizens. Rather, the issue is how to develop a conception of citizenship that might incorporate maternal thinking. Gender-neutral theorists, by contrast, are concerned both that this project reinforces existing stereotypes of women and that it aims to introduce into the public arena values and relationships that are not properly political (Dietz 1998: 390–4) (see Chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of this debate).

This, then, is the character of the equality/difference debate. Its central features are neatly captured by Fraser, who argues that:

The proponents of equality saw gender difference as the handmaiden of male domination. For them, the central injustices of sexism were women's marginalization and the maldistribution of social goods. And the key meaning of gender equity was equal participation and redistribution. Difference feminists, in contrast, saw gender difference as the cornerstone of women's identity. For them, accordingly, androcentrism was sexism's chief harm. And the centrepiece of gender equity was the revaluation of femininity. (Fraser 1997a: 100)

The existence of these two distinct strategies within feminism is not new, nor is the ambivalence about their relative merits. Indeed, the ambivalence regarding equality and difference perspectives recurs throughout the history of feminist writings. Pateman labels the simultaneous demand for both gender-neutral and gender-differentiated citizenship 'Wollstonecraft's dilemma' (Pateman 1989: 196–7). The source of the dilemma emanates from the mutual incompatibility of the two options given the dominant tendency to view a patriarchal model of citizenship as a neutral model. Pateman's argument is that the existence of this patriarchal conception of citizenship permits only two incompatible and

partial feminist options. 'The debate therefore continues', she says, 'to oscillate between "difference" (maternal thinking should be valued and brought into the political arena) and "equality" (citizenship not motherhood is vital for feminists) and so remains caught in Wollstonecraft's dilemma' (Pateman 1992: 21).

Scott makes a very similar point. 'When equality and difference are paired dichotomously', she argues, 'they structure an impossible choice. If one opts for equality, one is forced to accept the notion that difference is antithetical to it. If one opts for difference, one admits that equality is unattainable' (Scott 1997: 765). Recognition of the negative effects of this dilemma upon feminist theory and practice has motivated many to attempt to negotiate a path beyond the dichotomy. Indeed, it is rare to find anyone actually espousing either an equality or a difference perspective in a totally unqualified manner.

Beyond Dichotomy

Recognition of the partiality and limitations of the gender-neutral model of equality has repeatedly propelled feminists to the endorsement of its opposite, adopting a strategy of reversal. In place of abstraction, rationality, universality and equality, 'difference' feminists have asserted the value of the embedded and the emotional, of particularity and difference. However, the problem with simply affirming all that gender-neutrality excludes has become apparent to many feminists themselves. For, as Anne Phillips argues: 'in challenging a narrow version from one side, feminists risk simply situating themselves on an opposite of a false divide . . . in sharpening up what is distinctive in the new position, it is easy to reproduce an over-simple dichotomy' (Phillips 1993: 67).

Although both 'equality' and 'difference' have been promoted with great vigour within feminism, there has been a long-standing and increasingly prevalent perception that neither of these two stances offers an unambiguously positive way forward. As Martha Minow states, 'Both focusing on and ignoring the difference risk recreating it. This is the dilemma of difference' (quoted in Scott 1997: 762). To seek to transcend difference is to perpetuate the conflation of masculine partiality with neutrality. To focus on difference is to reaffirm the relation between feminine partiality and deviance. The 'problem' of gender in political theory might not be resolved by simply pursuing a strategy of reversal, revaluing that which is devalued and claiming recognition for that which is excluded. For although this strategy aims to challenge the core tenets of liberal impartiality, it might inadvertently reinforce their hold by working with the terms of debate they have created. As Scott

argues: 'it makes no sense for the feminist movement to let its arguments be forced into pre-existing categories and its political disputes to be characterized by a dichotomy we did not invent' (Scott 1997: 765). In this vein Phillips also states: 'I argue . . . against a polar opposition between what is abstract, impartial, gender-neutral, and what is specific, relational, engendered; and I suggest that the best in contemporary feminism is already steering a more middle route' (Phillips 1993: 58). This 'middle route' can take many forms. Some opt for a pragmatic endorsement of whichever policy appears best to further women's interests in each particular circumstance; others pursue a more theoretically integrated approach.

This third way, or strategy of displacement, argues against remaining within the terms of existing political discourse and seeks to show why neither an equality nor a difference approach will ever be a satisfactory one given that both work within parameters of debate constructed according to patriarchal norms. Assuming that the displacement project is currently prevalent, gender theorizing has increasingly distanced itself from both the strategy of inclusion, which would 'add women in', and the strategy of reversal, which would refuse existing norms, and has embraced the deconstruction of binary oppositions as a central theoretical, and political, task.

In the context of justice, for instance, there has been a clear trajectory. The attempt to realize gender justice according to existing norms of justice as impartiality, provoked a counter-literature arguing 'justice' to be a masculinist way of thinking about morality, and developing an alternative, feminine, ethic of care. In response to this rejection of justice as impartiality, writers as diverse as Seyla Benhabib, Susan Moller Okin and Iris Marion Young have all claimed that the distinction between an ethic of justice and one of care has been overdrawn (Benhabib 1992, Okin 1989, Young 1996a). These theorists argue, in various ways, that moral reasoning ought properly to draw upon both these approaches (see Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion). In relation to citizenship debates also, one finds that current theorists most frequently argue that one ought to draw on the strengths of both individualist and relational approaches. With regard to the gender-neutral/gender-differentiated dichotomy Ruth Lister argues that: 'a feminist reinterpretation of citizenship can best be approached by treating each of these oppositions as potentially complementary rather than as mutually exclusive alternatives' (Lister 1997: 92). In short, the current mood in gender theory is to a large extent characterized by an attempt to find a resolution of the equality/difference dichotomy. Equality and difference are increasingly seen as ideal types rather than as workable or sufficient models for political action in their own right. But, before we consider attempts to

negotiate a settlement between these two perspectives, let us focus on the third perspective that has emerged within gender theory, the strategy of displacement.

The precise manner in which theorists attempt to resolve or 'go beyond' the apparent dichotomy between equality and difference perspectives requires some attention. For there are significant differences within the strategies adopted. Some propose synthesis as the best way forward. This resolution is rarely presented as a distinctive perspective in its own right, and is more frequently seen as a historical account of cumulative change. As such it can appear lacking in theoretical clarity and innovative contribution. Phillips makes this point: 'If feminists take up the high ground of empathy and emotion *versus* abstract and impartial reason, they are I believe wrong. If they situate themselves more firmly in the middle ground – as increasingly it seems that they do – they may be right but not so strikingly original' (Phillips 1993: 67). In contrast to this synthetic resolution, there is a strategy for 'going beyond' equality and difference perspectives which does offer a distinctive and theoretically innovative perspective in its own right.

Diversity

The diversity perspective is not located on either side of the equality/difference divide, but rather gains its definition from its commitment to deconstructing the division itself. Grosz articulates the contrast between difference and diversity perspectives. Whereas the difference theorist is concerned to reverse the privileged terms in oppositional pairs, the issue for diversity theorists 'is not to privilege one term at the expense of the other, but to explore the cost of their maintenance' (Grosz 1994a: 32). If a difference approach aims to 'put women in the centre', this diversity approach in contrast aims to 'deconstruct centres'. Both are transformative projects: both seek to problematize the very foundations of political theory in the light of taking gender seriously. Both recognize – in a way that an equality approach does not – that dominant modes of political theorizing have been founded upon patriarchal gender priorities. As such both are analytically distinct from an equality approach which merely seeks to 'add women' in to the existing schema: they are transformative rather than integrative. And, in this respect, it is their shared rejection of equality politics that unites them.

However, as the terms of debate concerning gender and political theory have gradually shifted from the integrative to the transformative, it is the dissimilarity between the difference and diversity forms of gender politics that has increasingly preoccupied gender theorists. The distinction

between these two approaches manifests itself in the contrast between the sort of transformation envisaged. 'In the first stance', Ferguson states, 'men – male power, male identities, masculinity as a set of practices – are problematized; in the second, the gendered world itself becomes a problem' (Ferguson 1993: 3). This is a distinction between those who would reverse patriarchal gender priorities and those who would displace them. Rather than *re-centring* political theory around a female- as opposed to a male-gendered perspective, the diversity approach seeks to *de-centre* political theory with respect to gender altogether.

One of the most significant political consequences of this approach is that the apparently clear-cut distinctions between oppression and resistance become blurred. Diversity theorists are keen to point out that the 'reinscription of conventional power strategies can occur even in places where one might most confidently expect liberation' (Ferguson 1993: 123). In other words, while both equality and difference feminisms overtly aim to challenge the dominant patriarchal order, each might actually work further to entrench its underlying premises, perpetuate its logic and thereby prolong its dominance. Until the logic of binary dualisms is itself challenged, the political project of feminism will always be bound by Wollstonecraft's dilemma.

Scott makes one of the clearest statements of the need to 'go beyond' the equality/difference debate in this deconstructive manner. The entire equality versus difference debate is, she maintains, premised upon a false choice. Difference does not entail inequality, nor does equality presuppose sameness. In place of a dichotomy between sameness and difference Scott introduces the category of diversity. In other words, she destabilizes the duality between inclusion and reversal and proposes a third, heterogeneous, option. There is, she argues, a need to unmask the power relationship constructed by positing equality as the antithesis of difference, and to refuse the consequent dichotomous construction of political choices. The determination to 'go beyond' the equality/difference debate does not therefore signal a simple desire for agreement and synthesis. It represents the emergence of a new perspective that takes the deconstruction of binary oppositions to be its central task.

There are several important ways in which the equality/difference dichotomy can be displaced. The first strategy focuses on de-coupling the apparent opposition. The 'oppositional pairing', argues Scott, 'misrepresents the relationship of both terms' (Scott 1997: 765). The dilemma with regard to equality and difference emerges from the common acceptance of several distinct, and dubious, assumptions. Notably, it is commonly assumed that equality is synonymous with sameness and that difference is synonymous with dichotomous sexual difference. It is also commonly assumed that one must either be different from or the same

as a particular ideal type and, given that the male is the norm and female its subordinate other, this ideal type is assumed to be male. Given all these assumptions, to be 'equal' is to be the same as a male norm, to be different is to deviate from it. For women to demand equality is simultaneously to deny their sexual difference and to claim sameness with a dominant norm of maleness. Two distinct aspects of this form of reasoning are worth considering. The first is the equation of difference with dichotomous sexual difference, the second the equation of equality with sameness.

Difference and dichotomy

The strategy of displacement, involving an exploration and critique of binary oppositions, has come to be a central aspect of gender theory. Not only the equality/difference dichotomy, but dichotomous thinking itself has been subject to extensive critique (see Flax 1992, Lloyd 1984, Grosz 1994a, Green 1995, Prokhovnik 1999). The proposal that we move beyond the dichotomies that have structured debates within feminism is underpinned by a new theoretical commitment to the project of challenging binary thinking in all its manifestations. The deconstruction of dichotomies, revealing the ways in which each side of a binary division implies and reflects the other, is one of the central methodological devices of an increasingly prevalent theoretical approach, frequently labelled post-structuralism. This approach is now highly influential within feminist theory. Surveys of recent trends within feminist theory indicate that 'the critique of dichotomies, of dualisms, of falsely either/or alternatives, has become a major theme in feminist writing' (Barrett and Phillips 1992: 8). Given this, the amount of energy spent by feminist theorists in constructing and debating an equality/difference opposition is particularly bemusing to those feminists who view dichotomous thinking itself as the problem. In the context of the claim that dichotomous thinking is oppressive, it is intriguing that feminists have so often worked to constitute the significance and hold of the dichotomy between equality and difference.

Before surveying the nature of the critiques levelled at dichotomous thinking, let us briefly consider the central features to dichotomous thinking. Prokhovnik helpfully lists these as: an opposition between two identities; a hierarchical ordering of the pair; the idea that between them this pair sum up and define a whole; and the notion of transcendence (Prokhovnik 1999: 23–31). Opposition entails not simply an opposition between two things held in tension which are equally valued, but an opposition between two things held in tension, only one of which

can be right. Hierarchy entails the ranking of two polarized terms such that one becomes the privileged term, the other its subordinate counterpart. One side of the pairing is defined by its not being the other. The dominant term is dependent upon its exclusion of the subordinate term, such that the secondary status of the subordinate term is a condition for the possibility of the dominant one. Moreover the two are not only mutually exclusive; they are also mutually exhaustive. They are held to constitute a whole, not simply parts of an open-ended plurality. Together they comprise all the possible options.

Numerous feminist critics of dichotomous thinking have argued that dichotomies are, in effect, a particular form of metaphor in thinking and language. Dichotomy, as Prokhovnik contends, is one of the many possible metaphors that can be used to explain the world, but one that has been particularly potent and instrumental in setting out the condition of thinking in the modern period. Ironically, one of the effects of the dominance of this particular metaphor in thinking is the devaluation of the significance of metaphor itself. Rather than presenting itself as only one metaphorical mode among others, dichotomous thinking adopts an adversarial, zero-sum stance whereby any form of reasoning not dichotomous in form is both other than and subordinate to dichotomous thinking. In further insisting upon the dichotomous distinction between form and content, dichotomous thinking underplays the extent to which its own form structures the content of thinking and debate. (See Chapter 3 for a consideration of the extent to which dichotomous thinking could be said to be male or masculine.)

Critiques of dichotomous thinking are not specific to gender theorists. However, gender theory has become particularly preoccupied with the hold of dichotomies because of the perceived centrality of 'maleness' as the privileged term, which not only posits 'femaleness' as its 'suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart' but also sets up a range of other equally hierarchical dichotomies. In short, the political significance of dichotomous thinking is that it maintains inequalities of power.

Equality and sameness

Within the equality/difference debate, 'difference' theorists criticize equality as assimilatory, as requiring 'sameness', specifically gender sameness. The problem, implicitly assumed though rarely explicitly conceived, is not therefore 'equality' but 'equality as sameness'. This is important, because it means that critics of this stance could, and some argue should, reject sameness without rejecting equality. Diversity theorists tend to share the difference theorists' scepticism about existing formulations of

equality as sameness, but, rather than rejecting equality, they highlight the problems of sameness.

One such theorist is Wendy Brown. Brown argues that the definition of equality as a condition of sameness, 'a condition in which humans share the same nature, the same rights, and the same terms of regard by state institutions', is intrinsic to liberalism (Brown 1995). Within liberalism, she maintains, individuals are guaranteed equality, in the sense of the right to be treated the same as everyone else, because we are regarded as having a civil, and hence political, sameness. Her point is to endorse the feminist claim that, as long as equality is understood as sameness, gender consistently emerges as a problem of difference: human equality contrasts with gender difference. Because equality is conceived as sameness, its conceptual opposite is not, she claims, inequality, but difference. 'Equality as sameness is a gendered formulation of equality, because it secures gender privilege through naming women as difference and men as the neutral standard of the same' (Brown 1995: 153).

But in what ways does this generic liberalism under consideration assume equality to be sameness? The equality theorist would argue that the point of the liberal distinction between the civil and the political was precisely to allow for the existence of political equality despite civil differences of religious belief and cultural identity. Brown's point, though, is that 'an ontology of masculine sameness' requires its differentiation from women. Her claim is not of course that all men *are* the same, but that differences among men are named 'woman' and thereby displaced from men onto women. Women's status as difference becomes intrinsic. Difference is not primarily a descriptive term but a symbolic one. The liberal conception of equality 'allegorizes' gender. The discourse of liberalism requires, produces and then disavows the feminine as symbolic difference in order to secure the masculinist liberal norm.

It is not only equality theorists who have made this mistake. The conflation of equality with sameness is clearly manifest by many of the advocates of a difference perspective. Take, for example, Irigaray's claim that: 'Women merely "equal" to men would be "like them", therefore not women. Once more, the difference between the sexes would be in that way cancelled out, ignored, papered over' (quoted in Sellers 1991: 71). This statement only works, and the arguments for asserting the importance of difference are only compelling, if one assumes equality to be synonymous here with gender-sameness. To make this assumption is, as critics of the equality/difference dichotomy claim, to confuse a contingent convention for a definitional truth. Moreover, the assumption that equality is gender-sameness rests on a specifically patriarchal set of contingencies.

To ask if women should seek justice in terms of (masculinist liberal) sameness or in terms of (feminist) difference is to remain constrained by the form of dichotomous thinking adopted by 'liberal masculinism'. Neither strategy offers the possibility of 'subversive resolution' (Brown 1995: 165). Both equality and difference perspectives work to reaffirm the masculinist norm in different ways. The equality perspective does so by emancipating certain women to participate in the terms of masculinist justice and by extending an unreconstructed discourse of rights and autonomy to the domains of childrearing, health and sexuality. The difference perspective does so by proposing a norm of female caring as the basis for a counter-discourse of responsibility and inter-dependency. Both work within the confines of dichotomous thinking, accepting the claim that there can only be two oppositional, mutually exclusive options.

From the diversity perspective, equality feminism is perceived to accept the substantive content and normative value of the dominant pairings of dichotomous thinking. It simply seeks to distance these terms from the male/female binary. Difference feminism, on the other hand, accepts both the substantive content of the binary terms and their correlation with the male/female binary, but seeks to reverse their dominant/subordinate status. From the diversity perspective the equality approach is internally contradictory and inevitably self-defeating. In seeking to extend the scope of the dominant category of the pairing, equality feminism is inattentive to both the defining role of the subordinate and the constructed nature of the binary. The difference approach on the other hand is potentially self-defeating in that it may work to sustain that which it seeks to erode. The attempt to reject masculinist thought by affirming its opposite actually works to reaffirm binary logic, which is central to the operation of masculine thought. Such a celebration of the feminine might then 'discursively entrench' the masculine ideal that it seeks to denounce (Brown 1995: 21). To celebrate the 'feminine' as currently conceived is, from the diversity perspective, to celebrate a feminine contingently constituted through masculinist discourses. As such there is a danger that this approach might operate 'inadvertently to resubordinate by renaturalizing that which it was intended to emancipate by articulating' (Brown 1995: 99).

Equality is not to be confused with sameness. The whole conceptual force of 'equality' rests on the assumption of differences, which should in some respect be valued equally. To advocate equality is not necessarily to assume or to demand sameness in some material concrete sense; it is to propose that concrete differences be treated equally. What might constitute equal treatment is the subject of intense debate (equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome being a classic debate within

political theory) but it is only one particularly regressive conception of equality that is being critiqued by the advocates of 'difference theory'.

To claim that two discrete entities are 'the same' is to invoke some standard of evaluation: they are the same with respect to some specified criteria. Given that all entities have more than one property, they will probably be different with respect to other criteria. Two pencils may be the same colour but different lengths. Two people may be the same age but different heights. All this tells us is that things can be both the same and different with respect to each other simultaneously. To determine whether they are also equal is to engage in a different form of inquiry: here we must evaluate both entities with respect to an agreed upon norm. To be equal to another is to be regarded as equivalent to another. Whether one is regarded as equivalent is a matter of social agreement not objective fact. Such agreement will necessarily be made in specific contexts for specific purposes. In effect it is an agreement to regard diverse persons as equivalent despite manifest differences deemed non-pertinent to the context of evaluation. The central issue is not whether people are the same or different, but what criteria of evaluation are employed and who has the power to specify these. This is significant because, as Scott notes in the context of democratic citizenship, 'the measure of equivalence has been, at different times, independence or ownership of property or race or sex' (Scott 1997: 765). In other words, the criteria of evaluation have shifted over time and are subject to future contestation.

To recognize that equality does not necessarily imply sameness is not, however, to jettison the concerns of difference theorists. The criteria of evaluation adopted to assess equivalence may be relational and flexible, rather than objective and immutable, but they have nonetheless in practice worked fairly consistently against women. Significantly, women have rarely been in a position to specify these criteria. Even where the criteria have been other than sex, it has almost uniformly been one deemed characteristic of men – or more precisely of hegemonic masculinity. This has worked to define women as deviant. While the feminist 'equality theorists' aspire to ensure that women are deemed equivalent to men with respect to the specified criteria of evaluation, feminist 'difference theorists' point out that the criteria of evaluation were not only defined by men but, more importantly, embody ideals of masculinity. This means that women are not only excluded in practice but also subordinated in principle.

Feminist 'diversity theorists' on the other hand point to the weaknesses in both these approaches. The 'equality' perspective fails to recognize the socially constructed and patriarchal nature of the criterion of evaluation deemed pertinent to social inclusion. The 'difference' per-

spective (in focusing on sexual difference as the only criterion of evaluation) fails to theorize the extent to which 'maleness' and 'femaleness' are themselves socially constructed and also underplays the significance and plurality of other forms of difference. As Scott usefully summarizes: 'In effect, the duality this opposition creates draws one line of difference, invests it with biological explanations, and then treats each side of the opposition as a unitary phenomenon. Everything in each category (male/female) is assumed to be the same; hence, differences within either category are suppressed' (Scott 1997: 766). A crucial issue, then, is whether the norms of equivalence are in fact neutral, male or masculine. Equality theorists argue that they are in practice, or could in principle be, neutral. Identity theorists argue that the norms of equivalence are not, and can never be, neutral with regard to gender, because a central norm is that of maleness itself. Diversity theorists argue that the norms of equivalence are more plural and contingent than appeals to maleness alone allow. The existing norms are neither neutral with respect to gender nor an expression of it. Rather they are a part of the very discursive practices that constitute gender itself.

Arguing for this third approach, Scott states: 'It is not sameness or identity between women and men that we want to claim but a more complicated historically variable diversity than is permitted by the opposition male/female, a diversity that is also differently expressed for different purposes in different contexts' (Scott 1997: 766). The diversity perspective focuses not only on differences between the sexes, but also on the differences within gender groups. The binary opposition between equality and difference is displaced. So too is the binary opposition between the sexes.

Diversity theorists are, then, highly critical of equality theorists, but they tend to be even more vehemently opposed to difference theorists. They do not view this as a three-stage progression towards an ideal synthetic position. Young, for example, notes that: 'It may be true that the assimilationist ideal that treats everyone the same and applies the same standards to all perpetuates disadvantage because real group differences remain that make it unfair to compare the unequals. But this is far preferable to a re-establishment of separate and unequal spheres for different groups justified on the basis of group difference' (Young 1990a: 169). The risk of the difference approach is that one will re-create the stigma that difference carried before the formal attempt to transcend it by asserting equality. This is a risk avoided, according to Young, only if one rejects the 'oppressive meaning of group difference' as 'absolute otherness, mutual exclusion, categorical opposition' (Young 1990a: 169).

Drawing heavily on the diversity perspective, Young is concerned to reveal the extent to which both the equality and difference perspectives

arise from a single attempt to 'measure all against some universal standard' which actually 'generates a logic of difference as hierarchical dichotomy' (Young 1990a: 170). The real risk in working within this logic, even if with a view to reversing it, is that difference is here absolute. The failure to see difference as relational has two negative results: groups marked as different appear to have nothing in common with those considered as the norm; and differences within these groups are repressed. 'In this way', Young tells us, 'the definition of difference as exclusion and opposition actually denies difference' (Young 1990a: 170). In other words, to claim one's identity as 'woman' serves not only to perpetuate the idea that women are totally different from men, but also to repress the significant differences between women.

This insight is pursued by Bonnie Honig, who characterizes difference as 'that which resists or exceeds the closure of identity' (Honig 1996: 257-8). For Honig difference is a perpetual and unruly presence within any assertion of identity. She views the attempts of difference theorists to locate difference solely between stable identity groups as mistaken. Her project is to affirm the 'inescapability of conflict and the ineradicability of resistance' within, and not simply between, identity claims (Honig 1996: 258). This move would appear to distance her from even Young's modified reading of difference. Notably, she argues that her understanding of difference 'renders problematic . . . certain identity- and interest-based conceptions of pluralism' (Honig 1996: 271). On this perspective the real political potential arises not from stable subjectivities (however conceived), but from decentred subjects 'who are plural, differentiated, and conflicted' (Honig 1996: 272).

Relating Equality, Difference and Diversity

Having mapped out the archetypal equality, difference and diversity perspectives, let us consider how these three work themselves out in the context of political debate. For rarely is any one of the three found in its pure form. Much more frequent is the modified variation or ambivalent negotiation. There are three distinctive ways in which the strategies of inclusion, reversal and displacement are negotiated with reference to the debates concerning equality, difference and diversity. In the first, the difference perspective is modified in the face of the challenge of plural identity differences. In the second, the diversity perspective is modified in the context of the need for strategic endorsements of difference. In the third, the equality perspective is modified in the light of both the difference and diversity perspectives. Before looking at examples of each of these in turn, though, it is worth noting that there is a significant confusion of terminology in these debates.

Endorsements of a pluralized version of the 'difference' side of the equality/difference dichotomy are commonly called a 'politics of identity' (see Evans 1995: 21-2), and the attempt to explode the dichotomy between 'equality and difference' is frequently referred to as a 'politics of difference' (see Grosz 1994a). These conflicting uses of the same terminology add to the complexity of mapping distinct perspectives within this debate. A wide range of political theorists currently claim themselves to be advocating a 'politics of difference', including theorists advocating what I have labelled difference, identity and diversity perspectives (Taylor 1992, Young 1990a: 171). This serves to cloud what is already a complex terrain. It leads to a situation in which we find, within a group of theorists adopting the same methodological frame and proposing the same advocacy project, some criticizing a 'difference perspective' in the name of 'diversity' (Scott 1997) and others criticizing an 'identity perspective' in the name of 'difference' (Grosz 1994a).

Difference/identity

Many people who argue the need to 'go beyond' the equality/difference dichotomy are motivated more by political events than theoretical disputation. Indeed some of the strongest critics of the abstract theoretical approach of the diversity perspective are themselves responsible for challenging the claims of the difference perspective in practice, thereby weakening the hold of the apparent clear-cut dichotomy between difference and equality. A practical, political and historical reflection on what actually happened to alter the terrain of debate with the development of new political alliances and divisions focuses attention on the importance of 'identity politics'. Here the equality/difference debate is displaced by political activism, not destabilized by theoretical reflection. It was the political challenge of 'lesbians and feminists of color' (Fraser 1997a: 101), placing the issues of sexuality and race firmly on the agenda, that undermined the pertinence of the debate between equality/difference in practice. The displacement of dichotomy emerges, on this account, not from deconstructive theory but from 'identity politics'.

The rise of 'identity politics' in the 1980s placed both the difference and the equality perspectives under intense critical scrutiny and severe strain. But it is the difference perspective that has been most significantly weakened. For identity politics movements adopted the same general approach to cultural differences per se that the difference perspective adopted with respect to gender alone. They extended the difference analysis to a wider range of cultural differences, meaning that the gender issue no longer held the centrality that its advocates had once claimed.

The idea that there might be a single 'woman's perspective', opposed to the dominant 'male perspective', was undermined by the protests of those women who found themselves silenced by such a claim. The 'difference' approach was itself experienced as assimilatory by those women who did not conform to the norm of female identity proposed by those claiming to speak for 'the women's movement'. The conception of 'woman' being affirmed was in reality a particular conception of white, heterosexual, middle-class, educated, Western women. To claim that the experiences of these particular women could be used to define the nature of woman *per se* was not only inappropriate, but also harmful to the vast majority of women whose experiences were quite other. The response of those excluded by this discourse of 'woman' was to assert the specificity of their own experiences and demand recognition for the particularity of their own identities. The identifications of sexuality, race and class were all highlighted as central to the personal experiences and political identity of most women. Attention shifted from an exclusive focus on gender difference to an exploration of the question of the differences among women.

For if one claims that women have been undervalued as a result of the failure to recognize gender difference, what grounds can there be for not also recognizing similar claims made by all marginalized and subordinate groups? Once one has rejected the equality theorists' commitment to neutrality and impartiality, what is the basis for prioritizing one form of difference, namely gender, as more significant and more worthy of recognition than any other? Does not the assertion that there is a single shared woman's experience and voice itself subordinate other forms of difference and repress the diversity of voices within women? Furthermore, as other forms of difference intersect with gender difference, the grounds for claiming a radical discontinuity between male and female perspectives are clearly weakened.

This pluralized discourse of identity differences shares with the singular discourse of gender difference the commitment to making political activity an expression of one's identity and the political ambition for the recognition of one's identity. Identity politics, Grosz argues, 'is about establishing a viable identity for its constituency, of claiming social recognition and value on the basis of shared common characteristics' which are attributed to the particular social group of an identity (Grosz 1994a: 31). Its project is to establish for its members the rights, recognition and privileges that dominant groups have attempted to keep for themselves. As such, identity politics is a pluralized form of difference politics. The focus is still upon the recognition of difference, but now the identities in question are multiple rather than simply binary: the differences emphasized exist among women as well as between women and men.

Where a difference perspective was premised on a critique of patriarchy, identity politics works with pluralized discourses of marginalization and repression. The initial battles to rank and prioritize the various forms of oppression experienced have largely given way to a pragmatic acceptance of multiplicity. Where difference theorists aimed to realize the recognition of the female, specific groupings of identity theorists each pursue the recognition of their own distinctive identities. As women lose their exclusive status as 'marginalized other', space is not only opened up to explore the marginalized identities of gay, black, working-class and disabled women, it also emerges to explore marginalized masculinities.

Identity politics therefore issues a vital challenge to the hold of the equality/difference debate within gender theory. It represents an approach that is politically, but not methodologically, distinct from a difference perspective. While the deconstructive diversity stance is openly critical of both the politics and the methodological approach of the difference theorists, this identity politics approach uses the basic methodological commitments of the difference theorists to undermine their political claims. In this respect the development of identity politics was made possible by, and emerged in response to, the difference perspective. In focusing attention on the issue of gender and seeking to gain recognition for women's distinctive cultural identities, difference theorists laid the groundwork for the emergence of identity politics. In failing to be attentive to their own assimilatory tendencies, difference theorists also created the backlash, which energized identity politics.

This political and historical account makes it clear that the commitment to the deconstruction of binary dualisms emerges not out of theoretical thin air but at the end of a gradual progression in which the assertion of gender-visibility is a first step towards identity politics and then diversity. As Fraser argues, when the focus on 'gender difference' gave way to a focus on 'difference among women', the equality/difference debate was itself displaced (Fraser 1997a: 101). This inaugurated a new phase of feminist debate in which the deconstructive diversity perspective has come to play a major role, but a role that is often highly critical, or at best deeply ambivalent, about the identity politics which seem to have created the conditions for its appeal.

Diversity/difference

The difference and diversity perspectives appear, on a theoretical level, to be profoundly antithetical. Politics, for the difference theorist, is a manifestation of one's authentic self. For the diversity theorist, the subject

is constituted by political structures and relations. The former is concerned to make politics reflect authentic identities, the latter to reveal the extent to which all notions of authenticity are themselves constructed. Nonetheless a surprising number of theorists committed to the diversity perspective in principle endorse a difference perspective or some form of identity politics in practice.

For all its theoretical clarity, the nature of the advocacy project arising from the diversity project is perhaps less obvious than is the case with equality and difference projects. Given that it is not primarily (or perhaps remotely) normative, there are no direct political strategies or policy implications that follow from the endorsement of this archetype. Those who do view themselves as diversity theorists frequently do not engage in practical debates or political activism at all. Others do, but adopt some form of equality and/or difference perspectives in the process. For many, it is not clear that the diversity perspective alone generates a political programme at all.

Take, for instance, the position of Kristeva, who has influentially argued for a deconstructive approach to gender. She states that one might categorize feminism, both historically and politically, according to a threefold schema: women demand equal access to the symbolic order; women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference; women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical. These three approaches map directly onto the strategies of inclusion, reversal and displacement and lead to the endorsement of equality, difference and diversity perspectives respectively. From the third position, Kristeva directly critiques the difference politics of the second: 'In this third attitude, which I strongly advocate – which I imagine? – the very dichotomy men/women as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to metaphysics. What can 'identity', even 'sexual identity', mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?' (Kristeva 1981: 13–35). However, it is not clear that Kristeva intends to advocate this third position in isolation from the other two. She also states that she sees them as simultaneous and non-exclusive.

Commenting upon her work, Moi is clear that to:

advocate position three as exclusive of the first two is to lose touch with the political reality of feminism. We still need to claim our place in human society as equals, not as subordinate members, and we still need to emphasise that difference between male and female experience of the world . . . as long as patriarchy is dominant, it still remains *politically* essential for feminists to define women *as* women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women *as* women. (Moi 1997: 249)

This position is fairly representative of one adopted by many who find the deconstructive diversity perspective compelling in theory, but nonetheless perceive the difference and equality approaches important in practice. It results in a discontinuity between theory and practice: the rejection of 'difference' as an ideal theoretical type accompanied by the strategic use of difference arguments in political debates.

Many diversity theorists are not happy with this proposal. The retreat to a strategic endorsement of difference is frequently seen as an unhelpful capitulation. Fuss, for example, is concerned that: 'deference to the primacy and omniscience of Politics may uphold the ideology of pluralism, for no matter how reactionary or dangerous a notion may be, it can always be salvaged and kept in circulation by an appeal to "political strategy"' (Fuss 1989: 106–7). Butler is equally cynical about the claim that the diversity perspective puts 'into jeopardy politics as such', and therefore needs to endorse a difference perspective for strategic political engagement. She argues that this is 'an authoritarian ruse by which political contest over the status of the subject is summarily silenced' (Butler 1995: 36).

There are more sophisticated attempts to negotiate a frame of reference that draws on all three perspectives. For example, in the pursuit of the diversity perspective Young advocates what looks like a combination of equality and identity policies. In order to avoid the risks of each, Young proposes a dual system of rights: 'a general system of rights which are the same for all, and a more specific system of group-conscious policies and rights' (Young 1990a: 174). In contrast to the oppositional conception of difference, Young proposes a more relational conception. Rather than understanding difference as a description of attributes, it is here viewed as 'a function of the relations between groups' (Young 1990a: 171). In this formulation group differences 'will be more or less salient depending on the groups compared, the purposes of the comparison, and the point of view of the comparers' (Young 1990a: 171). Group similarities too will be relational rather than fixed: 'what makes a group a group is a social process of interaction and differentiation in which some people come to have a particular *affinity* . . . for others' (Young 1990a: 172). In other words, rather than using the concept of 'diversity', she tries to 'reclaim the meaning of difference', 'offering an emancipatory meaning of difference to replace the old exclusionary meaning' (Young 1990a: 168).

Equality revisited

Not everyone who is currently concerned to 'go beyond' the equality/difference dichotomy is committed to deconstructive methodological

principles. For some the need to undermine the hold of the dichotomy is motivated simply by a pragmatic need to recognize actual plurality of people and perspectives. For these theorists the central task is to formulate a perspective that draws on the best insights of both the equality and the difference perspectives. In other words, the project is viewed as a synthetic rather than a deconstructive one. Where Scott provides one of the clearest statements of the deconstructive diversity perspective, one of the clearest accounts of the synthetic approach to equality and difference is to be found in the work of Fraser.

Fraser views neither the difference perspective modified by identity politics nor the diversity perspective (her own labels for these two perspectives being 'multiculturalism' and 'anti-essentialism' respectively) as 'entirely satisfactory'. Both, she claims, rely on one-sided views of identity and difference. 'The anti-essentialist view is skeptical and negative; it sees all identities as inherently repressive and all difference as inherently exclusionary. The multiculturalist view, in contrast, is celebratory and positive; it sees all identities as deserving of recognition and all difference as meriting affirmation' (Fraser 1997a: 103-4). Neither, she claims, can sustain a viable feminist politics. For both 'fail to connect a cultural politics of identity and difference to a social politics of justice and equality. Neither appreciates the crux of the connection: *cultural differences can only be freely elaborated and democratically mediated on the basis of social equality*' (Fraser 1997a: 107). In other words, she claims that current debates about gender politics are characterized by various complex negotiations and confrontations between difference and diversity perspectives. These debates fail to engage with the equality perspective, and yet no resolution is possible until they do. As Fraser argues: 'both approaches repress the insights of equality feminism concerning the need for equal participation and fair distribution' (Fraser 1997a: 107). Fraser would have us construct a new equality/difference debate: one which confronts the relation between cultural difference and social equality.

Fraser's proposed strategy of displacement focuses on the reconstructive, rather than solely the deconstructive, moment. Rather than viewing the distinction between equality and difference as false or absolute, she sees these as complementary strategies pertinent to distinct, but equally significant, aspects of life. This leads to a debate about conceptions of justice: is gender justice about social distribution, cultural recognition or both, and can we - should we - distinguish the two? We will return to the debates about justice in Chapter 5. For now I want simply to indicate that, while recent debates about gender in political theory have been dominated by disputes within and between difference

and diversity perspectives, there are some who are now signalling the importance of bringing the equality perspective back in.

Conclusion

Debates about gender in political theory have long been characterized by a recurrent oscillation and antagonism between equality and difference perspectives. During the 1980s the pertinence or coherence of constructing debate according to these two approaches was challenged. The dichotomy was undermined both by the growth of identity politics and by the turn to deconstructive theoretical perspectives. The emergence of identity and diversity perspectives led to a reformulation of the difference perspective (focusing on differences among women rather than differences between women and men) and to a destabilization of the binary opposition between equality and difference itself. The main focus of debate shifted from one focused on the relative merits of equality and difference to one focused on the relative merits of identity and diversity. Diversity theorists have been concerned to reveal the extent to which identity politics replicates the theoretical partiality and political dangers of the difference perspective. Advocates of identity politics have been keen to highlight the abstract and apolitical nature of the diversity approach. There have, however, been recent moves to recuperate the equality perspective as a framework for pursuing a modified form of difference. The equality/difference debate has certainly been shown to be more complex than originally presumed, but its hold appears to be as strong as ever. As Di Stefano notes, 'the theoretical and political dilemmas of difference are well worth pondering. As yet, they remain stubbornly persistent and elusive, suggesting that gender is basic in ways that we have yet to fully understand, that it functions as "a difference that makes a difference," even as it can no longer claim the legitimating mantle of *the difference*' (Di Stefano 1990: 78).