Social Mobility, Equity and the Politics of Recruitment

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Abstract

Much reliance has been placed on increased equity as a way of improving social mobility but the evidence base for this view, for example in Britain, looks less and less convincing. Part of the attraction of equity was that it was believed to promote efficiency through the refinement of meritocracy. Sociological theory now suggests that the equation of equity with efficiency may have prevented reforms which would have improved social mobility. This theory fills a gap in the human resource management (HRM) literature to show that it is far from obvious what managers should do to increase organisational efficiency when they make recruitment decisions. Instead of recruiting for efficiency, their decisions are shaped by the politics of recruitment both inside organisations, affecting management decision-making particularly, and outside organisations amongst legislators and pressure groups (for example). This politics has shaped the way equity figures in recruitment, it has, for the most part, only figured to the extent that it was believed to serve efficiency, yet what counted for efficiency was itself a political product. When it is hidebound in this way it is small wonder that insufficient progress has been made in improving social mobility, in Britain and elsewhere, by increasing equity.

Introduction

Sociologists have long favoured increasing equity to make it easier for people to become 'socially mobile' and get better jobs than their parents. They have assumed that equity would be an effective counter-measure to the knack some groups, or classes, have for holding on to the best jobs from one generation to the next. This article summarises sociological theory which suggests that this assumption is wrong. Much of the empirical evidence it draws on is take from the British experience where improvements in social mobility have stalled (Blanden et al. 2005; Blanden and Machin 2007; Carnegie Corporation and Sutton Trust, 2008). The article's analysis and conclusions are, therefore, particularly applicable to Britain, but the theory discussed here has wider application to any society in which equity is seen as a way of increasing social mobility.

Even if their primary aim has been to increase social mobility, sociologists have often argued that increased equity is generally beneficial to society because of its effect on efficiency (Fevre 2003). This equation of equity and efficiency depends on education systems producing and certifying the competences which are used to assign people to the jobs they are best qualified to do. If there is equity in access to education *and* to jobs, social efficiency is served because everyone is doing the work they are best suited for. Organisational efficiency is served because productive processes get exactly the human resource they require. This means no more can be done without adding resources and per unit productivity cannot be increased by moving resources around.

In a meritocracy, inequalities that arise from the articulation of education systems and labour markets signal where people should put effort into the acquisition of competences and qualifications. This provides a mechanism for increasing the supply of scarcer competences

and, therefore, adjustments to supply in line with changes in demand. If this mechanism is working well, it is reflected in trends in educational achievement and social mobility patterns (Brown et al. 2011). If it is not working, and inequalities persist, the solution is to increase equity in access to education *and* jobs (since it does not matter how good an education system is at imparting and certifying competences if the labour market does not work in the way that is required). If inequalities persist after decades of enhancing meritocracy in this way, there are few options to explain this failure to adjust and some, or all, of the blame has usually been assigned to the people who are failing to acquire the right competences and qualifications (Herrnstein and Murray 1996; Marshall et al. 1997; Saunders 1997, 2003).

The sociological theory discussed in this article offers an alternative to assigning blame in this way. It suggests that tying equity to efficiency compromises the beneficial effect of equity on social mobility (Fevre 2003). The article illustrates this argument by focussing on recruitment, a key moment of the articulation of labour markets and the education system. The sociologists mentioned in the previous paragraph do not think recruitment requires theorising because they assume that, in a mature meritocracy, employers compel recruiters to put the right person in the job. Researchers who are familiar with the literature are, however, rightly concerned by the lack of theory development in the field (Braugh and Starkel 2000). The sociological theory that can help to fill this gap is sceptical of the ability of recruiters to do what is required for the successful articulation of education systems and labour markets (Fevre 1992). The first section of this article draws on sociological theories of management to explain that recruiting in a way that serves organisations is not at all straightforward and is best seen as the outcome of political processes inside and outside organisations. The second section suggests that whether recruitment is equitable or not is also determined by political processes and explains the implications of this insight for social mobility. The conclusions to the article briefly discuss some practical alternatives to meritocratic recruitment decisions.

Efficiency and the politics of recruitment

Sociological theory suggests it is far from obvious what managers should do to increase organisational efficiency and there is no obvious reason why this should not apply to their recruitment decisions. Before the implications of the second point are explored, the first needs to be elaborated. Sociological theory is critical of the suggestion that organisational decision-makers know how to pursue their organisations' best interests (Fevre 2003; Grint 1995; Maclagan 1998; Pattison 1997; Parker 2002). While they account for the decisions they take in this way, the frequent and violent shifts in the fundamental principles of good management decision-making confirm that the rationale for decisions must always be constructed rather than revealed (MacIntyre 1985). The same general point applies to the particular case of efficiency.

Economists may have no difficulty in defining efficiency as that condition in which an organisation can do no more without adding resources, or in which per unit productivity cannot be increased by moving resources around, but managers have real problems in judging when such conditions prevail. Even observers who have the job of evaluating whether managers are pursuing efficiency, such as the auditors who assess whether managers are spending public money wisely, make do with a version of efficiency which suits them. Auditors therefore define efficiency in financial terms, particularly the control of costs, and avoid trying to measure performance (Power 1997). When they focus on performance, so ignoring any potential conflict between performance and costs, empirical

research shows managers find it hard to know what counts as good performance (Lankshear et al. 2001). This is not to deny that managers have objectives (get sales up and employee sickness down, ensure an increased dividend to shareholders) but these objectives must not be mistaken for efficiency because what might work for one version of efficiency will be disastrous for other versions of the concept (Fevre 2003).

Even at the most abstract level, above the operational level where managers pursue targets and objectives, efficiency is not self-evident and asking for it to be defined simply encourages disagreement. Public sector organisations are often held to sacrifice performance in the cause of cost-efficiency and, even on its own, the measurement of performance can be particularly problematic for them (Van Thiel and Leeuw 2002). In the private sector, movements in share prices give investors clues as to where their money might be put to greater use. Managers of the organisations that suffer consequent disinvestment may violently disagree that share prices have anything useful to say about the 'fundamentals' and disagree amongst themselves about whether reduced costs, increased productivity or improved sales best indicate the efficiency of their organisations (Hutton 1996; Davis 2009).

At the operational level, a manager tasked with reducing a cost such as sickness absence may find s/he actually increases costs (because the organisation is pushing out workers who need to be replaced), as well as depressing productivity and sales (because the replacements lack training and experience). Any narrow target that an organisation sets might as easily undermine a strategic objective as support it. This happens not simply because the information managers need is costly to acquire (March and Simon 1958), or because managers put their self-interest before the interests of the organisation that employs them (Berg et al. 1979; Burns and Stalker 1961). It also happens because the general difficulty of knowing what to do extends from the ends through to the means which are at managers' disposal (Fevre 2003, MacIntyre 1985). Even when managers work out what it is they want to achieve, they do not know which levers to pull in order to make it happen and, when they do pull levers, they can rarely know with any degree of certainty whether this will lead to any effect, desirable or not (Harley 1999). Where a desirable effect occurs there can be no certainty that it is achieved as a result of managers' action rather than having some other cause (Fevre 2003; Grint 1995; MacIntyre 1985).

Pattison concludes that 'much of modern management practice depends on unproven and unprovable faith assumptions about reality' (Pattison 1997: 28). Their reliance on faith it not something that managers can easily confess, however. This section began by suggesting that, whatever the truth of the matter, organisational decision-makers account for themselves by claiming they act in the best interests of their organisations, for example in pursuit of efficiency. MacIntyre (1985) noted that such accounts provide the foundation of managers' claims to exercise power over others and command generous rewards for doing so (also see Gillespie 1991; Shenhav 1999). No matter how much ambiguity, confusion and contradiction managers encounter when they attempt to pursue goals like efficiency, they must continue to claim that they know how to act in the best interests of their employers and are able to act on that knowledge (Knights and McCabe 1998; Lankshear et al. 2001). This claim is validated when non-managers conclude that managers must be able to achieve goals like increased efficiency because there are organisations which produce goods and provide services, employ people and, in some cases, produce profits. Etzioni (1988) points out that this logic is tautological and we have indeed shown in this discussion that we cannot establish the contribution that managers make to organisational success.

This section also began by suggesting that what was said about the general case of pursuing organizational efficiency could just as easily apply to the particular case of increasing

efficiency through recruitment strategies and practices. The ambiguity, confusion and contradiction entailed in devising recruitment strategies and practices which increase efficiency are discussed at length in Fevre (1992). There are, for example, ways of measuring the impact on efficiency of particular recruitment strategies using technical, organizational (or cultural) and financial criteria which may well conflict with each other. The candidate who is prepared to work for the wages the employer is prepared to pay may not be adaptable to the latest technology. The candidate who is capable of adaption may have zero 'soft' skills and be unable to work in a team. As with organizational decision–making in general, the means which managers can use to achieve efficiency, once they have decided what efficiency means, are often contradictory. For example, are educational qualifications a better recruitment criterion than a proven ability to perform the work in question (Jackson 2001, 2007, 2009)? The variety of recruitment criteria used in different countries is testament to the contradictory solutions recruiters find to this and similar problems (Aycan 2005).

In the remainder of this section it will be argued that, because it is far from self–evident what efficient recruitment strategies and practices might be, organizations rely on political processes inside and outside the organizations to produce them. We have already encountered the most fundamental of these political processes: the process of self–justification and self–aggrandizement that provides the rationale for managers' responsibility for recruitment. Whatever difficulty they might have in practice, managers must claim that they recruit in the cause of organizational efficiency.

Beyond this fundamental process there are political conflicts between the different groups of decision-makers involved in recruitment which may operationalise efficiency in conflicting ways, or fail to agree on the means which they need to use. For example, finance, HR and operations management frequently have different definitions of efficiency (cost control, a healthy culture, productivity) and of the recruitment strategies and practices needed to achieve them (Fevre et al. 2011). Such disagreements cannot be resolved by an appeal to an efficiency umpire (to determine which means and ends best approximate the ideal) but only by political action. The political nature of recruitment is the effect of the difficulty of recruiting for efficiency rather than its cause, and the outcome of disputes between different managerial agents with their own spheres of responsibility and discourse, and their own political interests, will be dictated by politics.

No matter whether they are in conflict or not, different managerial agents have a strong incentive to exaggerate the rationality of their discourse and their decisions. This is one of the strongest reasons why social scientists like those referenced in the introduction to this article are so often persuaded that it is not only possible to recruit efficiently but this is what professional managers usually do. It is also one of the strongest reasons for inertia in recruitment strategies and practices. Managerial agents require observers to believe they are recruiting in the best interests of their organizations in order to hold on to, or enhance, their power, prestige and rewards. This factor reinforces routinisation because managers are reluctant to change a recruitment strategy if this means admitting they did not know how to recruit in the first place (Fevre 1992).

The pressing need to appear to be making decisions which others will admire as rational also means that recruitment strategies and practices tend to reflect the political realities inside and outside the organization doing the recruiting. It is less than fifty years since these realities dictated that British managers should base their strategies for efficient recruitment in sexism and racism and snobbery and the old boys' network (Collinson et al. 1990; Fevre 1992). Most claimed they were pursuing efficiency when they did so.

In recruitment to retailing, for example, recruiters believed that non–White recruits would not be welcomed by customers and so their recruitment was not in the best inter-ests of the company (Fevre 1992).

Many British employees still believe that their employer will favour the recruitment of a particular gender or ethnicity because this is how the company achieves aims like greater efficiency (Fevre et al. 2011). Nevertheless, few *recruiters* would say this is how they recruit the personnel who will sustain or increase efficiency when Britain has legisla-tion which makes this illegal. The political bases of recruitment strategies and practices are therefore clearly capable of change, albeit that that political struggles over their shape are rarely continuous and strategies and practices do become routinised.

Managers turn to routines for other reasons than avoiding criticism. They also do this simply in order to solve the conundrum of how to recruit the right worker for the job. One such routine came in for a lot of criticism from British sociologists twenty to thirty years ago (Fevre 1992). This was the practice of using informal recruitment methods which avoided the difficult questions because it gave recruiters a way of reproducing their existing workforce with every hire. Ignorance of what was requited to hire the best per-son for the job could be neatly circumvented by asking those people who might know what was required – the existing workforce – to take over hiring.

The effect of this delegation was to clone the existing workforce. This was an outcome that the sociological critics of the time found discriminatory, but from the recruiters' point of view it seemed a good solution to their problems. If they did not know how to find the right person for a job – or could not *agree* how to do this (Fevre et al. 2011) – they could at least take on a very similar person to the one who was currently doing it. If the employing organization was viable enough to fund the hire, this was accepted as proof that cloning the existing workforce was a good enough answer to the question of how to recruit efficient workers (sociological critics did not make this point at the time – Jenkins 1986).

As we will see in the next section, informality was subsequently edged out of recruit-ment, along with sexism and racism, when political realities changed. We should not imagine, however, that recruiters no longer try to clone the existing workforce when they hire. This is their main source of person specifications, for example, and they judge the usefulness of these specifications according to how little change results in the type of person hired (Brown and Hesketh 2004). One effect of this solution to the conundrum of recruitment is a routine that every excluded job-hunter bemoans: the requirement for previous experience which ensures those who have never had a job stay unemployed. This is not a solution to the problem of hiring the best person for the job so much as a solution to the political problem recruiters must solve to keep hold of their own well-paying jobs. Salognon (2007) provides one of the very few examples of sociological work which recognizes this and, in the process, demonstrates how recruiting people without experience has none of the expected detriment to efficiency.

It is not only recruiters who engage in the politics which shape recruitment. Within employing organizations there are directors, share holders and employees and their repre-sentatives. Outside there are national worker representative bodies, individual politicians, regulators, professional bodies, special interest groups, the media and so on. As with man-agerial agents, the discourse of these agents almost always takes it for granted that effi-ciency is the aim of recruitment and that it is not too hard (with the right expertise) to define it and find the means to achieve it. Their involvement does not make it any more likely that agreement is reached on what counts as recruitment for efficiency since their discourse will be shaped by their own political interests.

Disagreements over what counts as efficiency are not always the dominant feature of these political debates, however. For example, the British government responded to a political imperative when it dramatically increased the range of situations in which employees, and volunteers, who worked with children and young people, and vulnerable adults, would require vetting to ensure they had no relevant criminal records (Gallagher 2000). Although the political rationale for the change was centered on public concern over the sexual abuse of children, much of the opposition to it was grounded in the belief that increased vetting would be unnecessarily costly and increase hiring delays. Indeed reports of problems in particular occupations still arise although the regulatory reform has been in place for some time (*BMJ Careers*, 3 March 2010). In this case, the political profile of the public issue of child sexual abuse seems to have carried the day over concerns about efficiency.

Equity and the politics of recruitment

We saw in the previous section that patriarchal and racist politics – and the politics of snobbery and class prejudice – affected recruitment for efficiency forty or fifty years ago. It is usually assumed that, since that time, the politics of recruitment has been tending towards making recruitment more equitable as all the components of a fully-functioning meritocracy are put in place (Marshall et al. 1997). We know about the political investment that recruiters make in maintaining the status quo, so some other political considerations must have begun to matter to disturb the political realities of sexism and racism and classism which made discrimination and patronage synonymous with hiring efficient workers. The new political realities were discernible in the interventions of external agents such as professional bodies representing recruiters and, particularly, in the anti-discrimination legislation which forced organizations to adopt more equitable recruitment practices (Modood et al. 1997).

Throughout the preceding fifty years, British political realities have evolved in such a way that hiring efficient workers is now synonymous with 'equal opportunities'. To the extent that this showed they were doing their jobs well, recruiters were happy to adapt to these new realities. To this end they shifted from informal to formal recruitment practices including open advertising and greater reliance on qualifications and formal interviewing with standardized questions (Fevre 1992; Jewson and Mason 1986). In time they developed competency-based recruitment methods and additional recruitment tools such as psycho-social profiling, online testing regimes, recruitment auditions and the extensive use of assessment centres (Brown and Hesketh 2004). Latterly, the political realities of 'equal opportunities' mutated into 'equality and diversity' which brought minor changes to recruitment designed to encourage under-represented groups to apply and, perhaps, to allow recruiters to favour their recruitment if all other recruitment criteria had been met (Noon 2007; Scott-Parker 2008).

For the most part, the political realities which dictated these movements towards more equitable recruitment were not remotely comparable to the example given at the end of the previous section where efficiency was subordinated to political considerations. We have to go to the United States and the arguments about positive discrimination and righting the wrongs of slavery to find comparable movements (Edwards 1987, 1995), and it is noteworthy how much effort was expended on these arguments for small, and sometimes short-lived, victories over the efficiency imperative. In Britain, throughout the period in question, recruiters were usually only able to make recruitment more equitable if they were able to make a case for the improvement in efficiency this would bring.

The fact that, over time, this argument became known as the 'business case' underlines the fact that more equity need not be a political challenge to the supremacy of efficiency (Noon 2007; Riley et al. 2008; Scott-Parker 2008). Saying more equity will increase the accuracy of the decisions made to achieve efficiency was, after all, perfectly in tune with the political realities of life inside and outside organizations at the time. Yet the compromised nature of the drive for equitable recruitment put limits on the arguments that could be made in respect of those equity issues that were allowed to the table. Equity entrepreneurs had to be careful not to suggest that their moral point was more important than the business case or that the business case might, indeed, just be window-dressing (Fevre 2003). This meant that their demands for changes to recruitment practices tended to be conservative and resulting change tended to be halting and gradual (Noon 2007; Scott-Parker 2008).

Such constraints apply to legislators as much as equality activists. Most British equality laws, for example, have made no attempt to put equity before efficiency, and are founded on the belief that equity helps recruiters to make better business decisions. Even the (relatively) adventurous laws against indirect discrimination rely on a distinction between requirements justified by a business case, and therefore legal, and those that are not justified (Fevre 1992). It was not until the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 that a modest attempt was made to create some very limited exceptions to the business case in respect of protection for employees with a disability. The provisions for 'reasonable adjustments', extended in the 2010 Equality Act, meant that, in some circumstances, employers could be required to do things to increase equity that did not have an obvious and immediate efficiency pay-off (Fevre et al. forthcoming). As McKee et al. (2000) illustrate in the parallel case of family friendly policies, equality legislation has a direct effect on efficiency considerations in organizations. Indeed the threat of legal action gives recruiters a simple solution to the conundrum of working out how to recruit. In this case they do no delegate the job to their existing workers but to legal advisors.

This section concludes by explaining why the subordination of equity to efficiency makes it so difficult to construct an equity case in respect of social class. In Britain, at least, class is much more important in generating this inequality than ethnicity or any other social division (Equality and Human Rights Commission 2011). In the introduction to the article we explained that British inequalities have recently widened. In large part this has been a matter of decreased opportunities for social mobility from lower to higher socio–economic groups (Marshall et al. 1997). The introduction explained that inequalities were meant to signal where people should put effort into the acquisition of competences and qualifications but the source of widening British inequalities cannot be traced to any lack of response within the education system. If anything, the response has been over-enthusiastic with graduates being produced at a much faster rate than they could be absorbed into graduate jobs (Brown and Hesketh 2004; Brown et al. 2011).

After experimenting with meritocracy for sixty years or more, we arrived at the point when sociologists resorted to blaming the victims in the lower socio-economic groups for failing to behave in the way meritocracy required either through choice (Marshall et al. 1997) or because they lacked the capacity (Saunders 1997, 2003). It was the failings of those in the lowest socio-economic groups who could not do what meritocracy required of them that accounted for the failure of the adjustment mechanism that was meant to iron out inequalities by providing qualifications for the unqualified. When similar arguments have been made in respect of ethnicity (Herrnstein and Murray 1996) or gender (Ginn et al. 1996), there has been widespread outrage. Indeed the more usual response to evidence of the failure of meritocracy to improve the position of minorities has been to continue to push for improvements in access to jobs. It should be salutary that this seems to be a less viable

option when it comes to class inequalities. The reason is that *class very often functions as in important recruitment criterion*, and this is also why we have put so much emphasis on education, and so little on recruitment practices, as the solution to class inequalities.

Criticisms of recruiters who do not hire well-qualified women or BME candidates assume that these recruiters are damaging the efficiency of their organisations (Fevre 2003). Yet, where recruiters do not hire well-qualified candidates from lower socio-economic groups, it is assumed that this must *enhance* efficiency. This is what Marshall et al. (1997) implied when they argued that recruiters were turning to uncertified competences in order to recruit the best person for the job. In their case this helped to explain why improvements in British social mobility had stalled. More generally, however, this is what social scientists are referring to when they say that recruiters assess candidates' 'cultural capital' when they make recruitment decisions.

As used by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984, 1988, 1997 [1983]) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), 'cultural capital' describes the knowledge, manners and tastes which provide the raw material of social distinction but do not have direct implications for peoples' productive potential. This is good as far as it goes, but the theory that is now emerging requires that the link between cultural capital and efficiency is put under the microscope. This move is necessary in order to critique the link rather than validate it, of course. It is not just in Britain that beliefs about variations in aptitude, competence and talent, sometimes shading into social Darwinist beliefs about inherited traits, are a key feature of the understanding of class (Fevre et al. 1999; Brown et al. 2011). Apparently trivial differences, for example in people's manner of conversing, and in the degree of spontaneous self-confidence they display, are generally held as good evidence on which to base recruitment decisions (Brown and Hesketh 2004).

Particularly in Britain, then, moves to increase equity in recruitment in respect of social class will founder because they seem to be suggesting companies ignore efficiency, or even deliberately hire inefficient workers. Indeed, as Marshall et al. (1997) suggested, the politics of recruitment has been moving in the other direction as more sophisticated attempts are made to measure and valorise uncertified personal characteristics in recruitment practices. Questions are still put using the language which Bernstein dubbed the 'elaborated code' of the middle classes but there is now a technology of recruitment which is designed to give more refined opportunities for the same kind of assessment. In Britain, as elsewhere, psycho-social profiling, assessment centres, recruitment auditions and internships provide new opportunities for recruiters to encourage and evaluate differences in behaviour which are based in social class (Brown and Hesketh 2004).

These sophisticated recruitment methods are used to help recruiters capitalise on what they think they what they know about the characteristics of incumbent workers to help them reproduce the same workforce. This is their solution to the problem of hiring for efficiency, and it is just as effective as excluding those who suffer from social inequality as any of the informal methods which were much criticised twenty or thirty years ago (Fevre 1992; Jenkins 1986; Jewson and Mason 1986). Indeed, to the extent that inequalities are getting worse, this solution may be proving much more effective. If recruiters seem to be using criteria of social acceptability to recruit, it is now much easier to see that this is not what recruiters rely on *instead* of using efficiency criteria. It is how they operationalise efficiency criteria for recruitment (Brown and Hesketh 2004).

A serious attempt to increase equity in respect of class involves a fundamental challenge to the efficiency rationale in a way that gender and ethnicity do not and so nothing can, apparently, be done to resist widening inequality. At the same time, the paraphernalia of meritocracy remain in place, including the educational mechanisms which are supposed

to allow the adjustments which are meant to make such inequalities temporary phenom-ena. The appropriate response to inequalities is no longer for more and more people to acquire qualifications but for more and more people to access the criteria of social accept-ability that are being used to operationalise efficiency. For example, most British universi-ties do something to help their graduates acquire these characteristics but their effort does not affect those without graduate qualifications (see 'graduate employability' at http://www.millionplus.ac.uk). It therefore helps to entrench inequalities between those at the bottom and the rest.

Conclusions

The theory elaborated here encourages debate about alternatives to meritocratic principles for the distribution of people to jobs. These alternative principles will be political of course, but now we can acknowledge that the same applies to any principles for the dis-tribution of places in the division of labour, including meritocratic ones. We might argue that the reduction of inequality is such an overwhelming social priority that the state should mandate for greater social mobility in the way it has mandated for child protec-tion. This might involve requiring the removal of details that might indicate social class from application forms or even requiring the whole recruitment process to be blind to class with no face-to-face interviewing and no language-based testing. But perhaps this is simply pandering to the discredited trappings of meritocracy and it would be better to move directly to quotas for the recruitment of under-represented groups?

Proposals such as these will flatly contradict what organisations think they know about using recruitment to enhance efficiency, thus sparking bitter and long-running disputes to mirror those in the United States over 'positive discrimination' (Edwards 1987, 1995). What may be clearer now than it was at the height of the American 'culture wars', is that politics on one side will always be balanced by politics on the other. The argument against quotas will always rely on a political definition of efficiency, and the choice is never one between filling quotas or hiring the best people for the job. It is rather a choice between a pressing social priority and a version of efficiency which serves the interests of those who propound it.

This is the value of the theory elaborated here for public philosophy. It shows us we need a politics of efficiency but we need to remember that it is just that, politics, and people who engage in it will have their own special interests and, perhaps, tend to exag-gerate the rationality of their cases. This insight has the potential to be a game-changer with business being required to prove there is a particular business case for the way they want to hire when once it was only those who wanted more equity who had to con-struct such a case (Fevre 2003). Oddly enough, the recruiters themselves may welcome this redefinition of their role as it gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their contri-bution as 'business partners' who can make a strategic contribution to organisational success. This might well be preferable to the compromised position they currently occupy: having to launder any personal commitment to reducing inequality through a spurious business case that senior executives may treat with contempt (Noon 2007; Riley et al. 2008; Scott-Parker 2008).

Short Biography

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Note

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