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New Managerialism: The Impact on Education

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With the rise of the neo-liberalism as a system of values[1], there is an increasing attempt to off-load the cost of education, health care and public services generally, on to the individual. Allied to this, there is a growing movement to privatise those areas of public services that could be run for profit, including higher education.

New managerialism represents the organisational arm of neoliberalism. It is the mode of governance designed to realize the neoliberal project through the institutionalising of market principles in the governance of organizations. While Taylorism and 'scientific management have been employed extensively to for-profit businesses for many decades, what makes new managerialism 'new' is the deployment of managerialist principles in both public sector bodies (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012), and, increasingly, in non-governmental organisations (McCrea, 2014).

In the public sector, it involves the prioritization of private (for-profit) sector values of efficiency and productivity in the regulation of public bodies, on the assumption that the former is superior to the latter. It gives primacy to product and output over process and input, and it endorses strong market-type accountability in public sector spending. The attainment of financial and other targets is a priority, and success in meeting targets is measured through public audits of the quality of service delivery. The development of quasi-markets for services is also a key goal; this operates as a further form of control through competition and public surveillance (Clarke, Gewirtz and McLaughlin, 2000).

[1] *Neo-liberalism is… a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the State is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate for such practices….State intervention in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum….*' (Harvey, D. *A Short History of Neoliberalism: 2005: 2)*

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While it would be a mistake to view new managerialism as a unitary whole, implemented consistently across differing cultural and economic contexts, nevertheless in the redesign of public service provision, key features of managerialism include: a change of nomenclature from that of citizens, rights, welfare and solidarity to that of customers, service users and competition; a focus on outputs which is achieved through a measured monitoring of employee performance, and the encouragement of self-monitoring through the widespread use of performance indicators, league tables, target-setting and benchmarking. The decentralization of budgetary and personal authority to line managers combined with the retention of power and control at central level, and the introduction of new and more casualized contractual employment arrangements, as a means to reducing costs and exercising control, are also defining practices. Within new managerialism, there is an elision of the differences between public and private interests. New configurations of public-private relationships are designated as 'partnerships; these include outsourcing services like catering and private finance initiatives for new public buildings (Ball 2009).

Theorists of managerialism regard management as a political and not merely a technical activity. They hold that it is best understood as an ideological configuration of ideas and practices brought to bear on public service organization, management and delivery with a view to aligning organizational practices with those in the market system. It is about creating new management orthodoxy as to how public services are run. They regard it first and foremost as an ideologically-motivated approach to managing public services (Ball, 2009; Blackmore, 2010).

Most theorists who use the concept 'new public management' to analyze recent changes in public service management, however, see the process of management reform as the implementation of an apolitical form of regulatory governance of public services by state agencies. Their main reason for rejecting the link between new forms of public management and ideology is that they hold it is not simply ideologically-

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driven as governments of very different political persuasions in Western States have adopted new public management (or managerial) reforms (Pollitt 2003).

Historical Antecedents

Within traditional capitalist enterprises, ownership and control of operations were integrated functions. As capitalism became corporatized, managing workers and ensuring their productivity, became a separate professional task in large companies. The division between ownership and control facilitated the emergence of managerialism as management became a professional task. The work of managers was to ensure the efficient output of goods and service: maximum output for minimum cost. Max Weber characterized this form of thinking as an extreme form of instrumental reasoning where, in the interests of efficiency, value is not imputed to the activity itself but what the activity produces. He also foresaw the potential conflict between the formal-procedural rationality, to which instrumental reasoning leads, and more substantive value rationality, noting the dangers of the 'iron cage' of extreme instrumentalism where there would be "Specialists without spirit, sensualities without heart…" (Weber, 1930/1972: 182).

In prioritizing efficiency and productivity over other values in work organizations, managerialism is closely aligned also with Taylorism or scientific management as developed by Frederick Taylor in the late 19th and early 20th century (Taylor, 1911). Taylor held that improving worker productivity involved increased surveillance and direction of their work by managers, thereby creating a management class with increased power within work organizations. The prioritization of management as a field of practice, in aligning efficiencies with increased outputs, remains a core principle of management today.

Governmentality and the Internalization of Managerialism

Foucault's analysis of how power is exercised has greatly enhanced understanding of the way control and regulation is exercised, particularly how regulatory values are internalized and operationalized at the individual level. His concept of governmentality helps explain the success of managerialism as a political project. It

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provides a conceptual framework for understanding how individuals implicate themselves in their own governance within managerial organizations (Foucault, 1982-83).

Drawing on Foucault, understanding of the operation of governmentality at the individual level has been enhanced by Nikolas Rose (1989). He shows how control is increasingly less exercised through sovereign or hierarchical power but rather through internalized self-regulation particularly in the neoliberal era. The internalization of managerial values is not a simple process. It involves the management of identity as a modality of control that includes 'managing the insides' of workers, in terms of their hopes, fear and expectations of success in the work organization. Flexibility, adaptability, self-empowerment and self-actualization are incorporated into the new worker (and manager) identities: commitment to corporate goals for excellence and achievement becomes a necessary characteristic of the person (a matter of their character) rather than a requirement of the organization. In this sense, Rose speaks of the 'ethic of autonomous selfhood' that pervades the enterprise culture - a governing of the soul that deploys new technologies of the self, governing from the inside out. Managerialism is thus a form of governmental rationality, a type of disciplinary knowledge that generates its own compliance; people internalize the values of efficiency, productivity and outputs, through the twin practices of habitual practice and ideological infusion.

New Managerialism and Neoliberalism

Managerialism cannot simply be reduced to a series of management practices and activities. It is embedded in a complex series of social, political and economic organizational changes that are tied to neoliberalism as a political project (Clarke and Newman, 1997). It rests on the neoliberal assumption that the market is the primary producer of cultural logic and value and that solutions to societal ills and the management of social change can be best understood through the deployment of market logic and market mechanisms. Economic, educational and social problems are thus construed as management issues that new and more efficient managerial regimes

can resolve. The ethical, political and social dimensions of such problems are treated as secondary considerations.

Managerialism is not regarded by most, therefore, as a neutral management strategy; it is a political project heralding a new mode of governance that provides a unique type of moral purpose for businesses, and organizations modeled on businesses, including schools and colleges. Market-led models of control and regulation become the prototype for work organizations both inside and outside the market. One of the major concerns expressed regarding new managerialism's prioritization of efficiency and effectiveness is that it occurs at the expense of more broadly-based moral and social values related to care, autonomy, tolerance, respect, trust and equality. This has the ultimate impact of defining human relationships in work organization in transactional terms, as the means to an end – the end being that of high performance and productivity.

Managerialism, therefore, is quite a controversial mode of governance as many claim it reduces first order social and moral values to second-order principles; trust, integrity and solidarity with others are subordinated to regulation, control and competition. When managerialist practices achieve hegemonic control within organizations, they parasitize and weaken those very values on which the organization depends. While few would question the value of efficiency, in terms of maximizing the use of available resources, the difficulty with managerialism is that it does not just prioritize efficiency, it suppresses other organizational values so that they become incidental to the running of the organization. The net effect of the devaluation of moral purposes in and of themselves is that public services, such as education, are increasingly defined as commodities to be delivered by the market to customers who can afford to buy them. They are no longer defined as capacity-building public goods that are governed by rights protected by law at national and international levels.

Managerialism and Education

Managerialism in education poses specific challenges for teachers and students (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Managing a school requires many skills, some of which

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are purely technical and apply in any organization (planning, budget and time management, personnel relations etc.) while others are unique to education, including the developmental and nurturing skills required to enable students to grow and develop, and to support teachers in this task. There is an emotional investment in people that is not required in many organizations as the 'product' is the development and care of others. Because managerial principles originated in a commercial context where process is subordinated to output and profit, managerialist values manifest themselves in education through the promotion of forms of governance (measurement, surveillance, control, regulation) that are often antithetical to the caring that is at the heart of good education. While the nurturing of learners has an outcome dimension, gains are generally not measurable in a narrowly specifiable time frame. The gains and losses from having or not having care and nurture in education are only seen over time (Feeley, 2009). Moreover, the caring dimensions of education are not open to measurement in terms of quality, substance and form within a metric measurement system. Even if caring could be monitored and measured through matrices, the very doing of this would force people into the calculation of other-centeredness that would undermine the very principle of relatedness and mutuality that is at the heart of teaching and learning (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012).

As managerialism is the organizational form aligned with neoliberalism, is implicitly endorses a concept of the educated person that is market-led. Education is defined in terms of human capital acquisition, making oneself skilled for the economy. The purpose of education is increasingly limited to developing the neo-liberal citizen: one is educated to be a self-sufficient, rational and competitive, economic actor, a cosmopolitan worker built around a calculating, entrepreneurial and detached self.

Impact on Education Professionals

Managerialism has also altered the relationships between professionals and the State, especially in the public sector. The traditionally powerful position of professionals in public sector organizations has been strongly challenged through systems of surveillance, regulation and accountability that have been established under managerialism. The forms of accountability that have been institutionalized for the

professions, including the promotion and enhancement of user groups (parents and students) and other education stakeholders, including business and corporate interests, has meant that educational 'consumers' exercise control and influence over professionals in a way that was not true hitherto. Consequently, there has been a restructuring of professional identities in line with technicist job requirements.

Measuring one's professional performance against key indicators established by stakeholder interests has become a task in itself (Deem, 2004). However, not all of those within the professions are equally affected by the changes. The strategic importance of reconstructing professionals as managers for the successful implementation of managerial reforms has allowed those who endorse managerialism to make professional gains. Thus, even within professionals, divergences of power, status and influence have emerged between those aligned with and exercising managerial control and those concerned with the systematic maintenance and administration of school routines.

Impact of Managerialism on Educational Practice

Managerialism has had a profound influence on the management and orientation of education over the last two decades of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first. The impact of managerialism has not been even however, either geographically or across educational sectors. Its impact is greatest in higher education where there has been a global movement to make higher education into a marketable commodity that can be traded internationally (Marginson, 2006). The introduction of league tables and rankings for universities (most rankings are commercially-led by powerful publishing interests in the media including the Times Higher Ranking and that of Quacquarelli Symonds) has been an especially powerful tool for generating control over universities (Marginson, 2006). The impact of the managerialist culture is not confined to higher education however, especially within the English-speaking world of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom. Within these countries, managerial practices have also been invoked at primary and secondary levels through the introduction of local site-based school management and the devolution of

budgetary control to individual schools. It has also involved the introduction of performance management pay and appraisal systems and national standardized testing of children. Published ranking of schools is also common, resulting in the polarization of schools (primarily on the basis of social class) as middle class schools become over-subscribed and 'sink' schools struggle to maintain their numbers. The impact of these reforms on school personnel, both teaching staff and senior management, has been substantial, leading to changing subjectivities among both teachers and principals, as they seek to position themselves within the new managerialist order (Blackmore, 2007, 2010; Lynch, Grummell and Lyons, 2012). There is a privileging of entrepreneurial activity as school leaders attempt to market their schools in line with 'consumer' demands and interests.

Gender and Managerialism

Senior management posts are gendered within (and without) education, especially in higher education. Male power is embedded within organizational structures through hidden constructs of the 'ideal' type manager, through methods of recruitment and selection, through processes of job grading and career progression, through the organization of hours of work and via the seemingly neutral informal networks and sponsorship that operate outside of work hours in clubs, gyms, sport and other leisure activities (Blackmore, 2007; Halford and Leonard, 2001).

The gender impact of managerialism in education has taken a number of hybridised forms depending on the sector in which it is implemented. However, in all contexts, its successful implementation involves a shift in organizational culture to one which is firmly embedded in the principles of market dynamics, accountability and enhanced productivity. When analysed in terms of gender dynamics, managerialism presents both challenges and opportunities for men and women to (re)negotiate their positions in the highly competitive market-oriented culture. With the breakdown of traditional patriarchal power positions there is an emphasis on what you can do rather than necessarily who you are; in theory, women have the same chance of being

promoted to senior posts as do their male counterparts in new managerial regimes. The de-layering of management structures can and does undermine traditional patterns of male dominance (Collinson and Hearn 2003 and Deem 2004). However, under managerialism there is also an expectation that senior managers are competitive, tough, individualistic and wedded to the organization. There are assumptions that senior education managers can be workers 24/7, a life-style that is highly gendered in a way that advantages care-free men and women (Lynch, Grummell and Lyons, 2012).

Under new managerialism there is also a new code of values underlying decisions about what constitutes valuable knowledge—decisions that impact the organization of power. Market knowledge matters most; disciplines and fields of study that are not marketable have lower status and power. As STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects are prioritised in the neo-liberal era of market-relevant research and education, those who teach and research in these fields are at the pinnacle of the knowledge hierarchy, especially if their work has market relevance.

Their research is given priority for funding and is most likely to attract private investment in public-private partnerships given its potential for patents and profit. Given the traditional male dominance of STEM subjects, it is not surprising that the gender hierarchies of knowledge translate into gender hierarchies of governance especially in higher education. While women in the STEM fields do benefit from this process, they remain a minority. Subjects remain gendered and stratified, not just in status terms but in funding terms; research and teaching in the humanities and social sciences, all of which are strongly feminised fields, and are centred upon the relatively poorly funded voluntary and public service sectors where no patents apply, are positioned as dependents in the market-led world of mangerialism.

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‘Right, I can do this now’. Community based adult learning, health and well-being

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Abstract
This article explores the experiences of participants in community based adult learning (CBAL) in relation to health and well-being. It draws on data from a small-scale life history study undertaken with 10 adult learners in two local authority areas in Scotland. The article concludes that, for some learners, participation in CBAL had contributed to a sense of well-being and was seen by them as supporting their capacity to cope with ill-health. In addition, it is suggested that community based adult learning can play a role in the recovery from mental ill-health and depression.

Introduction

This paper reports on research that explored the experiences of a small group of adults who had participated in community based adult learning (CBAL) in Scotland. It presents the learners’ accounts of their participation in relation to issues of physical and mental health, and discusses the potential for CBAL to contribute to learners’ overall sense of well-being.

The provision that is the focus of the research was typical in that it was ‘targeted at excluded/disadvantaged groups’ and ‘developed substantially in negotiation with participants’ (Communities Scotland, 2003, p.9). The learning opportunities were offered in local community centres and included subject-based courses, as well as non-accredited discussion groups.

The study was undertaken in two local authority areas, in the context of an increasing focus in Scottish policy on the economic benefits of participation in adult learning (Scottish Government, 2007; 2011). Within this policy context, there is an emphasis on the needs of employers that might mean fewer resources are allocated to learning

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provision aimed at those outside the workforce. In addition, providers of learning opportunities are often required to define the outcomes of their work (Tett, 2010).

The study

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the University of Strathclyde. It was undertaken with eight women and two men who had participated in CBAL in the preceding six months. They were aged between 36 and 70 years, and two were employed, both part-time. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the learners.

The learners were affected by health and well-being issues in different ways. Four had experienced difficulties with their physical health, while three learners had suffered from mental ill-health or depression. One learner, Elaine, was in both categories. Four of the learners were affected indirectly through their responsibility for the care of a family member with health problems. One of these was Alison, whose daughter had complex health needs, while she had health problems of her own. The learners were at various stages of recovery, and had addressed their health issues in diverse ways.

A life history approach to the research was chosen in order to take account of the context in which learning took place. Two semi-structured life history interviews were carried out with each of the learners.

The approach to data analysis was interpretive, and the interview data were searched for components of health and well-being drawn from the academic literature (Diener et al., 1997; Field, 2009; Schuller et al, 2004):

- self-esteem, sometimes linked to a sense of agency or self-efficacy
- well-being, expressed as positive moods or emotions
- protection or recovery from mental ill-health

The learners' perceptions

Self-esteem, agency and self-efficacy

One learner, Alan, had experienced physical illness and disability following a stroke several years earlier. He said that he had gained in confidence through his

participation in CBAL, and this was linked in his interviews to the development of self-esteem. One example was directly related to his health when he was able to challenge a doctor whom he felt had made assumptions about his ability to understand his treatment because he was in a wheelchair. It was important to Alan that he was not treated differently because of his disability, and CBAL had contributed to his self-esteem in this respect:

> Well it's given me confidence that, you know, I still have the intelligence and the intellect that I always had. You know, what level you're at is hard to gauge but I can argue a point, you know? Because people are…they see someone in a wheelchair and think because they are disabled, they're disabled from the top of the head to the toe, including their brain. But some of the brainiest folk are disabled.

One of the aspects of the computing course that Alan enjoyed was that the other learners treated him 'like themselves'. Although Alan did not use the word self-esteem, these examples from his interviews suggested that how he was viewed by others was important, and CBAL contributed to his sense of self-worth in the sense that his disability was not the focus of his participation.

One interpretation of Elaine's interviews was that increased self-esteem, gained through her participation in CBAL, was linked with feelings of self-efficacy and agency: "It's made a big difference because I feel I have a choice, that my opinion counts, whereas before it never…you felt each person was respected, you know?" This was an important aspect of Elaine's participation in CBAL. She had been frustrated by not getting help following an injury at work, and in her subsequent struggle to recover and return to her job. CBAL had provided an opportunity for Elaine to feel that her voice was heard.

Some of the other learners described their experiences in terms of feeling more in control of aspects of their lives and being able to make decisions. One learner, Melanie, cared full time for her son who had a disability. She had decorated her

kitchen, something she attributed directly to the content of a positive thinking course, and the encouragement of the tutors:

> It's probably, maybe, the silliest answer you've heard but it's the truth, you know, and I thought: 'right I can do this now'. I've started to put the beading down and I was putting poles up. You name it, I'm trying DIY things just myself now.

This statement from Melanie suggested that she developed agency through her participation in CBAL, borne out by action, as she perceived it.

Well-being.

Some of the learners referred to aspects of their participation in CBAL that suggested it had made a positive contribution to how they felt about their lives. For example, Doreen looked forward to her course re-starting after a holiday break: 'I'll go back on Friday mornings and then whatever is coming up after Christmas. I actually do enjoy my Friday mornings…just getting dressed up on Friday mornings, out of my gym stuff'. Doreen's words suggested that going to her class provided a purpose to Friday mornings that gave her a reason to take extra care with her appearance.

Another example was Mary who had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS): "Well my husband says 'oh, you're a lot happier when you come back from your courses'. This sense of well-being was important, especially in the context of Mary's MS:

> I suppose if you get a diagnosis of poor health, that makes you think well I'm not going to sit down and feel sorry for myself. I'm going to get up and do something with my life. So I want to see different places. I want to do as much as I can basically. Just in case. You never know what's round the corner.

However, participation in CBAL was not always a positive experience in this study. The interviews showed that assessment was a source of worry and stress for some of

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the learners: "I go 'I can't do this, I can't do it!' And [the tutor] says 'for goodness sake, Linda you know you're fine', but I panic about that".

Some class discussions had been difficult for Melanie who was unable to work due to her caring responsibilities:

> When I'm on courses I've had to sit there and bite my tongue because some folks say 'and see these folks that's on benefits' and I'm like 'do you want to live in my shoes?'…And I says 'you should actually just sit and don't cast aspersions on anybody' you know? That sometimes is, I don't actually like…the tutors never ask you that. It's just the conversation of all in the group, you know?

On these occasions, the comments of others had acted against any feelings of well-being Melanie might have derived from participation in CBAL. However, these instances had not deterred Melanie from attending CBAL, and her words suggested that support from the tutors might have encouraged Melanie to continue to participate in CBAL, despite the difficulties.

Protection or recovery from mental health difficulties

The data analysis suggested that participation in CBAL had played a role in protecting the mental health of some of the learners as they coped with the circumstances of their lives. One example was Sam who had recently retired. His description of his participation in a Gaelic language class suggested a desire to protect his mental health by creating a sense of purpose: "Gaelic, the gym, just keeping myself busy. I miss my work. It's terrible to retire, because then you realise that - I am old." The way that Sam talked about retirement indicated a kind of battle to stave off sliding into inactivity or possibly even depression:

> it's just to keep myself, I like keeping myself, since retiring I find it's very difficult to … (laughs). You mustn't let yourself get into a rut, you must keep active physically and mentally, I feel.

This suggested that Sam feared that he might feel down if he did not keep to his daily routine, and learning Gaelic through CBAL was part of his plan to keep busy.

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Three of the learners in this study had experienced mental health problems prior to their participation in CBAL. Linda felt she had recovered fully at the time of her interviews, but stress and mental ill-health featured strongly in the life stories of Sarah and Elaine: "I ended up with back problems, reactive depression and I lost my hair" (Elaine). "With the self-harm … I was just really, really ill." (Sarah). These quotes revealed the seriousness of both women's ill-health, as well as longer-term physical effects.

Both Sarah and Elaine emphasised that their participation had taken "courage." Once there, they identified learning in a group as beneficial, and had contributed to their recovery from mental health problems as well:

> I've learnt that coming here and listening to, you know other people. I'm inspired by other people and I've enjoyed hearing, you know, what they're like, what going through school was like. You know the struggles that people have and if you don't know anybody coming here, it's hard to go into classes (Elaine).

Sharing her experiences had contributed to Elaine making sense of them, and she had drawn comfort from knowing that others had experienced similar difficulties. However, Elaine's confidence was very fragile and she said that there were "still a lot of things [she was] unsure of."

Discussion

Clearly, participation in CBAL did not transform the difficult circumstances of these learners' lives in relation to health issues. Also, it is not possible to attribute positive health benefits directly to the various learning opportunities attended. Nonetheless, the interpretation of the interview data suggests that CBAL contributed to positive health and well-being outcomes for some learners.

In this study, participation in CBAL was associated with self-esteem, linked to increased confidence that for some learners had been eroded through experiences of disability, mental illness or depression. The development of confidence was found by

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Schuller et al. (2002) to be "fundamental and pervasive" in many other studies of adult learning (p.14), and they identified ways in which increased confidence might be important to health outcomes, that can be seen in this study. Firstly, one learner, Alan, had "challenged the views of others" (Schuller et al., 2002, p. 14), and his self-esteem was increased through feelings that he had stood up for himself. However, this was in contrast with Melanie's experience of saying nothing when other learners in her group expressed views with which she disagreed. Secondly, both Alan and Mary had been able to "communicate more effectively with professionals, notably on health or education matters" (p. 15). A third aspect of increased confidence –"to draw on and make sense of their own personal experience" (p.14) – was applicable in Elaine's case. In this study, the development of confidence and increased self-esteem were inter-linked in ways that supported health outcomes for some learners.

The analysis of the interview data suggested that participation in CBAL had supported the development of self-efficacy and feelings of agency. Through their participation, some of the learners reported feelings of independence, and that their opinions counted. A sense of agency was highlighted in the stories of some learners who had made decisions about their lives, and carried out their plans. However, the learners did not use the words agency or self-efficacy in their interviews. This has potential implications for providers of learning opportunities that are often required to provide evidence of the outcomes of provision (Tett, 2010). It might be important for practitioners to look for ways to evaluate CBAL that makes explicit the health and well-being outcomes of participation.

The findings of this study support recent research that suggests that participation in learning can contribute to health and subjective well-being (Aldridge & Lavender, 2000; Field, 2009; Schuller et al., 2004). However, there were some negative aspects of their participation which had worked against this on some occasions. Field (2009) has noted that some adults experience "anxiety, stress and frustration through learning" (p. 184), and this had been the case for some of the learners in this study. Accreditation was a source of concern for Linda, who feared assessment processes.

Also, although some learners had benefitted from learning in a group, Melanie described how insensitive comments from others had been upsetting.

The interview analysis suggested that participation in CBAL had contributed to the protection of the mental health of some of the learners in this study. The focus of Sam's interviews for example, was on the role CBAL had played in coping with retirement. Schuller et al. (2004) distinguished this "sustaining effect" (p.25) of participation in adult learning, from what they described as the more dramatic transformations that can result from education. Elaine and Sarah both described their participation in terms of their recovery from mental illness. However, it is important to acknowledge that participation in CBAL was a part of their recovery from mental health difficulties, in the context of other aspects of their lives and relationships.

Conclusion

The findings of this research contribute to the debate about the potential roles and purposes of CBAL. The learners described the ways in which the support of CBAL practitioners and feelings of being heard by others, as well as a new sense of agency and independence, facilitated health and well-being. This study identified potential benefits of participation in CBAL yet none of these learners had plans in relation to employment. This research might support CBAL practitioners as they seek funding for learning opportunities for adults that are outside the workforce.

However, this needs to be held in balance with negative experiences of learning that can detract from these potential benefits. The learners in this study identified some aspects of their participation in CBAL that had a negative effect on their experiences of learning. It is important that those who provide CBAL opportunities are alert to the barriers to learning that both assessment and learning in a group can create, and that they remain sensitive to the circumstances of learners' lives. Nonetheless, the potential for CBAL to support learners' positive health in a variety of ways is an important research finding in a policy context that prioritises economic outcomes of participation.

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Imagining a different future

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Abstract

Most providers engage in evaluation but, often, there is little opportunity to record in any depth the experience of returning to learning and the difference it has made to learners. For that reason, the Edinburgh Adult Education Research Group undertook 10 life-story interviews with students to examine in-depth the impact adult learning had on their lives

A learner's story

EM had a difficult formal education, disrupted by the Second World War. At school in England, where her father was stationed, she suffered bullying – by other students and by a teacher – and left, at 14, with few positive memories. She remembers being taught to write her name and address by her mother. Her best learning, she says, happened on the occasions she returned to Edinburgh to stay with relatives.

After leaving school, EM took a variety of jobs, including working at Boots the chemist and in a shoe factory. She wanted to be a chemist or a nurse, but her parents didn't support her ambitions. Living at home was tough. Her parents had a bad relationship and EM was often caught in the middle.

She got married but her husband was cruel and it ended in divorce. Her second husband was very 'traditional' and EM found herself confined to the home with her children. There were no opportunities to learn outside the home. It was a terribly difficult time. During the interview, she became emotional when speaking of her eldest daughter, who died when she was pushed off a building. EM was at her lowest point when she decided to return to education. Her neighbours were abusive and she was frightened to leave the house.

EM joined the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in 1999, enrolling on courses in creative writing and photography. She was unsure at first, worrying that she was not a 'worker', and felt conscious of her own lack of formal education (she left one class because of the well-educated students who talked too much and dominated discussion). But studying with the WEA gave her new life, she says. She looks on them as family and friends who have supported her for many years. She is eager to give something back to the WEA, and does so through her volunteering work. She is very positive about all the tutors and support within the organisation. She loves looking at the history of Edinburgh and linking it to her own. EM has plans to write a book about her own life.

Her advice for learners is just to take the plunge. She was not sure about starting adult education but decided to give it a try as she had nothing to lose. 'All the staff have been

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really wonderful and I've never regretted it,' she says.

The story of EM's life may not be exactly typical of the learners we interviewed in this research but it will resonate with the many adult educators who have acquired insights into the lives of their students and who recognise how adult education can make a difference. Increasingly, however, adult education providers are required to demonstrate the impact of participation on learners' lives and, in the current context of austerity and the marketisation of services, the need to justify public resources for adult education is a major preoccupation and worry for those in the profession.

Of course, many providers engage in evaluation exercises, which provide valuable evidence of impact and insights from learners which are critical to shaping future services. However, evaluation usually occurs at the end of the learning programme and so focuses on the immediate outcomes for participants. This precludes a more in-depth opportunity for learners to reflect on and record their experiences of returning to learning and the difference it has made in their lives. To address this, the Edinburgh Adult Education Group, with the aid of a community education student on placement from the University of Edinburgh, undertook a small-scale research project to provide a more in-depth look at the impact of adult learning on the lives of some learners. Ten life-story interviews were carried out with adults who did not have a successful experience of school education and who did not engage in formal education immediately after leaving school. Six men and four women students drawn from a variety of community-based provision across Edinburgh contributed to the research.

The research aims were:

- To investigate the ways in which participation in community-based adult education impacts on learners' lives across four significant areas of life: personal, family, work and community; and
- To investigate how participation in community-based adult education has enabled learners to renegotiate their educational identity.

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Learners were asked about their early education experiences, their motives for returning to learning, and the influence of adult education on their lives. The interviews were digitally recorded, and written summaries and full transcriptions were made of each interview. These were coded and analysed collectively by the research group. Key findings from the research are divided into four categories: wounding learning experiences; breaking the mould; supportive learning; and impact of learning.

From an early age, wounding learning experiences can shape individuals' dispositions to learning in ways which have powerful long-term consequences. Learners can feel deeply disempowered, particularly through poor experiences of schooling, which lead to low self-esteem and feelings of intellectual failure throughout adult life. This finding will not be a surprise to many of those working in community-based adult education, and previous research in this area has highlighted the significance of social class, gender, school experience, family and employment, in shaping learners' attitudes towards learning and their expectations of failure or success. Social privileges in life usually turn into educational success; conversely, educational failure is often a reflection of an unequal social and economic landscape as well as a devalued cultural one. These factors feed into personal wounds as well as 'learning cultures', which can enable or disable opportunities for engaging with learning.

Most of the learners in our sample had experienced educational failure multiple times. Specifically, learners report that teaching methods at school were not conducive to their personal needs in that large classes and rote learning styles meant those who didn't keep up at school fell further behind; there are also accounts of specific learning difficulties which were not identified or supported. Moreover, the failure of educators to listen to learners' experiences deepened recursive and tumbling spirals of learner self-esteem. As a consequence, learners viewed returning to adult education as involving huge risk; sometimes it is hard to fully appreciate the important step individuals take in their decision to participate. This means, of course, that the triggers which motivated their actions are significant and that their return encounter to education has to be a welcoming and positive experience.

Memories of educational failure have to be overcome quickly if adult motivation is to be reinforced rather than squandered.

> I always went to school, but I never got what I should have got out of it. I think what it was, when I went to the [adult] classes they were all smaller classes. It was more personal and not so daunting. AW

Learners in our sample welcomed small classes and being respected as an 'equal in discussion', a critical factor in transforming expectations. We found that breaking the mould of expectations is, on the one hand, partly achieved by good friendly interpersonal relations but, on the other, it is also a pedagogical, curriculum and organisational issue. Learners decide to return to education for a number of reasons: to learn things not learned at school, for employment, for entrance exams, to support their families and to pursue interests. Recognising and building on learners' motivations to learn are essential for achievement. In organisational terms, accessible locations, informality, flexibility in terms of dropping in and dropping out, affordability and good-quality childcare are all ingredients in high-quality adult provision.

> I can access basic numeracy and literacy classes at no cost, which is wonderful. It's absolutely wonderful that people can do that and continue their learning. JM

One of the most significant themes that learners highlighted in their interviews was the crucial role played by their tutors. One of the contradictions of the lifelong learning policy agenda, which developed in the UK from the 1990s, has been that emphasising the focus on learners can mean overlooking their relationship with educators. In our sample it is clear that the subjectivity of the learner and the agency of the educator have to be seen as mutually related. This mutual relationship is supported by the Scottish social practice model, where adults' life experiences are acknowledged and built on, which underpins the principles of teaching practice in a

great deal of community-based education and contributes to successful learning experiences. Learners say they valued the following aspects of what tutors do to:

- create a relaxed, comfortable, unthreatening space;
- act as equals in the group by showing they are 'willing to learn with the group';
- tailor learning activities through negotiation with learners;
- encourage supportive rather than competitive relationships within the group;
- include activities for collaborative learning which motivate learners;
- welcome ideas which learners bring to the group;
- break learning down into manageable units and ways of understanding; and
- show they have a flexible approach to teaching.

Adult tutors are involved in re-positioning the educational relationship so that where learners previously felt they were slow and ignored at school, they now begin to feel they can go at their own pace, are listened to, and are encouraged by tutors. In theoretical terms, cognitive and affective processes are mutually supportive and recognising the importance of this for adult learning is critical to successful renegotiations of learner identities from poor to positive ones.

Productive tutor-learner relationships are also evident in the impact of community based adult education on learners' lives. The important point shining through the data is that learners' lives have to be understood holistically rather than as a mere labour market toolkit in need of new tools. Being ready to learn may not have a specific purpose, as the learner below states:

> I decided because I just wanted to learn things I didn't learn as well at school. That was the main reason why I went. I guess I was kind of more interested to learn now; I'm ready to learn now. SD

If we broaden the aperture from earning to learning, to include work as merely one of the motivations people bring with them to study, then a richer seam of impact of adult learning is revealed. Our research highlighted the significance of diverse motivations

for learning, a diversity which is ignored in policy that only seems to recogise worthwhile learning as that which contributes to employability. If policymakers are seriously interested in building a knowledge society then starting from a social-practice perspective should be a key conceptual and pedagogical resource for successful policy.

Learners say the learning they have experienced has been a *lifelin*e, giving purpose and a new capacity for living.

> I write letters for my son, and I read for him some small stories. For my daily life, it has been a great success. For example, I can go to the train station and get a ticket, the bus station, speak with somebody or check some websites. AR

> The confidence that it's given me is huge and it feels like I'm not locked out anymore, that there's a way in. I used to feel ashamed of not being able to participate. JJ

We asked learners to identify how they had benefitted from their experiences and the following list captures the main points made:

- acquiring a positive change in their self-identity as capable and intelligent learners;
- the acquisition of new skills and strategies in dealing with daily life (such as writing letters, using a computer, speaking and understanding English, coping with numeracy, acting with independence);
- increased confidence and improved self-esteem;
- enhanced skills for work;
- developed and improved social and interpersonal skills; and
- better able to engage in family learning.

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Highly significant in the above is the way in which adult learning can involve the reconstruction of self-esteem, of feelings of recognition and positive learning identities, because, without this as a starting point, it is difficult to achieve other goals or even to keep motivated to learn. If adult motivations for learning are not fulfilled why should they persist? Moreover, persistence is necessary to begin to turn round deeply ingrained negative identities and low self-confidence. But once learners begin to see themselves in a new light the possibilities for action and autonomy, individually and collectively, increase and the potential impact of community-based adult education is enhanced.

To return to EM's story at the beginning of this article, it is important to capture the wider picture of how adult education might help individuals change their life. EM's experience of the WEA led her to begin living a new kind of life and imagining a different future from the one she had lived. She is aware that the shadow of privilege in education can be present in adult education too – the well-educated who speak too much – but she is now confident in her own educational achievement and her willingness to volunteer reflects an awareness that she has valuable experience and knowledge too. The WEA is, she says, part of her family and friends – in short, she belongs.

Adult educators need to focus on the importance of identity work with students as the blocks created by prior negative learning experiences have to be addressed before any new and sustained learning can occur. Community-based adult education is, in this respect, a lifeline for some learners and is in a strategic position to foster positive learning identities. Above all, the qualities of the tutor to support and link learning to everyday life interests and issues is a critical catalyst for transforming and building new learners' identities and agency. If lifelong learning is to be meaningful it needs to address the real-life circumstances of the learner along with the importance of resourcing and investing in high-quality education. Our research demonstrates in a convincing way that learners' lives are complex and that learning should be *for* life.

The authors are all members of the Edinburgh Adult Education Group, a partnership of providers from the local authority, the voluntary sector, museums, libraries and the University of Edinburgh, which aims to support and promote community-based education in the city. The research group was drawn from the wider adult learning body. The fieldwork, interviews and analysis for this research were carried out by Marita Fallon, postgraduate student, University of Edinburgh.

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Foucault's Concept of Counter-Conduct and the Politics of Anti-Austerity Protest in Ireland

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Since the announcement of the Irish recession in 2008, there has been much media and popular speculation regarding the apparent failure of the Irish people to collectively resist austerity. The socialisation of private banking debt and successive fiscal 'adjustments', which have seen huge reductions in public spending, disproportionately impacting on the Irish community and voluntary sector (Harvey, 2012), have not generated sustained opposition from civil society. Apocryphal stories of Greek protesters chanting 'we are not like Ireland' or the current Irish Minister for Finance Michael Noonan's threats to print t-shirts with the slogan 'We're not Greece', belie a more complex reality. Evidently, as Laurence Cox (2012) has observed in this journal 'responses from working class communities and social movements' have been 'minimal'[2]. In the absence of a widely-shared and enacted anti-austerity politics, there have been regular manifestations of localised or sectoralised opposition to welfare retrenchment, service withdrawal, and the introduction of new levies or charges (Allen, 2012). It is important to note, however, that their achievements to date have been variable.

On the 14th of October, 2008, the then Finance Minister Brian Lenihan, announced that government intended to withdraw automatic entitlement to medical cards for those over 70.[3] Introduced in 2001 the over-70s medical card was one of a small

[3] According to Ireland's Health Service Executive (2013) Medical Cards entitled holders to 'access Family Doctor or GP services, community health services, dental services, prescription medicine costs, hospital care and a range of other benefits free of charge'. HSE (2013) 'Medical Cards and GP visit Cards', http://www.hse.ie/medicalcards/

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minority of universal health benefits but it would now become conditional on a means test. This paper focuses on public reaction to Lenihan's announcement. His budget proposal inspired *the Older People's Uprising,* Ireland's first demonstration of popular resistance to austerity, now remembered as an effective if untypical expression of *people* or pensioner *power*.

This paper presents *the Uprising* as an example of what Foucault (2007) dubs 'counter-conduct', through which subjects resist governmental forms of power. Here government is understood in the Foucauldian sense to mean 'the conduct of conduct'(Death, p238). More generally the governmentality literature seeks to analyse how 'government is thought into being in programmatic form' by diverse 'practitioners of rule', highlighting the 'concepts they invent or deploy to render their subjects governable' (Weir et al, 1997, p502).

The Uprising secured notable concessions on medical card entitlement; contested aspects of ageism; and raised the spectre of a sensitive, politically astute and mobile older people's vote. However, it's important not to overstate either the depth of resistance or its transformative potential. As Carl Death (2010) explains, counter-conduct works with and within the constraints of governmental forms of power: because it is so closely intertwined with that which it opposes, it may reinforce or re-energise established ways of doing things. In this case, the forms that protest took and the framing of older people's demands reflected and reinforced Ireland's political tradition of clientelism. *The Uprising* thus offers us an interesting opportunity to learn from and about the limits of activism in the Irish context.

Governmental rationalities and the medical card.

According to the WHO (2012, P60) 'Ireland is the only EU health system that does not offer universal coverage of primary care'. Instead access to low-cost or 'free' services is largely determined by means tested medical cards. Historically there has been considerable institutional, professional and political resistance to proposed extensions of universal benefits across the health system. Nonetheless, in his December 2000 budget speech Minister for Finance Charlie McCreevy, a member of

Fianna Fáil, announced that from 2001 all Irish residents aged over 70 would become eligible for medical cards, irrespective of their means. The proposal seemed anomalous particularly since McCreevy was widely regarded as a champion of market values and Ireland was at this time pursuing distinctly neo-liberal policies, centred on the expansion of the housing market, improving competitiveness and promoting public sector reform. Indeed, the centrality of such economic rationalities to the Irish model of development, and the consequent 'subordination' of social concerns was explicitly noted in McCreey's budget speech. He presented the over-70s card as proof of his Government's commitment to '[a] Fairer Society', while underscoring policy-making's bottom-line:

> to manage our economy to secure our continued prosperity; to improve our quality of life; to promote a fairer society; and to reward work and enterprise through ongoing tax reform. …. The budgetary targets and goals are based on the over-riding need to keep our economy competitive and on the need to ensure that this is reflected in our approach to how we reward ourselves.
> (Dail Eireann 2008)

Reviewing his budget statement we see that some predictable concepts are deployed to activate responsible conduct from Ireland's interest groups and citizens; references to 'sensible management' (Dail Eireann, 2008), 'disciplined approach' and 'attractiveness of work and enterprise'. But neo-liberalism, as expressed through governmental rationalities and policy measures in specific nation states, is often complex and contradictory. As acknowledged by Kitchin *et al* (2012). Ireland's unique version was shaped by the apparent absence of polarising ideological divisions and our long-standing traditions of clientelism and brokerage politics. Such factors made for a 'species… which is perhaps best characterised as ideologically concealed, piecemeal, serendipitous, pragmatic, and commonsensical' (Kitchin et al 2012, p1036). Also noting that his 'Budget supports social partnership', McCreevy alluded to the particular role of corporatist arrangements in both fashioning and legitimising Ireland's economic and social development trajectory. In 2000 the social partners included trade union, business, farming and community and voluntary sector representatives, among them organisations advocating on behalf of older people.

Thus we cannot dismiss the governmental rationalities of the time as the pure and unmediated constructions of the Government. They were, to a greater or lesser extent, filtered, shaped, mandated, resisted and administered via social partnership structures and their participants.

Ireland's governmental rationalities are also tainted by politics, particularly politics of the more expedient kind. Mel Cousins' (2007) work on 'budget-cycles' highlights how incumbent governments have tended to expand social security spending at key moments in order to bolster their re-election prospects And, despite McCreevy's lofty rhetoric, the over-70s card was widely viewed as a Fianna Fáil sweetener for older voters, an attempt to enhance the party's likeability in advance of the 2002 election. Critics accused McCreevy of wilfully misdirecting scarce resources, privileging comparatively well-off pensioners over younger people and families whose medical needs and economic vulnerability were more acute. Interestingly, that same line of argument was seized upon by his own party as it sought to face down *the Uprising* in 2008.

The origins of the 'over-70s' card thus reveal the interplay between economic rationalities, electoral strategy and social policy formation. In 2008 its withdrawal followed confirmation of the recession and the Irish bank bailout. Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan's first crisis budget was constructed as a response to the 'historic task' facing the state: the need to 'to restore order and stability in the public finances, to increase productivity and competitiveness and to protect those who are most vulnerable in our country' (Dáil Éireann, 2008). In Ireland, as in many other contexts, the solutions to neoliberalism's ills are presumed to lie in what Jamie Peck (2010) calls 'Zombie' neoliberalism, i.e. it looks as if it is dead, it should be dead but somehow it is still 'dominant' (Peck, 2010, p106), Remarking that 'the world financial system has been turned upside down', Lenihan framed austerity as inevitable and he thus sought to mobilise popular support for it. In a telling example of governmental discourse that sought to shape the conduct of Irish citizens he identified this budget as an 'opportunity for us all to pull together and play our part according to our means'. Dáil Éireann , 2008).

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Aside from its specific policy prescriptions, Lenihan's budget speech revealed the rationalities that were immanent to the distinctive governmental project of the moment, managing the Economic Crisis, and thus was universalism rendered disposable. When Lenihan (re)affirmed Ireland's allegiance to the dominant economic orthodoxy: '[w]e have a low tax burden by European standards... we have made a choice to reward work and enterprise', he also appealed to vague concepts of fairness and need.

> Government policy is to target resources at those in greatest need. Universal entitlements irrespective of means do not target those in greatest need… in some cases there is a need to differentiate between those who have and those who have not.
> (Dáil Éireann , 2008)

Government spokespeople tried to minimise the likely impact of the policy, claiming that retrenchment was essential for economic survival and for fairness, but that it would only disadvantage a minority of better-off older people. Certainly, as Hogget *et al* (2013) observe, 'fairness agendas' are a more comfortable fit with neoliberal economic rationalities than are concepts of universalism, equality or redistribution.[4] Furthermore, references to 'fairness', and by implication the inverse 'unfairness', also help to cultivate resentments. In this there are parallels with other contexts where the resurgence of 'anti-welfarism' has re-energised the hackneyed *deserving versus undeserving* binary that has been a long-standing feature of debates about welfare (Hoggett et a, 2013). As the medical card controversy raged Ireland's Tánaiste Mary Coughlan ridiculed efforts to retain the entitlements of 'well-off pensioners, … senior civil servants, High Court Judges, property tycoons, ministers of state and hospital consultants' (Kerr, 2008). Notably, this cast list of the supposedly undeserving was scripted to include those most associated with the excesses of the Celtic Tiger years.

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During *the Uprising*, the Irish government built its defence by targeting the medical cards of supposedly prosperous pensioners, thus signalling its intention to unburden the state of their 'unfair' and 'unsustainable' dependence. However, in the interests of political stability governments must also secure a broad consensus around potentially unpopular policies and consequently Lenihan framed his budget as 'a call to patriotic action'. Such invocations of patriotism are echoed in the discourses of 'virtuous necessity' (Clark & Newman 2012) that have gained traction in the UK as the Conservative/Liberal Democratic coalition has set about disassembling the welfare state. Promoting '…shared sacrifice and suffering … a sense of collective obligation' they too seek to mobilise consent and active collaboration with the governmental project of austerity (Clark & Newman, 2012, p309).

The Uprising and its achievements

The withdrawal of automatic entitlement to the over-70s card had been anticipated by media and activists in the run up to the budget. The advance speculation did not diminish public outrage and may even have helped to expedite the mobilisation of opposition. In popular memory *the Older People's Uprising* is associated with the Age Action Ireland organised public meeting attended by 1,800 older people that took place in St Andrew's Church, Dublin on October 21st, and the *March on the Dáil* by 15,000 older people that occurred the following day. These were boisterous assemblies where attendees demonstrated their unanimous opposition to the policy. Government spokespeople who came along to minimise or defend the proposal were silenced by the booing and jeering of the older protestors. In contrast, opposition politicians were warmly welcomed and they made their presence known as they mingled with the crowds. This ensured that the events were politically charged yet curiously non-ideological, even though the principle of universalism was repeatedly invoked by protesters.

It is worth remembering that the Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament and Age Action Ireland, who called the protests, had social partner status. They also had on-going involvements in adult education, citizenship and active ageing programmes for older

people. This public profile along with the parallel development of senior social centres was vital to the rapid mobilisation of protesters from across the country.

From budget-day onwards, national and local day-time talk radio shows became animated platforms for older people and supporters to vent their fury and rally resistance. Contributors thus reclaimed the public sphere, as they testified to the benefits of the universal card and shared their fears about the arbitrariness of means testing. Marches occurred in Cork, Limerick, Tralee, Galway, Drogheda and Clonakilty, and the constituency offices of various ministers were also picketed. Even at the Dublin *March…* protesters proudly demonstrated local affiliations: "The Banner [County i.e. Clare] Fights Back", "National Widows Association Drogheda Branch", "Tara Disabled Mineworkers and Pensioners". Participants thus emphasised the geographical range and legitimacy of their oppostion, strategically putting their elected representatives on notice. In Ireland conventional ideological divisions between left and right are obscured by the persistence of a populist and clientelist political culture. This obliges national legislators to be attentive and responsive to local constituents and in its most notorious form it means promising favours in exchange for future votes. Exploiting this tradition, the Irish Senior Citizen's Parliament urged members **to** 'Get out There! Get Working! Get talking to your local politicians and demand that this be withdrawn'. And so, even as they practised their right to protest at the various marches, participants in *the Uprising* self-consciously identified as disgruntled voters – "we voted 4 you now vote 4 us" was a common placard.

This explicit threat of an electoral backlash by older people created a political crisis for government. There were (short-lived) rebellions on the government backbenches and Fianna Fáil's local councillors petitioned party leaders for an immediate rethink. The protesters forced clumsy and repeated revisions of the new means test criteria so that five alternative versions were published in the week that followed the budget announcement. These revisions were designed to neutralise disquiet and Minister for Health Mary Harney reassured the public that only 20,000 older people, as opposed to the previously estimated 125,000, would lose their cards. Ultimately, the protests

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succeeded in preserving the entitlements of a large number of existing claimants. The principle of universalism was, however, lost. The policy has been continued by the Fine Gael/Labour coalition that was elected in 2011, despite both parties' ostentatious condemnation of it at the time. As I write, consideration is being given to a new scheme to provide universal GP access to those aged over 70.

The Uprising as counter-conduct

Foucault's work is rightly recognised for its nuanced and sophisticated contribution to our understanding of power; how it is relational, dynamic, exercised from multiple standpoints simultaneously; how it doesn't only repress conduct but also vitalises it or calls it into being.

> Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations. (Foucault, 1978, p99)

Although he recognised that resistance necessarily and inevitably coexists with power, the concept of resistance is widely regarded as under-theorised in his work. This tendency is also reflected in the wider governmentality literature, which as Carl Death (2010, p239) points out 'has made little contribution to the study of social movements, protests and contentious politics'.

This is unfortunate, especially since the seeds of a more considered and productive engagement with protest politics are already present in Foucault's work. Introducing counter-conduct during the College De France lecture series, Foucault placed it squarely beside his analytical account of governmentality. The former concept seeks to evoke and capture 'struggle[s] against processes implemented for conducting others' and it is an explicit acknowledgement that efforts at government are not always successful, inciting as they do instances of 'resistance, refusal or revolt' (Foucault, 2007, 200/202). For example, Lenihan's budget speech sought to conduct the conduct of Irish citizens, urging us to act responsibly in the face of crisis. With t*he Uprising,* significant numbers of older people responded to his exhortations that we

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'pull together' and 'play our part' by participating in public demonstrations and collective action.

Crucially, counter-conduct should not be mis-recognised as a kind of kneejerk 'NO' or mindless reaction; instead Davidson (2001, p37) characterises such resistance as 'an active intervention… in the domain of the ethical'. At the Dublin marches participants brought the ethics of government into sharp relief as placards questioned why citizens should be expected to shoulder the costs of the recent bank bailout. Therefore, while this can be regarded as single issue protest it did highlight more fundamental concerns about economic management and wealth redistribution, and their relationship to the needs of citizens.

"Hands off the medical cards for the over-70s
Stop the bleeding of the needy
To fill the pockets of the greedy"
"Rob the Pensioners to Bail out the Bankers
Shame, Shame, Shame"
"Age 85 Need Help to Stay Alive
I Need my Medical Card Please"

Foucault observes that counter-conduct is reflective of citizens' rejection of particular kinds of governmental direction, if not a rejection of government tout court; we won't be conducted in this way, not by you, not at this price, not according to this logic (Foucault, 2007). During *the Uprising* protesters explicitly renounced government discourses on patriotism, with many carrying tricolours as they marched or displaying banners with more subversive ruminations: "Our Patriotic Duty Revolution". If their counter-conduct was enacted discursively it was also performed. Jessica Kulynych (1997, p333) reminds us that the word *demonstration* translates as 'show' or 'performance' and that practising protest is itself a corporeal challenge to the norms of political conduct. Indeed these transgressive aspects of resistance were most memorably evoked when older people picketed TD's clinics or when they shouted down and drowned out their political leaders.

The ethical and performative dimensions of counter-conduct are effectively illustrated by the Uprising's challenges to ageism. Waving banners and T-shirts declaiming 'Older and Bolder' or the Age Action Ireland logo, protesters performed a shared spirit of collective purpose. They also confounded stereotypes of the 'passive' or 'past it' older person, while simultaneously upending conventional representations of the dangerous or malevolent protester. Placards and banners condemned the targeting of older welfare recipients and linked the budget decision on medical cards to a pervasive ageism within Irish society.

"Mary [Harney, minister for Health] what's next Euthanasia?"

"OAP not RIP"

"Just Shoot Us. It would be quicker".

We do, nonetheless, need to be cautious in our expectations of how progressive or transformative counter-conduct is and can be. Foucault did not hold with purist or binary conceptions of resistance as external to and alienated from an opposing power. Power and resistance are mutually constitutive and, likewise, government and counter-conduct co-exist within the same relational field.[5] Carl Death (2010, p245) clarifies that 'the political subjectivities performed through protests' are often 'exaggerated or momentary'. While we might presume that a stark opposition between 'authentic' outsiders and insiders is a pre-requisite for the successful mobilisation of resistance, the messy realities of NGO relationships with the state or the lingering effects of social partnership make for less polarised allegiances. The most prominent events associated with the *Uprising* were led by organisations, who had participated in social partnership in the past, and evidently they hoped to return to such arrangements in the future. Again, as Laurence Cox (2012), has noted in this journal, there is an abiding sense that for many organisations in the Irish community and voluntary sector the real business of politics is best conducted in more formalised and structured environments.

[5] Foucault, M. (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France (1977-1978)*, Basingstoke: Palgrave and also Davidson, A. (2011) 'In praise of counter-conduct', *History of the Human Sciences*, 24(4): 25-41.

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Likewise, *the Uprising* did not so much reject electoral or representative politics, as inflect it. Many aspects of Ireland's clientelist culture were actively embraced by protesters. Protests were centred on the Dáil or constituency offices; opposition politicians attended the *March*…; some protesters carried banners with party logos; there were threats that votes would be withdrawn. And as placards singled out ministers for rebuke, they reflected back and perhaps even validated the personality fixated character of Irish politics.

"Shame on you Brian for even tryin"
"Harney you're fired"
"Hard hearted Harney"

This all reminds us that counter-conducts 'can both challenge and reinforce hegemonic power relations, *at the state time*' (Death, 2010, p2479). The *Uprising* was a partially successful expression of countervailing power by protesters who urged TDs to change their minds, reverse the decision and restore the medical card. The *Uprising* saw thousands of older people question and resist governmental rationalities regarding the primacy of the economic, the nature of the crisis and the burden of responsibility that should be carried by citizens. They strategically adopted tactics that won the attention of the wider public, mass media and political elites and they mitigated the scale of retrenchment in this intance.

But power relationships and politics in Ireland had *not* changed drastically; instead liberal democratic and clientelist traditions were refracted and reflected through protest tactics. The principle of universal entitlement was jettisoned as the government strategically recalibrated medical card eligibility rates. We do see the beginnings of a conversation about universalism and its place in social policy - but one that is subordinated to the dictates of neoliberal rationalities, political expediency and sectoralised definitions of collective interest.

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CONCEPT
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Learning with Adults: The Role of Practice in the Formation of Adults

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Practice has for a long time been an important feature of adult learning and the debates centering around this field. It is common to attach importance to this aspect of an adult's learning and life trajectory in evaluations of university programmes focusing specifically on adults. The emphasis here is on engaging the adults' life experiences. This is based on the belief, following Freire, that the starting points of effective learning are the learners' concrete existential situations. With this view in mind, different sites of practice (family, work, communal etc.) are regarded as important sites of learning.

Furthermore there has been a long series of debates around ways and means of evaluating and validating practice, especially in the area of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR). Validation packages have also been the outcomes of projects for this purpose. A lot of adult education takes the form of attempts to learn to be able to tackle immediate goals, both individual and communal. Hence relevance becomes an important feature. By relevance one means a strong connection between learning and life.

Practice and praxis

And yet fields of practice, though capable of generating different forms of learning and different insights, captured in the commonplace phrase, or (should I say?) the rather outworn cliché, the 'University of Life,' are also said to have their limits. This has been argued with regard to schools where learning from the 'drift of life,' though necessary as a potential starting point, is often deemed not sufficient in itself to

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provide the kind of knowledge necessary to partake fully of what life itself can offer (Young and Muller, 2010). Seizing upon aspects of life as an 'occasional motive' (Martinelli, 2007) is just a conduit that gradually takes the learners into the heart of those disciplines containing knowledge that is 'really useful' (a contentious term that raises the issue: who decides what is useful?) in the outside world. The intention is to take learners to that higher level, to 'take … students beyond their experience and enable them to envisage alternatives that have some basis in the real world' (Young 2013: 107). It is argued by some that this is what justifies the effort of attending a school, no matter how unorthodox it is in its overall approach (think Barbiana and Lorenzo Milani – Batini *et al*, 2014) rather than simply learning from life itself.

One might argue, along the same lines, that we need institutions that allow us to take steps forward and which provide knowledge that, though ideally having their basis in the real world, cannot be learnt simply from everyday life without some professional or significant intervention by teachers and others, including peers. Adults are said to have a broader range of experiences than children which hence provide further reasons why their experience must be engaged (although I contend that this should be a feature of education at all levels). This is where the old Socratic maxim, as reported by Plato in the *Apologia*, gains importance: an unexamined life is a life not worth living. Practice on its own, without suitable conditions and stimulae for reflection and examination, besides imaginative elaboration of thought, does not necessarily 'make perfect.' In Freire's view, action without reflection is mere activism. What really 'makes perfect', or more appropriately takes us forward, in the views of many (notably Iram Siraj Blatchford, 1994), is Praxis.

Praxis (Brookfield, 2005) is not to be confused with *practice* but involves reflection upon action for transformative change. Freire adopted praxis as his central philosophical and pedagogical concept (Gadotti, 1998). It is the key pedagogical vehicle for the 'coming into critical consciousness' or '*conscientização*'. This is the means whereby one can stand back from the everyday world of action to perceive this world in a more critical light. It is the sort of approach from Freire which another critical pedagogue, Ira Shor, calls 'Extraordinarily Re-experiencing the Ordinary'

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(Shor, 1987: 93). Educators and learners need to start from their existential situation. They then engage critically through praxis, the obtaining of critical distance, to uncover the underlying contradictions of one's reading of the world, history, specific situations etc. The stimulae for this can be various an extraordinary experience, critical questions posed by educators, a codification of aspects of this experience in the form of representative photography, a drawing, a play or a documentary (Freire, 1973). Whichever medium is used or experience is called into question, it must have the potential to allow persons to stand back from the world they know to view it in a different light, the kind of light that allows for what Mezirow would call a 'perspective transformation.' (Mezirow, 1978) There would be potential here, without any guarantees, for a person to develop a more coherent and therefore critical view of things.

Unfortunately the humdrum and pressures of life often deny time and space for praxis be provided. Some people manage on their own to carve out such spaces. For instance there is a discussion in Freire and Faundez (1989) where two persons, from Latin America, in exile in Switzerland, regard exile itself as a form of praxis, a way of reviewing their respective country (Brazil and Chile) from afar, drawing on their past experiences and recently received information, to begin to see it in a different light.

Some stumble into such spaces. Revealing here are accounts by political activists who experienced imprisonment and found that space for critical reflection in prisons, often abetted by like-minded prisoners of conscience etc. who serve as co-learners and as persons in dialogue with whom to bounce off and confront ideas. The cases of Gramsci, Luxemburg, Mandela, and Castro, all taken away from their 'world of practice and action' and secluded either for short or long periods, come to mind. These situations that enabled some critical reflection on practice through forced 'standing back' or obtaining 'critical distance', the criticality possibly being enhanced by contact with other political prisoners in the yard or corridors (as with Gramsci), led to ruminations that are expressed in a number of publications (Gramsci, 1971, Mandela, 1995).

Others require assistance in this regard, even if, with some, such as those just mentioned, this assistance is of the merest kind. It is however sufficient enough to spark off reflection. Specific organized prison education attempts have been documented, e.g. prison education, as with Castro, Gramsci, Irish political prisoners inside the Maze, and Palestinians inside Ansar III (Sacco, 2001) etc. Other forms of prison education are organized among inmates of different types in an area which has been growing rapidly in Europe, for instance (http://www.epea.org/). Then there are the various forms of non-formal learning worldwide that provide such stimulus for a variety of purposes literacy acquisition, health education, cooperative development, consumer awareness, etc. These popular education settings have been the subject of much research in adult education (La Belle, 1986; Torres, 1990, Kane, 2001) and are said to give importance to flexibility and relevance; codifications of experience for critical distance, as in Freire, etc but which focus primarily and as a starting point on the field of everyday life, of practical life activities. The educators involved are said to teach as well as facilitate learning bringing in 'hinge themes' (Freire, 1973) that can stimulate one's imagination and critical acumen to be able to see beyond commonplace views of reality.

In addition, the 'significant other' can be a peer or group of peers with whom the person engages in debate or co-investigates an object of inquiry. Children have often been organized into groups of peer tutoring as with the Montessori approach or the approach adopted by don Lorenzo Milani at his school at Barbiana (Scuola di Barbiana, 1996; Batini *et al,* 2014). This represents a tradition that goes back to at least the 18th century school of John Lancaster in England. Adults can furthermore be organized within non-formal learning settings in peer tutoring groups or may voluntarily or unwittingly find themselves in one, examples of the former being the Swedish study circles and of the latter being groups of pensioners meeting in a particular club or pub on a Saturday afternoon or other time of day. Among both sets of peer tutoring groups one finds for instance communal clubs where guardians can congregate to chat with one another on, say, the processes of rearing the children in their care. This can happen in an organized way within community centres developed for this purpose and other purposes. They can also meet informally, say in public

laundries, where experiences are shared. Dialogue and exchange can help stimulate changes in practice and generate a 'perspective transformation.' The foregoing are various possibilities for one to reflect on and share experiences of practice with others, often more experienced others in a situation with the potential to constitute what Vygotsky calls 'zones of proximal development.'

An idea which has been floated around for several years and put into practice in a number of countries, as well as being written about in the adult education literature, is that of the workplace being turned into a learning organization (Fenwick, 2008) where experiences are shared. This has been in keeping with the much celebrated concept of total quality management (TQM). This concept has been embraced by many, including unions, who want to maintain on the agenda the issue of workers' participation. The concept has, however, also been viewed with suspicion in terms of suiting management's interests since it renders workers more 'loyal' to the firm through having a limited sense of ownership of it. The more interesting forms of this kind of engagement with the sharing of practices at the workplace could be found in some of the most radicalized forms of self-management or cooperative development, where the sharing of practice and the learning accruing from it is carried out within the process of what some would call a critical engagement with the world of work. In short, the attempt is more radical in that involves not only ways of carrying out production more efficiently but also, and primarily, entails engaging critically with the process of production itself and the different social relations it entails, with a view to transforming it. More radically, it can also involve questioning the nature of production itself (Milani, 2002). The greater the degree of worker control, the greater the chances for this type of engagement with practice to occur. The chances of its being allowed to occur unobtrusively in traditional capitalist enterprises are very remote.

One other site of practice which also involved learning of the formal and nonformal, and possibly even incidental type, is that provided within social movements (Welton, 1993; Hall and Clover, 2006). Learning through practice can be acquired informally as when people participate in an action for change or to offer resistance to forces that

pose a threat to the citizens' lifeworld/s (Foley, 1999). Movements can also provide direct learning experiences, such those involving the acquisition of competences to provide alternative forms of social practice. The old labour unions provided forms of training meant to improve practice in such fields as negotiation of employment conditions, bargaining over wages etc. There are those who would argue that social movement learning can also occur incidentally. People learn from each other when engaging in collective action, as with the Arab uprisings where people learnt from others and exchanged ideas regarding how best to go about their practice to pose a serious threat to corrupt government regimes. What we have here is the collective dimension of learning with regard to improving living conditions. It is all about learning through collective engagement in particular struggles. It is common to come across situations when organisations belonging to social movements hold workshops to make theoretical sense out of the practice in which they are engaged. This was the case with activities organised by the academy of the green party in Vienna in which a colleague and I were involved. It centred on making theoretical sense of various activists' engagement in protests and other activities in relation to the neoliberalisation of the University, a series of actions under the title of Unibrennt (University burns), (Mayo, 2012). Other movements entail learning from particular situations concerning creative practices with respect to consumption, production and citizens' organisation. These practices fall under the umbrella term of 'social creation' (De Vita and Piussi, 2013)

Finally, a word of note with regard to organizations involved in practice in the social domain, especially NGOs involving voluntary workers. It is not uncommon to experience situations characterized by rifts between theoreticians and actual practitioners, the latter complaining of the existence of ivory towers in which theorists and researchers are cut off from 'the trenches' so to speak, while the former often engage in patronizing attitudes towards the latter who are sweepingly dismissed as people who act with 'good intentions' but who play into the hands of the authorities with their actions owing to their failure to 'understand' the nature of the structuring forces at play. This often leads to an unhealthy dichotomy characterized by lack of mutual respect and lack of recognition that different useful knowledge/s and insights

emerge from different sources including the practice engaged in by the voluntary workers themselves.

English (2005: 503) writes of the theory-practice divide in this context but, also draws on a concept by Homi Bhabha with regard to the cultural studies area. She adopts the notion of 'third space' practitioners to refer to those in-between spaces or marginal places in which there is a fluid movement between roles of adult educator, researcher, practitioner or theorist. Many adult educators often combine such roles either wittingly or unwittingly. This allows scope for both sectors to work together and learn from each other. Both parties involved can gain access to different kinds of resources: those that traditionally belong to the academy and those arising from or strongly connected with the field of practice itself.

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Review

Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty First Century*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. viii + 685 pages.

"The past devours the future" is the most poetic of the ways in which Thomas Piketty expresses the unfettered long-term consequences of "r > g" (the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of economic growth), in accordance with which the wealth of a rentier capitalist class will grow disproportionately and create more and more inequality. While not always so poetic, the style of this book makes it accessible and interesting even to a reader with little knowledge of economics. There are few new concepts to be learned and much information that might not figure in a more conventional mainstream book on economics; for example, there is a clear description of the history of public debt, an explanation of how it works, its role as an alternative to taxation, as a means of enriching the already rich and the role of inflation in reducing it. The central themes of the book are clearly stated and they come round again and again, in different contexts - different countries, different measures and different spans of historical time. There is occasional humour, in the form of ironic turns of phrase, rather than actual jokes; the nearest he comes to one of the latter is when he concludes that planet earth must be in debt to Mars because calculations of total global debts are never balanced out by global assets (the only alternative would be the rich hiding assets to evade tax). Jane Austen and Honoré de Balzac further lighten the load. He illustrates one of his central themes, namely that the nature of capitalist accumulation is impelling us towards a society similar economically to that of the nineteenth century, with scenes from these two authors' novels. The book is easily navigable and eminently browsable, being divided into four parts, which are in turn subdivided into chapters, which are in turn subdivided into headed sections. There is an outline list of contents at the front and a detailed list of contents at the end and there is a good index.

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Its accessible style and structure certainly help but they cannot nearly explain the extraordinary popular success of this weighty volume. It has flown off the shelves of bookshops and it features in all sorts of top-ten lists for non-fiction sales. For a while it was the top-selling non-fiction title on Amazon in the United States. The author himself has been multiply interviewed, on television and in print and is in great demand for delivering guest lectures. He even gets called a "rock-star economist". Much of the explanation is (I think) that Piketty makes observations and predictions about the economy and the structure of society which confound very widely accepted views but which at the same time are recognisable in certain things we can see happening around us. The greater social equality in the decades following the second world war, which many of us had hoped was the beginning of a long-term historical trend was in fact, we learn, a temporary abnormality. On the other hand, the recent reverse, which many of us hoped and believed was temporary, turns out, according to Piketty's findings and his analysis of them, to reflect the re-establishment of capitalism's long-term historical trend.

Picketty offers plentiful evidence for his case concerning past and future economic trends. Much of it is quantitative and is well supported by graphs. Most of the statistics are drawn from France and Britain, because they provide the most data stretching back into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; they are joined by the United States for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It should be stressed however that Piketty does not confine himself to these countries or even, entirely, to these centuries. His narrative ranges widely over space and time, wherever he can find data to support his case, which is (very summarily) that capital consolidated and grew through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries while inequality grew at the same time; then it suffered considerable destruction and reduction in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by recovery and, along with it, diminishing inequality for a few decades afterwards; now, in our own era, we are witnessing a return of the original trends. Therefore many of the graphs are U-shaped (inverted, in the case of tax rates), with the base (or apex) of the U occurring some time in the twentieth century. For example, the world capital/income ratio reached a low point in the 1950s

(p196), inequality in the "Anglo-Saxon" countries reached its lowest point in the 1980s (p316) and inheritance tax rates in Britain reached a peak around 1970 (p503).

The route to wealth in modern capitalist society (says Piketty) is increasingly that of inheritance and this trend is liable to continue. Those with substantial wealth are less likely to be entrepreneurs and more likely to be rentiers, that is, those whose income is gained simply by virtue of what they own, as distinct from what they do. The capitalist society of the future will come increasingly to resemble that of the nineteenth century in Britain and France. It should be emphasised that this is not portrayed as being a direct result of following a particular political or economic philosophy but rather as being an underlying structural tendency:

> Rent is not an imperfection in the market: it is rather the consequence of a "pure and perfect" market for capital, as economists understand it: a capital market in which each owner of capital, including the least capable of heirs, can obtain the highest possible yield on the most diversified portfolio that can be assembled in the national or global economy. (p423)

And later:

> The idea that unrestricted competition will put an end to inheritance and move toward a more meritocratic world is a dangerous illusion. The advent of universal suffrage ..... ended the legal domination of politics by the wealthy. But it did not abolish he economic forces capable of producing a society of rentiers. (p424)

Unless a steep, progressive tax on wealth is instituted by governments on an international basis, a measure which Piketty recommends more in hope than expectation, the scenario we face is diminishing social mobility and increasing inequality based on birth.

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It is possible even now to appreciate the growing importance of inheritance in our society. For example, inheritance of a house in Britain can easily represent the equivalent of the sum of twenty years' worth of a professional income; power in the world of Westminster politics is increasingly dominated by those born and brought up to it; entry into many top professional jobs can only be contemplated by those with well-off parents, since it requires a period of unpaid internship; and there are those whose earnings have been so high as to enable them to retire early and live off rent, as will, most likely, their children. In her review of Piketty's book (*The Guardian,* 17 July 2014), Stephanie Flanders told a revealing anecdote, which was designed to counter his claims about the rich avoiding tax; instead, it inadvertently illustrated his point about our impending return to the nineteenth century. Flanders assured us that the wealthy are much less worried about tax than about the prospect that their spendthrift children will fritter away the family fortune: 'I was at a conference recently for advisers and trustees to family estates, and was amused to hear speaker after speaker assert that the "biggest threat" to a family fortune was "not the taxman or the markets but the family itself".' Such concerns are indeed reminiscent of the world of Jane Austen!

Yet this rise of the rentier has not resulted in a reduction in the volume of manufactured products, even if there is growing differential access to them. I would have welcomed an account of how rentier capitalism facilitates, or at least accommodates, the continued production of cars, ships, computers, mobile phones, kitchen sinks, clothes, and so on. Less of it may go on in France than hitherto, and less still in Britain, but the global output of such items is greater than ever and capitalism crucially depends on its ability to continue the production of goods to the end of exchanging them as commodities on the market before they are used. Production of commodities is a topic curiously absent from this massive book on capitalism in our century and absent also from the author's account of the nineteenth century, of which Jane Austen is a well-chosen literary representative from this point of view. Apart from being, in my opinion, the best English novelist of the nineteenth century, her genius was directed entirely to a minute examination of the preoccupations of the lower-to-middle echelons of the landed gentry, who lived off

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rent. But there are other excellent novels from that same century (including some by Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell) which prominently feature a self-made mill-owner and his disputes with his workers. Moreover, the chronology of these authors (Austen was the earliest, having been born in the eighteenth century) would suggest a "society of rentiers" being replaced by a society dominated by industrial capitalists, rather than vice-versa.

The particular evil that Piketty perceives in inheritance-based inequality is a threat to "democracy", although he does not elaborate on what he means by democracy in this context or precisely what he thinks would happen to it. The important qualification in the last sentence was 'inheritance-based'. Piketty would not seek to abolish inequality, merely to moderate it and (above all) ensure that it is not based on birth. He argues for a meritocracy, asserting that it is vital to be able to justify a society's inequality: "it is vital to make sure that social inequalities derive from rational and universal principles rather than arbitrary contingencies"(p422). But even if we could agree on the principles (bearing in mind that the qualities required to gain wealth are not necessarily admirable), and even if, difficult though it would be, people were prevented from handing on money or property to their children, insuperable difficulties would remain. Given the lifelong benefits of growing up in a well-off household, the effects of inequality would still impact greatly on the life-chances of those in the next generation, for whom they would be arbitrary contingencies. To be sure, this objection to Piketty's political philosophy has no implications for his proposed strategy of a progressive tax on wealth, which is aimed more directly at greater equality than meritocracy.

The title of the book is somewhat misleading, in that it evokes the title of that other book called *Capital*, written by Karl Marx in the nineteenth century. The two authors use the word 'capital' in quite different senses and Piketty's references to his forbear are generally lukewarm at best. This is no tribute book. He rubbishes the prediction made in the *Communist Manifesto* of the progressive impoverishment of the proletariat under capitalism, citing a rise in wages in the last third of the nineteenth century. It is a familiar target of anti-Marxists but a very odd one for Piketty to

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choose in view of its similarity to his own predictions of ever-widening inequality. Crucial to Piketty's entire argument is his contention that the reduction in inequality which occurred after the second world war was an "aberration". How come the improvements in workers' living standards of 1870-1900 were courtesy of capitalism if those of 1950-1980 were despite it?

Piketty argues that the temporary reduction in inequality in the latter half of the twentieth century was a response to the preceding two world wars and the Great Depression. This is not unreasonable except for the fact that the events themselves are described as though they were the equivalent of a collision with a large meteorite, rather than social eruptions which had social and economic causes. He constantly refers to them as "shocks"and "accidental events", as here (p376): "the fact that wealth is noticeably less concentrated in Europe today than it was in the Belle Époque is largely a consequence of accidental events (the shocks of 1914–1945) and specific institutions such as taxation of capital and its income." This quotation conveys the main factors that Piketty allows to shape history: structural development of the capitalist economy, external events that can knock it off course, and government measures that can moderate its effects. All that needs to be added to these are the positive effects of population growth (including immigration) on wealth distribution within a country. He does not acknowledge any agency on the part of the proletariat itself in raising its living standards in the second half of the twentieth century, let alone the possibility that it might have forged onwards to overthrow capitalism and create a genuinely egalitarian society.

These (in my view) political limitations of the book do not diminish the quality of the contribution made by Piketty's empirical research on inequality, the main findings of which are presented in Part Three of the book. Their benefit to all those interested in the subject and their value to all those involved in politics from the centre leftwards can hardly be overstated. He anatomizes the distribution of wealth and income. The data are drawn at least partly from an ongoing project in which he is engaged and which provides an accessible and interactive resource on income and wealth

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distribution across the world, available on the internet[6]. He reports the distribution of income from capital and of income from labour across the populations of various countries and various historical time-scales and in various ways. He rejects single derived measures, such as the Gini co-efficient, as inadequate and potentially misleading. He typically uses some fraction of a country's population (the richest 1%, for example, or the richest 0.1%, or the richest 10%, or the poorest 9% of the richest 10%) and compares its share of the wealth with that of another fraction of the same population (the bottom 50%, perhaps), or with the same fraction of the population of another country, or traces its changing share of national wealth over several decades (or even centuries). Again he insists that no one such measure is sufficient to characterize the wealth distribution within a country. He examines the relationship of inequality with age and the preponderance of inherited wealth. For example, 12% of those born in France in the 1970s inherited the equivalent of a lifetime of the average wage of those in the bottom 50% of earners (it was 10% of the 1810s cohorts but only 2% of the 1920s cohorts - so another U-shaped graph). He is keenly aware of uncertainties surrounding some of the data since he and his colleagues spend much time trying to fill in the gaps and penetrate the obfuscations of official statistics (one of the sections of the book has the title 'The Chaste Veil of Official Publications'). This makes questioning his evidence quite risky. The *Financial Times* supposedly dismantled his statistics on wealth distribution. He wrote a detailed rebuttal in the form of an addendum to the book, which is available on the internet[7]. With regard to Britain, the *Financial Times* quoted statistics from a study which gave a much more favourable view than Piketty's of wealth distribution in Britain in recent decades. After criticising the methodology of the study, here is Piketty's verdict on the statistics themselves:

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6. Alvaredo, Facundo, Anthony B. Atkinson, Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez, The World Top Incomes Database, http://topincomes.g-mond.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/ . Accessed 19 August 2014.
7. Piketty, T. (28 May, 2014). 'Technical Appendix of the book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*: Appendix to Chapter 10. Inequality of Capital Ownership. Addendum: Response to the FT.' http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/capital21c/en/Piketty2014TechnicalAppendixResponsetoFT.pdf Accessed 15 August 2014.

"Also note that a 44% wealth share for the top 10% (and a 12.5% wealth share for the top 1%, according to the FT) would mean that Britain is currently one of the most egalitarian countries in history in terms of wealth distribution; in particular this would mean that Britain is a lot more equal than Sweden, and in fact a lot more equal than what Sweden has ever been (including in the 1980s). This does not look particularly plausible."

That's the way to tell 'em!

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