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Religion, the Scottish work ethic and the spirit of enterprise

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Abstract: *Using a historical approach, this paper revisits Max Weber's 'Protestant ethic', addressing in particular a variant form of it – the 'Scottish work ethic'. It examines that ethic as both a collective and individuated theological drive that helped shape the proto-entrepreneurial proclivity of the Scottish people. The Scottish work ethic is a secularized drive peculiar to Scotland with its strong Calvinistic religious heritage and emphasis on hard work, thrift and education. From an academic perspective, although much has been written about the Protestant ethic and Weber's thesis, the same cannot be said of the Scottish work ethic. This paper fills this gap in the literature while extending consideration of the nature of the work ethic to include the power of religion and theological drives in the creation of the prevalent spirit of enterprise within a people.*

Keywords: *entrepreneurial culture; religion; entrepreneurial drives; theological drives; Scottish work ethic; Protestant work ethic*

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This paper is not about religion *per se*, but about its cumulative effects on the entrepreneurial behaviour of a people exposed for centuries to a particularly intense strain of Calvinism.[1] Anthony Giddens (1976, p 1) remarked incisively that Max Weber's seminal work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* 'undoubtedly ranks as one of the most controversial works of modern social science'. Indeed, it continues to provoke critical debate. Nevertheless, Giddens (1976, p 3) describes Calvinism as a 'set of doctrines promoting practical ends'. Weber argued that in the industrialized countries of Europe, an 'entrepreneurial elite' emerged, dominated by those of the Protestant faith. However, to date academic attention has focused on the role of the entrepreneur in the capitalist process. Little consideration has been given to the wider influences of the disputed ethic on a people. Adopting a historical approach, this study takes religion and the Protestant ethic as starting points in the formation of the theological drives that shape the proto-entrepreneurial proclivity of the Scots. The focus is on the vaunted Scottish work ethic in a people 'trapped within the cage-like moral compulsions of the Protestant ethic' (Davies, 1992).

This work is of importance because, despite the existence of a healthy and vibrant work ethic, Scotland does not have a heritage of producing home-grown entrepreneurs, although Devine and Dickson (1985) link Calvin to Schumpeter in shaping the psychology of the Scottish entrepreneur. As a scholar of entrepreneurship, the author finds this fascinating because if Weberian logic held true to type, one would expect Scotland to be awash with entrepreneurs. This leads to our research question: that is, if religion is conducive to the entrepreneurial spirit, why has Scotland not developed a more vibrant entrepreneurial culture? Caulkins (2002) makes passing reference to the fact that in Scotland there is not a culture of entrepreneurship or of celebrating the entrepreneur as a hero. Ironically, Scotland has a history of raising men who in later life emigrated and became entrepreneurs in their adopted homelands. For example,

Reed (1991) documents the life of the Scottish-born Australian entrepreneur David Syme, and in particular the influence of the Scottish work ethic on his success. His story is perhaps not surprising, given that work ethics are not fully fledged entrepreneurial dreams. This paper explores this difference and considers why Scotland does not traditionally have an enterprise culture, despite the fact that the Scottish are an enterprising people.

The word 'spirit' relates to the vital principle of conscious life, as well as denoting a dominant tendency or character, but being incorporeal, it cannot be seen. Thus we speak of the spirit of an age or a people. As a heuristic, it works at different levels. In religious terms, the spirit animates the individual, mediating between body and soul, and is said to inhabit places and objects and to possess a particular character. At a secular level, a spirit is a pervasive attitude capable of inspiring emotive change in others, embodied in a feeling, disposition, mood or sentiment that can act as a driving force. In relation to entrepreneurship, it is synonymous with human traits and states such as courage, ardour, vigour, energy, enthusiasm, zeal and enterprise. It is associated with firmness of character or mettle and has a causative property.

A 'Verstehen'-based approach is used, concentrating on historical sources to unpack and chart the development of the Scottish work ethic and associated socioeconomic factors. The remainder of the paper comprises five sections. The next section discusses Weber, religion and entrepreneurship, placing the various literature in context and identifying the importance of theological drives and the process of secularization. The subsequent sections address (respectively) issues of theology and methodological underpinning and the general nature of work ethics, introducing the Scottish work ethic before locating examples of it in song and story. There follows an examination of historical influences that led to the formation of the Scots ethic, particularly the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The role of education is discussed along with two cultural stereotypes (the 'lad o' pairts' and 'son of the manse') – both of which exemplify how the Protestant ethic produces enterprising individuals, but not necessarily entrepreneurs. These are manifestations of an overarching entrepreneurial archetype – the 'poor-boy-made-good'. However, in a land where opportunities in business were scarce, these enterprising individuals made their mark by first obtaining an education and then succeeding by dint of hard work. The section ends with an analysis of the influence of the Scots ethic on the entrepreneurial propensity of the Scots. The final section concludes the discussion by placing it in the context of entrepreneurship theory. This study is embedded in a research arena in which capitalism, entrepreneurship theory and theology merge (Cornwall and Naughton, undated; Vinten, 2000). Indeed, according to Deutschmann (2001b), capitalism possesses a religious character.

On Weber, religion and entrepreneurship

Although Weber's Protestant ethic was primarily an attempt to understand the role of religious affiliation in social stratification, he perhaps overprivileged the role of the entrepreneur in the capitalist system. Moreover, Weber treated the subject as an overarching ethos and did not dwell on the workings of the system. Thus, despite his appreciation of emerging Marxist theory, he paid scant attention to the position of the working man within the system, or the influence of religious forces upon him. In a predominantly Protestant social landscape, it happens that both entrepreneur and worker will be raised and schooled within overarching ideological and theological frameworks and belief systems. In seeking to articulate and explain his aperçus about the psyche of Western capitalism, Weber overlooked the contribution of the committed worker in the entrepreneurial process. From a close reading of Weber's controversial thesis, it is possible to chart emerging themes that led to the domination of those of the Protestant faith in the business world. Figure 1 presents a pictorial representation of Weber's thesis.

Weber argued that a Calvinist upbringing predisposed one to success because the Protestant ethic imbued the elect with a spirit that drove them in the pursuit of gain and the rational mastery of their craft. Staunch believers who possessed the 'gift of grace' actively embarked upon a personal quest for virtue, assisted in this undertaking by their 'this-worldly' attitude and 'ascetic values', which compelled them to work hard and succeed. Calvinist theology and doctrine legitimized the acquisition of capital, providing one was not profligate. Education and self-help assisted one in attaining worldly success. Weber appreciated the influences of the Industrial Revolution upon the entrepreneurial landscape and the consequential changes in working practices whereby the separation of household from work brought about change. This, combined with the emergence of nation states and the Western city, led to the genesis of a middle class bureaucratic elite and a disciplined labour force, allowing entrepreneurs to extract higher profit. Over time, a mythology evolved eulogizing the working class entrepreneur; but most of Weber's capitalist entrepreneurs were not working class parvenus: they were drawn from an educated bourgeoisie. Marxist
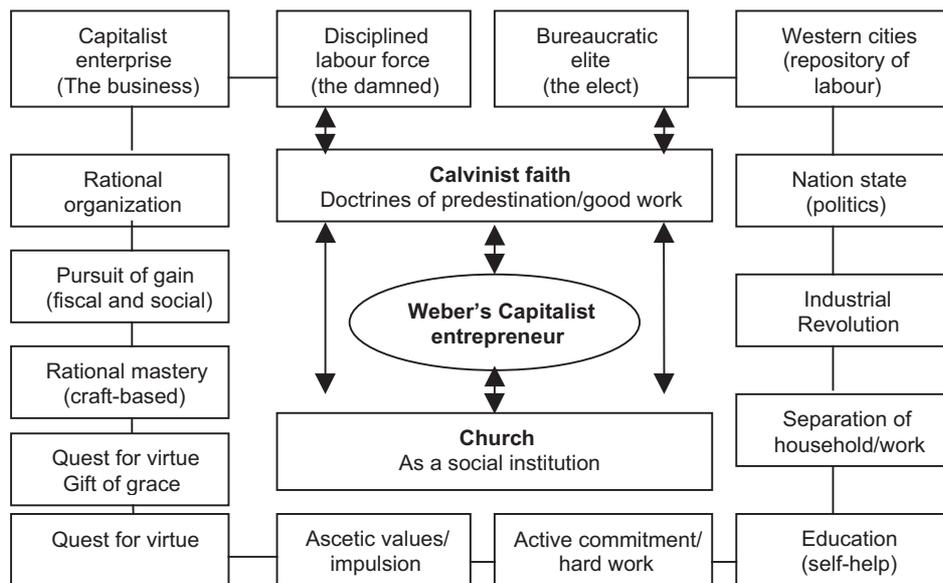
Figure 1. Emergent themes in the Protestant ethic.

theory made much of the exploitation of the working classes by the establishment and the bourgeoisie, but setting aside issues of discrimination and the class war, the pride and self-discipline of working men could well have resulted from the same Protestant belief system. Nor did Weber take cognizance of the influence of Freemasonry and other social institutions upon the ascendant Protestant hegemony. In the Age of Enlightenment, the quasi-religious tenets of Masonry mirrored ingrained themes of brotherhood and equality. Membership of the Lodge increased dramatically, as scholars, philosophers, gentlemen, merchants, farmers and tradesmen embraced its theology. One should not underestimate the influence of Scottish Rite Masonry on the Scots ethic because the Masonic degree placed great emphasis on the work ethic and on doing good works. Consequentially, this work extends Weber's thesis by considering such deeply social issues.

The controversy surrounding Weber's thesis continues to this day. Indeed, Schröder (1995) argues that Weber was mistaken in the affinity between Protestantism and capitalism, which did not constitute a direct link but merely a very loose connection. Of particular concern was the assertion that Catholicism was anti-entrepreneurial. According to Gregg (2004), Catholic theology espouses a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. Another criticism of Weber's thesis is that it does not take account of marginality and ethnicity. Yet, despite this prolonged battering, Weber's thesis has become accepted. It even forms the butt of jokes. Indeed, Davies (1992) narrates that 'during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there have been many jokes and a good deal of spontaneous humour about the calculating behaviour,

calculative rationality and excessive parsimony of predominantly Calvinist peoples'. It is also significant that Scotsmen are the butt of such jokes. Moreover, Jacob Viner (1978) has argued that Calvinism as practised in Scotland is essentially repressive in nature and that once religion becomes a creature of the state, it is used to oppress people rather than to free them. Talk of oppression may be taking the argument too far, but it could be argued that religion can suppress entrepreneurial drive. Nevertheless, for Anderson *et al* (2000), Weber's Protestant ethic elevated entrepreneurship to a privileged status.

Placing religion and entrepreneurship in context

Studies of the link between religion and entrepreneurship continue to proliferate – for example, Mohandoss (1996), Gregg and Preece (1999), Drakopoulou Dodd and Seaman (1998), Anderson *et al* (2000), Carswell and Rolland (2004) and Drakopoulou Dodd and Gotsis (2007). Drakopoulou Dodd and Seaman (1998) articulated the complexity of the interdependent relationship between religion and enterprise, whilst Longenecker *et al* (1998) linked religion, entrepreneurship and business ethics. Despite this plethora of studies, Vinten (2000) argues that traditionally religions find it difficult to balance theology with business participation and wealth creation, although Deutschmann (2001a) highlights an affinity between money and religion. According to Vinten (2000), theologians overlook important social issues that contribute to entrepreneurial proclivity. Akbar (1993) criticizes most studies for confining themselves to analysing the basic tenets of a religion instead of teasing out behavioural patterns in its followers. For

Audretsch *et al* (2007), religion influences a person's decision to become an entrepreneur. Carswell and Rolland (2004) question whether religious practice impacts on individual entrepreneurial behaviour and its contribution to society. Moreover, Akbar (1993) considers the possibility that some religions are more conducive to creating entrepreneurial personalities than others. Likewise, Audretsch *et al* (2007) acknowledge emerging concerns about the impact of religion on economic development. However, this paper is not concerned with this issue, but with the impact of religion, theology and doctrine upon the prevailing entrepreneurial spirit of a people and their life chances. It is important to remember that a religion is essentially a belief system.[2] In this respect, it shares with politics the ideological organizing structures of doctrines and dogma.

Religion and the process of secularization

Notwithstanding the above, many studies of the links between religion and entrepreneurship extend the work of Weber.[3] Blackburn (1997) tested Weber's thesis that the capitalist work ethic owed its origins to Protestantism by studying the ethic in Australian Protestant churches. Blackburn traced this ethic to a 'mercantile elite' drawn from Protestant churches. Blackburn explained how the mercantile elite obscured the religious origins of the work ethic, making it a foundation stone in its creed of economic individualism. According to Blackburn, this creed was perpetuated via the self-righteous dogma that those who worked hard would be rewarded by riches. Conversely, the poor were thought to be so because they lacked a work ethic and were profligate. Blackburn argues that the modern Australian work ethic as espoused by the Australian mercantile elite resulted from the secularization of the traditional Protestant work ethic. The removal of religious content played a significant part in the secularization process whilst maintaining its moral principle. This is important because it mirrors the Scottish experience.

Issues of theology and methodology

It is necessary to position theology in relation to entrepreneurship theory and discuss issues surrounding a choice of methodology. At a basic level, theology is an ordered knowledge.

Selecting a theological underpinning

Examining theology from the perspective of an entrepreneurship scholar is problematic because of the variables involved. Religion and entrepreneurship have a complex, often contradictory, relationship that theologians

and business scholars have only cursorily explored. As a scientific rhetoric and discourse, theology makes use of the same principles and methods as science, being embedded within reasoned discourse. Religious belief is encompassed in a moral framework of laws, commandments, scriptures, doctrines, faith, beliefs and practices; thus, several theological approaches help us understand the influence of religion on entrepreneurship theory. These are: hierology (the comparative philosophical study of sacred traditions and religions to reconcile faith with reason); moral theology (which concerns itself with character and conduct); and practical theology (studying how religion influences the everyday lives of a people). Indeed, Schalm (1971) studied motivation from a theological perspective by examining human behaviour as interpreted within theological frameworks and enacted as learned behaviours and drives. In this work, we go in search of collectively individuated theological drives, treating theology as a branch of philosophy dealing with religious beliefs. We concentrate upon given beliefs and doctrines that followers treat as truths, providing form and meaning in their lives. Philosophy, ethnography and history help theologians to advance their arguments and align them to a 'Verstehen' approach.

Selecting a methodological underpinning

When researching religion, Romberg (1998) advocates a mix of the historic perspective and an ethnographic approach. Historical approaches to entrepreneurship such as those of Schumpeter (1937), Cochran (1950) and Baumol (1990) seek to understand how (1) historical context and (2) social structure shape the emergence, frequency and in particular the character of entrepreneurship in a national context. Weber's *Protestant Ethic* was written from a historical Verstehen-based perspective, making history 'of focal importance to the social sciences' (Giddens, 1976, p 2). Moreover, Giddens (1976, p 8) stresses that Weber wrote *The Protestant Ethic* with polemical intent, which is significant since religious doctrine and associated dogma often depend upon polemical renditions and colourful rhetoric to get their message across. Thus, in attempting to understand the essence or spirit of a particular religious doctrine, it may be necessary to adopt a polemical stance. One of the most difficult issues to deal with when researching the influence of religion upon entrepreneurship, behaviour or culture is not to privilege the status of the religion under scrutiny. This is because the religious faith in which the researcher was raised will undoubtedly colour his or her perception.

This work is framed within the perspective of Christian theology. In our quest to understand the influence of religious faith and theological drives (the Protestant

ethic) in the perpetuation of entrepreneurial behaviour (the Scottish work ethic), we face the added difficulty that such practices transcend national boundaries.[4] What we are effectively dealing with is not religion, but the contentious issues of sentiment and nostalgia – the very qualities that imbue historical studies with aesthetic appeal. Nevertheless, Weber (1976, p 88) warned that making an appeal to national characteristics was falsifying history; but in order to isolate essences, this is the course we must take. In seeking to tease out essences of national characteristics (such as the Scots ethic), we are in effect engaging in (1) an ongoing interaction, and (2) a continuing conversation between self, cultural inheritance and history. Thus, interactional analysis[5] (Psathas, 1995) provides a guiding framework in our quest for understanding. This is because, according to Psathas, the technique is used to research the mundane everyday settings. We thus use the technique to analyse songs.

On work ethics and theological drives

A work ethic is a moral code or set of values based on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence, which eulogizes individual talents and economic success. Those said to possess it (or be possessed by it) have a belief in the moral benefit of work as a character-enhancing activity. The very notion of the work ethic grew from a complex confluence of religious, economic and social factors. However, this religious element shapes it as a theological driving force. For Weber (1976, p 197), 'an ethic based on religion places certain psychological sanctions (not of an economic character) on the maintenance of the attitude presented by it, sanctions which so long as the religious beliefs remain alive are highly effective'. Those driven by the ethic take on the traits of reliability and initiative that are capable of being enacted at a cultural as well as an individual level as a theological drive.

On the general nature of work and work ethics

Vinten (2000) argues that work is infused with a spiritual underpinning that aids self-actualization. Work *per se* gives people structure in their lives and provides a sense of purpose and fulfilment. Conversely, idleness leads to feelings of negativity and depression. One is reminded of the old Calvinist adage 'the devil makes work for idle hands'. However, a 'long hours' culture can lead to a reduction in productivity and to depression. Work ethics are collective narrations of pride that legitimize individual life stories. For example, Applebaum (1998) refers to the American work ethic and to the worker as a hero. Thus, in American folklore, both entrepreneur and worker share heroic status due to their propensity for hard work. As narratives, ethics are

about recognizing the intrinsic moral good that emanates from 'doing good'. At a macro level, a work ethic is an unwritten social contract between a people and those in governance. The ideology of the ethic theoretically dictates that workers practising work ethics should be selected for better positions, more responsibility and ultimately promotion. This links the work ethic to management practice because such ethics, as cultural norms, hold individuals personally responsible for their work, being based on a belief that work has intrinsic value. We now consider the Scottish work ethic as a theological drive.

On the specific nature of the Scottish work ethic

From an entrepreneurship perspective, little has been written about the Scottish work ethic. This is perhaps because of its ephemeral nature rooted within the domain of history. One finds passing reference to it in contemporary history books such as *The Scottish Nation* (Devine, 2000); *Scotland's Empire* (Devine, 2002) and *The Scottish Empire* (Fry, 2002), in which it has achieved the status of being taken for granted. This Scots ethic comprises three important elements – the love of work; the ethos of service; and education, education, education!

- This love of hard work for its own sake has been articulated as the 'joy of work' (Koiranen and Karlsson, 2002). This is an integral part of entrepreneurial behaviour discernible in many Protestant faiths. In Presbyterian Scotland, this gospel of work was preached fervently (Massie, 2005). To work is to be a man and is tied to one's masculinity and personal identity. In days gone by, work was a gendered activity, even though women worked shoulder to shoulder in the fields and factories with men.
- The Scots ethic is associated with service because Scots working men were born into a society in which serving others was a viable economic option. Indeed, Devine and Dickson (1985) stress the high skill levels, strong work ethic and service-orientated culture of the Scottish workforce.
- Another important element relates to making sacrifices, getting an education and making good. This variant of the ethic is a particularly middle class phenomenon. Over time, the work ethic with its notions of character became infused into the Scottish education system (Natale and Rothschild, 1995).

This process brought religion, education, work and home life into alignment in a holy trinity of Kirk, state and society in which the Scottish education system played a considerable part in the production of a free-

thinking yet servile class. We shall return to this later. The Scots ethic has become conflated with the pursuit of happiness. This philosophical stance is a vestige of the Scottish Enlightenment, which expounded the qualities of virtue and wisdom. The ideology dictates that as individuals we are not entitled to happiness, but must earn it by dint of merit and hard work. Thus a person has a duty to put his or her talents to best use. This view-point aligns behaviour with the tenets of Calvinism, but the resultant work ethic transcends Presbyterianism because it is deeply ingrained in the collective psyche of the Scots as a people. What was once a religious charac-teristic has, via the processes of secularization and legitimacy, become a collective Scottish trait. According to Watson (2006), being Scottish is about survival and education. The work ethic, ambition and discipline are part of a cultural heritage passed down from our forefa-thers as crucial qualities for success in any undertaking. In many ways, Watson is correct, because people are generally raised in a family in which the work ethic prevails, bolstered by the homespun philosophy that one must make one's own way in the world.

Indeed, McCrone (2001, p 90) labels this process as the 'Scottish identity myth', which he describes as a set of self-evident truths not amenable to proof. Identity myths tell others who we are. McCrone discusses the American dream and the Scots ethic, remarking that they are not meant to be open to proof or disproof, but nevertheless, in both cases notions of hard work coupled with ability lead to success. Thus for McCrone, Scots myths such as: we are all 'Jock Thamson's bairns' and the sentiment contained in the song 'A Man's a Man' are important as self-evident truths that we were all created equal. Indeed, Scots have a preoccupation with fairness and egalitarianism, and eulogize the ideal of the honest man (McCrone, 2001, p 91). Notwithstanding this, McCrone acknowledges that myths are notoriously difficult to examine because they consist of a number of related symbolic elements of a culture assembled to account for and validate social institutions. Moreover, McCrone (2001, pp 89–90), in a chapter entitled 'Getting on in Scotland', talks of the historical construction of class, and acknowledges that in Scot-land, because of this myth, men in non-professional positions are far more likely to describe themselves as working class than their English counterparts. This spirit of egalitarianism is best located in song and story.

Locating the work ethic in song and story

A national spirit is best located in a genre of songs in which the Scottish obsession with work is self-evident, taking on the twin countenances of sentiment and romanticism illustrated by lines from songs that resonate with notions of work:

- 'The Dawning of the Day' (anonymous);
- 'The Roses of Prince Charlie' (Ronnie Brown); and
- 'A Man's a Man' (Robert Burns).

'The Dawning of the Day' narrates a melodic tale of a people who fished stormy waters when fish were aplenty, who ploughed the wild heathlands until they bloomed like a rose; a people who built the great ships that sailed all the oceans and toiled underground and natures treasure's exposed; a people who travelled the world consorting with kings and princes, discoursed with scholars and reasoned with fools whilst serving with distinction down through the ages. The song epitomizes national characteristics such as being as fierce as a badger when danger is threatening and of the cunning and the guile that the fox calls his own. Emotive states such as fighting; reasoning; stubbornness; laugh-ing with the devil and weeping like a willow; of being gentle and prickly, and finally of working with the hardest and playing with the best are highlighted. Although the sentiments are not directly related to the work ethic *per se*, they do express a strong connection to work – fishing, farming, shipbuilding, mining, politics and scholarship. The key themes to take away are those of service, resilience and hard work.

In the ballad 'The Roses of Prince Charlie', the emphasis is on a fighting spirit, with six references to fighting and battling. It mentions carving out a new world with sweat, blood and tears, and the fighting spirit is linked to economic activity via taking strength from the green fields that blanket peat and coal, and of ships from the Clyde with a nation in their hold. The song ends in a crescendo of passion with a reference to the water of life, black gold and fishes from the sea. Thus in three short verses, we see the spirit of Scotland encapsu-lated in its traditional staple industries.

Finally, in 'A Man's a Man', we hear of a land of honest men of independent mind, who toil relentlessly, pray, eat homely fare, dress in hoddin grey and disdain the riches of the aristocracy. The theme is of honest poverty and the traits emphasized are strength, honesty, common sense and the pride of worth. It was written to honour egalitarianism and the brotherhood of free men. These songs resonate with a people obsessed with its work ethic. To understand how this attitude was formed, one must turn to history.

Historical influences on the Scottish work ethic

Scotland has a long religious heritage and prior to the twelfth century, had its own church. During early medieval times, Roman Catholicism was adopted by the kings of Scotland. Our quest for the genesis of the Scots

work ethic of necessity begins in fifteenth/sixteenth century Scotland in an age of protest and reformation across Europe, which saw the ascendancy of the Protestant faith. It is then necessary to trace the spirit through the Age of Enlightenment and after that into the age of the Industrial Revolution.

The age of protest and reformation

The Scotland of the Reformation was a proud, independent medieval kingdom in political and economic crises. As a nation, Scotland was still reeling from the disastrous military defeat by the English at Flodden Field in 1513, which saw the Scots army decimated; the loss of fathers, sons and brothers in the slaughter was later romanticized in history in the song 'The Flowers of the Forest'. This loss affected Scotland's economy. Indeed, Herman (undated) credits Scotland as being the poorest nation in Western Europe. Yet Scotland was by no means backward (Harvie, 2002, p 101). Harvie estimates the population of Scotland in the fifteenth century to be around 500,000 people, most of whom were poor. The small population limited the entrepreneurial opportunities available to ordinary Scots. Nevertheless, Scots merchants, traders, fishermen and mercenaries plied their trade in Europe. A merchant class emerged, particularly on the east coast of Scotland, with its North Sea trade links. However, most ordinary Scots had to trade on their own skills and social capital. During this time, thousands of Scots sought their fortunes in Europe as mercenary soldiers and itinerant traders. Scotland was an orderly society with a developed social class system. The ecclesiastical parish system and the system of royal burghs were already in place as systems of social organization. The mercat (market) cross in every burgh was symbolic of this trading heritage.

Scotland officially adopted the Protestant faith in 1560 under the leadership of the dourly charismatic John Knox, who espoused the teachings and doctrines of John Calvin. Scotland entered a period of its history known as the Reformation – which swept away the Catholic Church. John Knox was a devout Calvinist who preached Calvinism in sermons from the pulpit and spread its gospel via fiery blasts from his pen. In his writings, he extended to ordinary people the right to rebel against unjust rulers, imbuing generations of Scots with the spirit of stubbornness and rebellion. John Knox in his *Book of Discipline* (1560) promoted the notion of a meritocracy, arguing that if everyone received the same chance, then those with ability would rise in station. Politically, Scotland was in turmoil: its sovereign Mary Queen of Scots clung to her Catholic faith, which caused friction. The Kirk, as the Presbyterian Church became known, exercised a strong moral force in Scottish society. Through the organizational structure of the parish, it had influence in every aspect of people's lives. However, the author agrees with Weber (1976, p 45) that the old Protestantism of Luther, Calvin and Knox had precious little to do with entrepreneurial progress. After a period of internecine warfare and political intrigue, following Mary's deposition in 1567, Protestantism became the predominant faith. Mary's infant son James VI was raised as a Protestant.

Setting aside high politics, during this period the very foundations of Scottish identity were built upon the notion of hard work and the abhorrence of idleness and begging. Indeed, legislation was passed in 1579 by the Scottish Parliament for the relief of the poor and impotent.[6] Each parish was required to keep a poor list. The connectedness of the poor laws to the organization of the Kirk created a climate of fear and loathing of unemployment amongst ordinary Scots, which lasts to this very day. The journalist Allan Massie (2005) argues that idleness was frowned on, or roundly condemned. Incisively, Massie points out that the Scots *Thesaurus* has several pages given over to contemptuous words denoting idleness and laziness. It was a case of work or want.

The Age of Enlightenment and enterprise

In 1603, in the Union of the Crowns, James VI of Scotland became James I of England. This seminal episode in British history was later named by Scottish satirists as 'the shame of 1603' when their king forsook his homeland. This act of astute political entrepreneurship was later vilified in the line of a song lamenting that Scotland had been 'Bought and sold for English gold, what a parcel of rogues in a nation'. During the following 104 years, despite the Union of the Crowns, Scotland received a poor deal in terms of commerce. Scots merchants had to struggle for trade and were discriminated against by English merchants. The disastrous Darien venture in the 1690s saw Scotland plunged into the economic equivalent of Flodden and led to a climate in which Scotland became a member of the United Kingdom in 1707.

Despite this bleak outlook, Scotland began to prosper. Herman (undated) cites the tobacco merchants of Glasgow as spectacularly successful businessmen. He stresses that their frugality and ruthless cost-cutting played only a small part in their success. It was their ability to raise capital that made them rich. They borrowed from anyone who had money to invest. However, a partnership came with a proviso that no-one could draw out more than 5% interest on the capital they held in the firm, the balance being ploughed back into the business. These new men of business were philanthropists who helped build up the wealth and civic structure

of Glasgow, financing literary societies, setting up charitable foundations and financing chairs at Scottish universities. Thus they practised social as well as moral virtue. They frequented the 'Hodge Podge Club', rubbing shoulders with philosophers such as Adam Smith, William Ogilvie and Thomas Reid. According to Herman, Adam Smith used these men as a model for his writings on entrepreneurial businessmen to spread the gospel that thrift and parsimony were essential virtues in business. Again we see the invisible hand of networking, power and patronage at work. This was an age of enlightenment in which Scottish academics such as Adam Smith and David Hume blossomed. In time, the writings of Smith and in particular his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*, embodying Calvinist theology, played a seminal part in the creation of entrepreneurship theory. Both Smith and his mentor Hume shared the Scottish obsession with thrift, and Hume considered that thrift generated capital best put to use in employing people who in turn were kept productive by the need to earn. This national obsession with thrift continues to this day.

The evolution of the Scots ethic in the age of the Industrial Revolution

Herman (undated) describes thrift as a bleak virtue going against the grain of our most basic human instincts. For Herman (2001), it is the only virtue we have come to associate with cultural bigotry, noting that Scots and Jews are vilified for their meanness. Scots have a reputation for (1) cheapness, and (2) possessing a ruthless desire to take a profit at any cost. Herman argues that there is a major difference between being cheap and being thrifty, noting the pervasiveness of cultural stereotypes. He argues that the Scots have capitalized upon this reputation for knowing the value of money. Their reputation for thrift is the reverse side of their deserved reputation for (1) hard work, (2) good business sense, (3) fiscal responsibility, and (4) a penchant for success. Indeed, he argues that the Scots author J.M. Barrie once remarked, 'There are few more impressive sights in the world than a Scotsman on the make'. In a poor country, it is necessary to be constantly on the make. Scotland was the poor man of Europe, which perhaps explains why Calvinist doctrine did not manifest itself in the rags-to-riches formula associated with entrepreneurial narrative *per se.*

Instead, it manifested itself in a more realistic manner, in which any opportunity was seized. Thus in the age of the Industrial Revolution and the British Empire, Scotsmen came to dominate industry, the military, the Civil Service, universities, hospitals and politics, forming an 'entrepreneurial elite' of managers and professionals serving the common good. Herman argues

that they were so successful that in Victorian England, Scots were discriminated against because of their thrift, frugality and obvious success. This backlash led to the undeserved social construction of the Scotsman as a stingy tight-fisted miser (Notestein, 1946). Herman links this frugality back to Calvinist theology as a lean Presbyterian version of the Protestant work ethic by citing an old Scots saying, 'You can praise God by peeling a spud, if you peel it to perfection and if you are well paid for it, all the better'. In Scotland, such proverbial sayings became known as providences. In time, these became proverbs passed down through the generations.

Another secret to the success of the Scots is their cohesiveness, sociability and propensity for networking. Wherever they settle, they form expatriate communities to celebrate their Scottishness. Herman (undated) cites the Caledonian Club in London as a hub of Scottish entrepreneurial activity where Scottish writers, artists, physicians, lawyers, civil servants and bankers met to plan their deals. However, 'Calvinist cant' alone cannot explain the success of Scots abroad. Adam Smith identified the slow and silent accumulation of wealth as being another Scottish trait. Samuel Smiles (1859) drew heavily upon the writings of Smith, but whereas Smith and Hume had articulated how thrift transformed society via productivity, Smiles described personal aspects of the trait. In effect, Smiles sought to transform the social capital of the common man by encouraging people to save and to attain self-actualization. It is significant that Smiles became to the British what Horatio Alger was to the Americans. However, Smiles preached a doctrine of self-help and prudence, the purpose of which was to instil a spirit of self-reliance. It was a realistic and achievable doctrine in its time, and spread the proto-entrepreneurial message that everyone, including the common man, could become a stakeholder in the capitalist system. It was in effect a secularization of Calvinist theology that provided hope to the masses. Thus, unlike Alger, Smiles did not encourage young men with the false hopes of the entrepreneurial fairytale. In the process, Smiles can perhaps take the credit for reinstalling a spirit of freedom, independence of mind and self-respect within the working man. Smiles thus spread this gospel of work (Briggs, 1968) through books such as *Self-Help*, *Character*, *Thrift*, *Duty* and *Life and Labour*.

During this period, Scotland continued to prosper and change from an agrarian country. Workers migrated from the countryside and settled in growing urban centres such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen. The poor and the destitute became the workforce of the Industrial Revolution. The residual effects of the Calvinist work ethic, the emphasis upon

universal education, the Union of the Crowns, the Enlightenment and the age of the Empire combined collective social capital with opportunities, creating a situation in which Scots of every station in life had a marketplace for their trades and skills. Indeed, Forster (1986) tells of the Calvinist work ethic associated with Scottish Presbyterianism being brought to Africa by Scottish missionaries; whilst Ciulla (1999) cites the Scottish immigrant Bertie Charles Forbes as an example of a businessman who elevated the moral adulation of the work ethic. However, it was through their affinity with education that the Scots demonstrated their entrepreneurial character.

Education and the rise of the parish school

This affinity with education is part of Scotland's cultural heritage. Indeed, its universities are amongst the oldest in Europe; thus, Scotland has a long history and tradition of producing scholars and learned men. This facet of Scottish cultural history carried forward to the seventeenth century when Scotland became the first country in Europe to provide free education to all children. Scottish education prides itself on everyone being equal. Allan Massie argues that Scotland was one of the first countries in Europe to teach that the individual was responsible for his own well-being and thus responsible for what he might make of himself (Massie, 2005). The message took root and was taught in the schools and preached at home. It was a personal duty get on in the world, and the means by which you did so was work, work and more work. Consequentially, respect for work became ingrained in the Scottish character. Self-reliance became the rule by which a man lived. In the process, the two ideal typical cultural stereotypes emerged as manifestations of the spirit of enterprise in a Scottish context – namely the 'lad o' pairts' and 'sons of the manse'. These social constructs are similar, except that the former type generally came from impoverished but honest parents, whilst the latter emerged from the educationally privileged middle class position as ministers' sons. However, whatever their personal situation, they went on to become 'learned men' who used their pens to achieve social mobility. McCrone (2001, p 94) corroborates this by pointing out that Scottish universities have a long tradition of admitting the disadvantaged, and in particular poor children from the countryside, but stresses that most entrants were of middle class extraction – the sons of teachers, ministers, farmers and crofters who had made good via the rural parish school system.

The 'lad o' pairts'

This stereotype relates to the clever boy of lowly, often rural background, who by dint of hard work and parsi-

mony, overcame poverty to rise in society thanks to Scotland's open education system and with the help of parental self-sacrifice, ambition, personal determination and strength of character. MacKinnon and Oram (2003) make a tenuous link between entrepreneurship and education by highlighting that in Scotland the 'lad o' pairts' makes progress. Checkland and Checkland (1989) make the link between entrepreneurship and this Scottish institution in relation to the recruitment policies of Scottish industrialists who employed 'young men of good modest middle-class families'. Talented boys who showed promise were often helped by a mentor figure.[7] Scots pride themselves on providing opportunities for humble laddies to succeed. As a heroic individual, the lad became lionized by middle class society as the ideal type so beloved of Scottish sentimentalism. Like the myth of the entrepreneur from humble origins, these boys are an equally mythical social construction with just enough truth to legitimize it. Many became migrants who went on to achieve great things (MacKinnon and Oram, 2003). Arshad and Mitchell (undated) argue that the virtues of Scottish education embodied in their persona as the lad o' pairts echo the log-cabin-to-White-House route in the USA. Natale and Rothschild (1995) describe Andrew Carnegie as a lad o' pairts. Anderson (2001) highlights the work of the renowned Aberdeen graduate and literary entrepreneur William Robertson Nicoll, whom he labels as a lad o' pairts. However, McCrone (2001) argues that although the concept had an egalitarian element, the bullying 'Dominie' [Headmaster][8] played a part in shaping the prodigy. Robert Burns and Hugh Miller are often cited as examples of famous lads o' pairts as both were of humble birth. In the 'worked examples' shown in Boxes 1 and 2, we draw out some of the other influences on their success. Importantly, neither Burns nor Miller was born into abject poverty, highlighting the fact that these prodigies came primarily from a working class aristocracy plunged into poverty – and not its dregs.[9] This formula is startlingly similar to the Horatio Alger myth of the 'poor-boy-made-good'. Nor were they unusual. Indeed, J.M. Barrie, author of the children's story *Peter Pan*, is another example of the phenomenon. Born in Kirriemuir, Angus, into a deeply Calvinist family, Barrie was the ninth child of ten. His father was a weaver and his devoted mother ensured that all her children were schooled in the three Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) to prepare them for professional careers. She encouraged his love of storytelling and ensured that he received a decent education, sending him to board at various schools. Again we find a fusion of familial love, a religious upbringing, hardship, sacrifice, pride, a vicarious ambition to succeed through hard work and a decent education. In Calvinist Scotland, the

Box 1. Robert Burns – farmer, poet and national bard

Robert Burns was born in 1759 into a poor farming family in Ayrshire. As one of seven children, his childhood and upbringing were shrouded in poverty. Much has been made of his lack of educational opportunity and his reputation as an unschooled ploughman poet, but this is a myth. Although he had little regular schooling, his father William saw to his children's education, teaching them how to read and write, and to do arithmetic, geography and history. Significantly (in relation to this paper), he wrote them a manual of Christian belief. Robbie was also tutored in Latin, French, grammar and mathematics by a family friend. He had short spells at the parish school between the toils of farming life. He developed an interest in poetry and, whilst working as a ploughman, started penning verses and writing satirical articles. Burns even satirized the Presbyterian Church and Calvinist theology with its dour asceticism, which made him unpopular amongst the Ministry. The young Robbie had an eye for the girls and fathered several illegitimate children before marrying his wife Jean. This caused friction between him and the Kirk elders. He was also an active Freemason, which led to him penetrating the intellectual circle in Edinburgh, and it was there that he influenced another great Scot, the writer Walter Scott. Robbie also turned his hand to business for a short while until his flax business burned down. Burns's poetry celebrates the small town and rural idylls and he was steadfast in his allegiance to the common man. Burns died at the dawn of the new era of capitalism.

Box 2. Hugh Miller – scientist, poet and folklorist

The deeply religious Miller was a leading founder of the Free Church in 1843. Born the son of a sea captain, following his father's death, he was mentored by rich uncles. At the early age of 17, Miller was apprenticed as a stonemason. He excelled at this work and for the next 15 years travelled the length and breadth of Scotland plying his trade, becoming a loner at heart. The peripatetic Miller became influential in the Free Church Movement and toured the Highlands preaching a doctrine of Christian resignation. The theological message of the Free Church was wrapped around the triumvirate of temperance, self-help and self-education. This dogma coexisted alongside hostility to trades union, Chartism and social reform. The Free Church thus appealed to those with a middle class outlook, and in the process attracted a growing urban bourgeoisie congregation. In the Highlands, impoverished crofters flocked to the Free Church in droves. These humble crofters were nevertheless a rural bourgeoisie with a vested interest in the land. In the industrialized central belt of Scotland, this class-based Free Church theology did not take root amongst the urban working class poor. Miller also became a writer and folklorist; however, his academic writings are largely unreadable. Interestingly, his autobiographical work *Schools and Schoolmasters* (Miller, 1859) received critical acclaim. Its publication coincided with that other classic of Scottish Victorian ideology, namely Samuel Smiles's influential book *Self-Help*. Miller's message to Scots working men was that success revolved around thrift, temperance, self-education and an adherence to God. Miller also made much of traits and character.

entrepreneurial dream could be a vicarious one – work hard and thy children shall succeed! The same could be said of the 'sons of the manse'.

The sons of the manse

Clark (2007) remarks that like 'the lad o' pairts', the term 'sons of the manse' has become a Scottish cliché. For Clark, the stereotypical minister's son is the embodiment of the Protestant ethic as being an achiever,

dedicated and disciplined. Many children of the manse become ministers too, but a significant number have made careers for themselves as doctors, politicians, solicitors and so forth. Clark tells the story of one such son of the manse – Dr James Adair Lawrie (1802–59) who became Regis Professor of Surgery at Glasgow University, and whose father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all been ministers. Clark lists other famous sons of the manse – Gordon Brown, Peter Fraser, Douglas Alexander, David (Lord) Steel, Eric Liddle, John Buchan, John Logie Baird and Lord Reith. This genre bolstered the backbone of the Scottish establishment. Clark, himself a son of the manse, remembers hearing the censorious words, 'Remember who you are!' ringing in his ears. He tells an alternative tale of hardship and hard work, reminding us that these elements are not solely the province of entrepreneurship stories, but are common to success stories. It is a struggle for an independent identity leading to a need to achieve. Clark ultimately rejected religion. Teh above examples resonate with the words of Weber (1976, p 42) that many of the great capitalist entrepreneurs – down to Cecil Rhodes, came from the families of clergymen. The talented and deserving were thus fast-tracked into positions where they could collectively benefit the capitalist system.

Assessing the influence of the Scots ethic on entrepreneurial propensity

What does the above exploration of song and (his)story tell us about the entrepreneurial propensity of the Scots? It tells of a divide between the working classes and the entrepreneurial middle classes. We can classify the latter as Weber's elect and the former as his damned (Weber, 1976, p 103). Generally speaking, the middle classes are more likely to attend church than the working classes. Having said this, workers in dangerous occupations such as fishing, mining and farming have traditionally embraced religion as a concept, but, as demonstrated in Figures 2 and 3, the work ethic manifests itself differently according to class.

In these diagrams, there are four mutually reinforcing institutions or cornerstones of the Scottish system: namely, the Kirk, education, the professions and the Lodge, although membership of the latter, being voluntary, need not feature. Both models revolve around the accumulation of capital, but the working classes patently had fewer opportunities available than the middle classes. Unless the proverbial 'poor boy' had an ambitious parent or a relation who mentored him, he was fated to leave school and enter a punishing cycle of hard work and thrift. There was no other choice but to embrace the work ethic, get an apprenticeship and learn a trade. The alternative was to join the armed services,
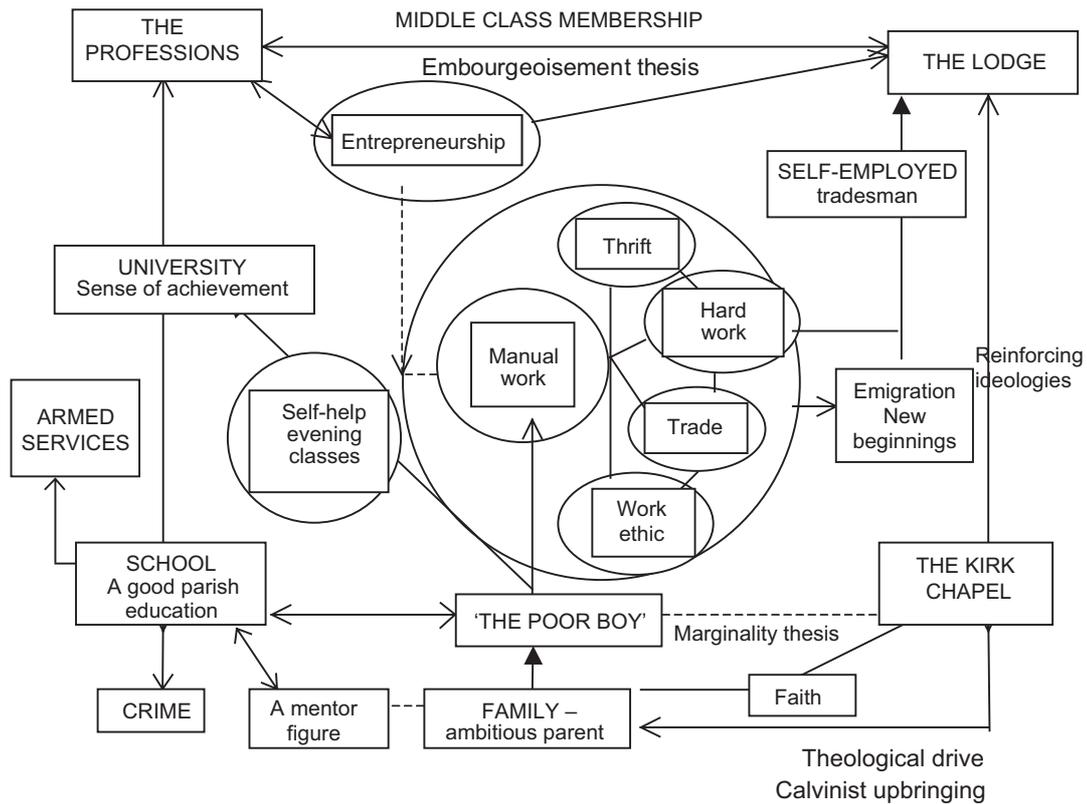
THE PROFESSIONS

MIDDLE CLASS MEMBERSHIP

Embourgeoisement thesis

THE LODGE

Entrepreneurship

SELF-EMPLOYED tradesman

UNIVERSITY Sense of achievement

Thrift

Hard work

Manual work

Reinforcing ideologies

ARMED SERVICES

Self-help evening classes

Trade

Emigration New beginnings

Work ethic

SCHOOL A good parish education

THE KIRK CHAPEL

'THE POOR BOY'

Marginality thesis

CRIME

A mentor figure

FAMILY – ambitious parent

Faith

Theological drive Calvinist upbringing

Figure 2. The Scots work ethic and the accumulation of social capital by the working classes.

emigrate or become a self-employed tradesman. For a few, returning to education as a mature student was an option, as evening classes led to university and eventually the professions. A less trodden path was into entrepreneurship, and the hotelier who had started life as a ploughman's son, the farm labourer who saved and bought a farm, and the fisher laddie who banked enough to buy his own boat were revered in their communities as being self-made men. The 'blessed' children of the middle classes had more opportunites, having access to private tutelage and successful relatives to act as mentors. Many went to private schools – a fast track into universities and into a profession. Others joined the officer classes, entered politics or went into the family business/farm where they too worked hard and sometimes benefited from inheritances or property, which enabled them to avail themselves of new entrepreneurial opportunities.

Although accumulated social capital may account for the differential between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, one cannot ignore the influence of religion and Calvinist indoctrination on the stronger theological drive of the middle classes resulting from their allegiance to the Kirk.

However, the Scots ethic does have a dark side. For example, Checkland (1976) argued convincingly that

Scotland's central belt was anti-entrepreneurial because of its industrial heritage and the service ethic, which cast dark shadows over the working classes, encouraging a dependency culture. Checkland likened the effect to the 'Upas Tree' whose canopy prevents anything underneath from taking root and growing. In a similar vein, Wight (1993) examined the work ethic in lowland Scotland, concentrating upon issues of self-esteem and respectability, and found an ingrained culture of drinking associated with the working classes. Thus the work ethic has a darker side because Scots have a reputation for the prodigious consumption of alcohol and a liking for a dram. Whilst alcohol may be the scourge of the working classes, few could argue with Herman (2001) that the now silent shipyards of Glasgow and factories of many Scottish towns were once proud symbols of Scottish enterprise.

Conclusions

The Protestant ethic has undoubtedly made its indelible mark upon successive generations of Scots working men. However, it is necessary to consider the issue of entrepreneurial opportunities available to working men. The economist William Baumol (1990) argues that the number of entrepreneurs in any given system is a
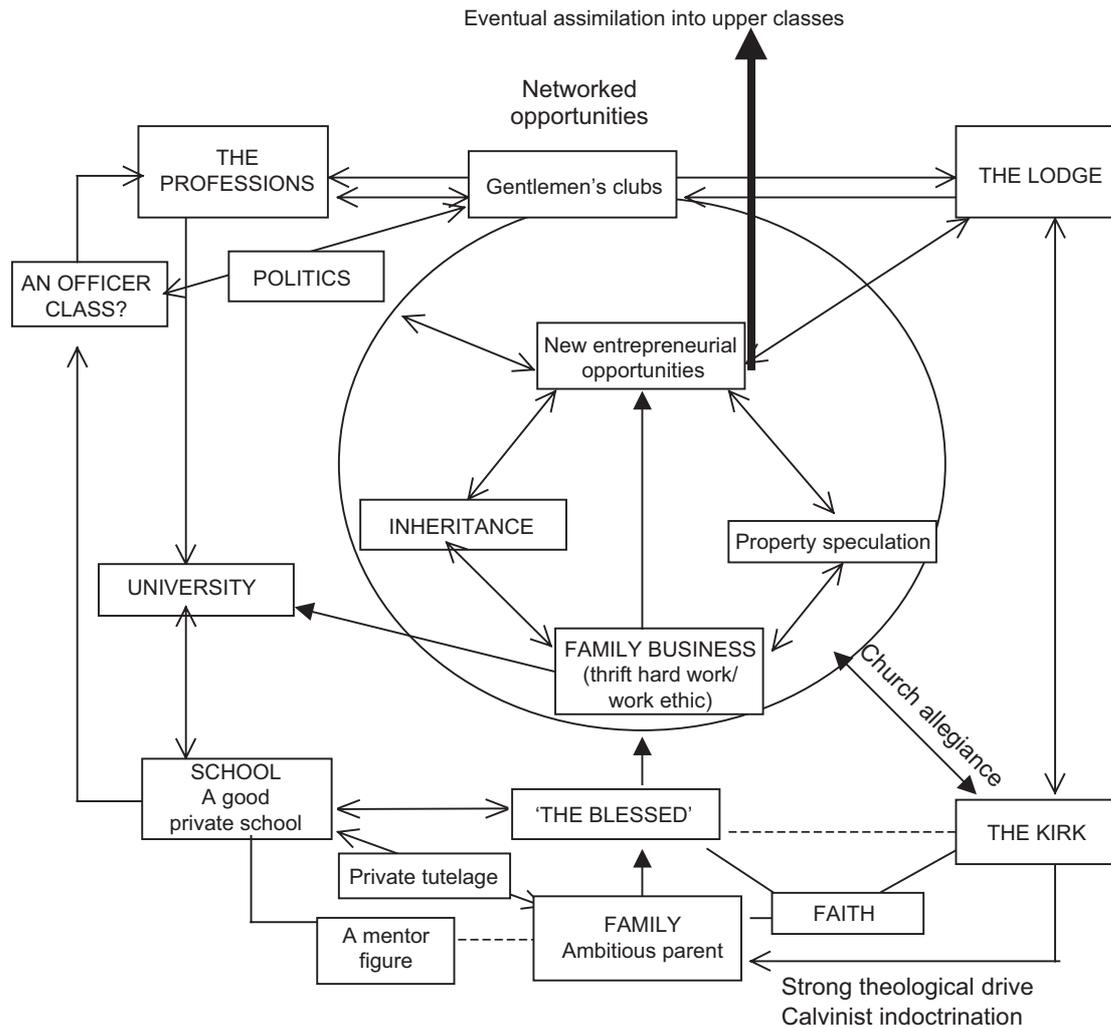
Eventual assimilation into upper classes

Networked
opportunities

Figure 3. The Scots work ethic and the accumulation of social capital by the middle classes.

product of both culture and history; thus, in a small
nation such as Scotland, not everyone can become one
of Weber's bold entrepreneurs. They may not possess
the drive or social capital to succeed, but within the
wider system of capitalism they can engage in the
entrepreneurial dream. Like generations of enterprising
Scots, they can obtain an education and transform their
skill sets and social capital to obtain higher wages in a
competitive marketplace. Perhaps too much is made of
the clever entrepreneur, because with a self-disciplined
and dedicated workforce driven by the Calvinist ethic, it
would be difficult for the entrepreneur to fail.

The Scottish work ethic transcends individual reli-
gions, although it remains an identifiable characteristic
of the Presbyterian faith with its Calvinistic heritage. It
is an ethic available to all Scots – whether Protestant,
Catholic, Anglican, Episcopalian or Free Church – as a
national ethos and characteristic. This paper has demon-

strated that the link between the Protestant ethic and the
spirit of capitalism, although tenuous, is still relevant.
However, this does not signify a direct link between
religion, entrepreneurial propensity and capitalistic
success. A religious upbringing or exposure to the
Protestant ethic may influence and enhance one's
chances of succeeding as an entrepreneur, but it imposes
constraints on personal self-efficacy, particularly when
channelled into a secularized ethic/theological drive
such as a work ethic. As illustrated by the phenomena of
the lad o' pairts and sons of the manse, it can divert
people away from becoming entrepreneurs into other
enterprising pathways.

Although Scotland is still a small nation of under five
million people, we should not forget the influence of the
Scottish diaspora. It is estimated that there are 28
million people of Scottish descent across the globe.
Thus the influence of the Scots ethic underpinned by

Calvinist theology in the entrepreneurial affairs of many countries cannot be overlooked. The veracity of this ethic is often questioned by journalists and social commentators alike, but it remains a powerful driving force in its homeland. It may only be a work ethic and not an entrepreneurial dream, but there are positive signs that attitudes towards entrepreneurship are changing for the better, with organizations such as Scottish Enterprise and the Entrepreneurial Exchange working to create an appreciation of Scotland's entrepreneurial culture. Scotland stands on the brink of a new age when entrepreneurs such as Tom Hunter, Tom Farmer, Brian Souter and others are now household names and role models for future generations to follow. It is of note that 'the First Minister of Scotland' Alex Salmond speaks of the resurgence of the '*Celtic Lion*' in relation to the buoyant Scottish economy.

Notes

[1] See McNeill (1991) for a treatise on the history and character of Calvinism. The author's interest in religion developed from a research interest in the socially constructed nature of entrepreneurship, and not from an interest in religion or theology. The author is a non-practising Presbyterian and as a child attended Sunday school, absorbing the basic tenets of the Protestant religion as a personal creed.

[2] Witchcraft is also a belief system. Indeed, Romberg (1998) considered the influence of witchcraft [brujeria] upon entrepreneurial propensity in Puerto Rico. For Romberg, this blend of Kardecean Spiritism, popular Mediterranean Catholicism and Afro–Latin witchcraft and magic merge into a potent social driving force. Romberg argues that *brujeria* has elevated material success to a morally and spiritually grounded ethos: namely, a 'calling' and a 'blessing'.

[3] Mohandoss (1996) extended the Weberian thesis to include the religious precepts of Jainism.

[4] Also because religious influences are notoriously mobile and because of the propensity of people to migrate.

[5] Psathas used the term 'conversational analysis', but in this paper the term 'interactional analysis' is used to cover our interaction with history. It is useful when studying social life *in situ*, or in this case, a remembered way of life. It rests alongside phenomenological and ethno-methodological theories and therefore with Verstehen.

[6] A further Act of 1672 saw the erection of correction houses where beggars could be made to work. This was followed by the Poor Law of 1845, which kept the operation of poor laws in church hands at parish level.

[7] The gendered nature of this social construct is universal; indeed, McCrone (2001) noted that it had no gendered equivalent, although he did not rule out the ubiquitous use of the male descriptor. The author found one reference to the existence of a 'lass o' pairts' linked to the celebrated Aberdeen School mistress Isabelle Skea who rose from humble beginnings to become a headmistress (McCall, 2007).

[8] In Scottish culture, the 'Dominie' held a prominent position in society and although much has been written about sons of the manse, the 'Dominie's bairns' is an equally mythic stereotype.

[9] The lad o' pairts phenomenon subsumes another interesting social stereotype – the 'children of the Cottar house'. A Cottar house was a 'tied cottage'. These children of poor but honest farm workers were brought up to adhere to the tenets of the work ethic. Many such bairns did well at school, but whilst the lad o' pairts may have been the Dominie's favourite, they had to fend for themselves.

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