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Understanding Wales: Nationalism and Culture

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Cover Page Note

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Introduction

In the spring of 2013, ten students from the University of North Carolina Wilmington participated in a study abroad program in Wales, attending Swansea University for the semester. As a group, we began examining Welsh culture and identity. Living abroad provided many opportunities to collect data and make observations about Welsh life. Our initial observations pointed to a tension that seemed to exist between Welsh and English cultures. We found this tension noteworthy and decided to examine it more closely through an exploratory research project examining Welsh political and economic history, Welsh culture and Welsh nationalism through participant observation, field trips and face-to-face interviews.

Overview of Wales

Welsh Political History

The Welsh government has had a long and distinct history. From its beginning to its current form, the main government in Wales has undergone many changes, and two very important changes in recent memory. Arguably the three most significant changes that the Welsh government has seen in its history have been: 1) the Laws in Wales Act of 1935-1942; 2) the Government of Wales Act of 1998; and 3) the Government of Wales Act of 2006. All three of these Acts were followed by unprecedented changes to the Welsh lifestyle and political structure of the country, contributing to the shaping of Wales that is still going on today.

Wales effectively began in 1535, with the Laws in Wales Act. This bill was enacted by King Henry the VIII in order to annex Wales into England. Carrying elements of political oppression, this act was also able to better define Wales as a country and helped to form a Welsh government. Before the Laws in Wales Act of 1535, Wales was ruled under a series of lordships. This caused Wales to, in effect, be at war with itself. These lordships would fight over land and money, being subject to neither Welsh nor English law. Such aspects as a set legal border between Wales and England were ambiguous or nonexistent before the bill; however, the Laws in Wales Act was able to set a clear and concise border between the two countries, along with many other elements of legislation. A major characteristic of the Laws in Wales Act was the formation of the Council of Wales and Marches. This was essentially a "regional administrative body within the Kingdom of England."[1] This was an important moment in the history of Wales for the council was the first governmental body that controlled modern day Wales (the current territory). Among this council were the formations of courts, sheriffs, and new counties,

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[1] This Realm of England; Monarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy

which abolished the former lordships. The strides that Wales took in the 1530's were crucial to its modern day form. Furthermore, this bill was very popular among the Welsh population. They were for the most part pleased because of the political stability England might bring to them. However, the act did have oppressive aspects to it as well. The act made English the only language to be used in the courts, and attempted to punish those who used Welsh. This was not in an attempt to eradicate the Welsh language entirely, but most likely to make the country more uniform with England.[2] It did mold a belief many years later that the Welsh identity was trying to be erased, making Wales more uniform with England.

Possibly the most important piece of legislation for Wales in the 20th century was the Government of Wales Act of 1998. This act made Wales a devolved nation of the UK. The Government of Wales Act established the National Assembly for Wales, which acts as the secondary legislature for the country. The powers originally given to the National Assembly have been considered weak, due to the fact that they were only given legislative powers when authorized by the UK parliament. This meant that the UK Parliament had the power to enact legislation it deemed fit, making it the primary legislature for Wales. In 2006, the Assembly gained more powers through Schedule Five of the Government of Wales Act of 2006, which granted the Welsh Assembly primary legislative powers over such things as economic development, agriculture, food, etc. An overall amount of twenty new criteria were added to the Assembly's jurisdiction as "primary powers". Even so, the UK Parliament still has legislative powers over some very crucial areas, such as foreign affairs and taxes. This has raised some concerns with Welsh citizens over whether or not the Assembly should have more or full autonomy over legislation in the country.[3]

Welsh Economic History

Welsh economic systems have been diverse and ever-changing since the country's consolidation in the 1500's. At the time of Welsh consolidation, the economy relied mostly on cattle driving and trade for the ports along the coast. Economic development was difficult due to the topography of the country, which made mainland transportation a more arduous task. The economy, since the industrial revolution however, has mainly consisted of the extraction of natural resources from the earth. Coal, iron, copper, and slate became major industries in the country, leading to periods of unprecedented growth from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries. Some major economic

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[2] http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/wales_act_of_union

[3] http://www.hughjames.com/services/public__not_for_profit_sector/public_sector/devolution_in_wales/welsh_government_explained.aspx

periods in Wales came from the mining strikes of the 1980's, and then the subsequent recession of the 1980's and early 1990's.

At the height of the Welsh economy in the 19th century, coal, iron, copper, and slate mining were very profitable industries. The coal mining industry in Wales began around the 15th century, but the industry was not of much significance until the beginning of the industrial revolution. In the 18th century coal began to boom, becoming the go-to fuel for the use of new machinery. Nevertheless, coal was just one of the many mining industries booming at the time. Wales saw a vast expansion in slate production as well, making it the world's largest slate supplier in the 19th century. Copper too became very large and by 1845, 55% of the world's copper was being produced in Swansea alone.[4] This led ports, like Swansea and Cardiff, to see massive spikes in population, exports, and development. Iron was another huge market for Wales at the time, producing 40% of all of Britain's iron by 1850.[5] By the end of the 19th century, Wales had become one of the world's leading mineral producers. The various mining industries had allowed Wales to industrialize even more, helping South Wales to see the formation of canal and rail networks which created more growth through transportation and commerce. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, lighter industries began to replace the heavier ones. Wales would soon see the mines begin to close over the course of the next 80 years.[6]

By 1981, there were just 34 coal mines left in Wales, with the other mines showing similar decreases. The decline in mining over the previous decades had taken a toll on the Welsh economy, which did not at all resemble what it had been at the turn of the century. The mining unions still had strength, though, and hoped to prevent further closings in the future. At the same time, Margaret Thatcher, who had recently gained much support for the Falklands War victory, was set to combat the unions and the fight of the century was surely about to ensue. The miners' strike began in 1984 following the National Coal Boards' decision to close 20 coal mines in England, Scotland, and Wales. This caused mining workers across Wales to strike, but the number of those who participated differed greatly by region. While just 35% of miners went on strike in the north, 99.6% of coalfield workers went on strike in South Wales. Even amidst all of this widespread support in Wales to not close the mines, the act to close the coal mines was still passed. The Welsh economy shortly began to feel the effects of the strikes and closing of the mines. This was difficult for many families due to the fact that "With so many men not working … South Wales suffered hugely with deprivation and community breakdown. Some areas broke down irretrievably, with the effects visible for years afterwards in ghost villages in the Valleys."[7] The Welsh

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[4] http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/industry.shtml

[5] http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/industry.shtml

[6] http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/industry.shtml

[7] http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/society/industry_coal06.shtml

mining industry took a huge blow from the loss of the coal mining strike. By 1995, just one coal mine was still in operation, effectively ending the industry that had made Wales such a prosperous country just ten decades earlier.

The Welsh economy at the time of the 1980's recession was dominated by the service sector. 60% of employment in Wales was service sectors jobs due to an increased amount of foreign investment. These jobs, as service sector jobs tend to be, were generally low skill and low paying, which attracted large percentages of the population.[8] The 1980's recession was said to have hit Wales the hardest out of the other United Kingdom nations. The United Kingdom is comprised of four nations, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, under the government of the British Parliament. This was emphasized when the rest of the UK economy had begun to grow again by 1981 while Wales did not hit peak unemployment until 1986, with the jobless rates being at 13.3% (170,000 people). Furthermore, the Welsh unemployment numbers did not get back to pre-recession levels until 1990,[9] just before the beginning of the 1990's recession. The Welsh economy has since consistently lagged behind the rest of the UK. Household disposable income for Wales is 14% lower than that of England, and the Welsh Gross Value Added (GVA) accounts for only 3.6% of the entire GVA of the UK. This is the lowest GVA out of the four nations in the United Kingdom. This has prompted critics to suggest a stronger Welsh Assembly would allow for more relevant economic policies, with others saying weak devolution has not been the cause of Wales' recent economic woes.

Welsh Cultural History

The first people to settle in Wales lived around 12,000 years ago, making it no surprise that the people of Wales claim a very strong and vibrant culture. From their very distinctive language to the rich and long history of the region, the Welsh are proud to hold their culture so close to their hearts. The Welsh people have seen almost all of modern civilization that has existed from the Roman Republic to the Middle Ages. Welsh culture has been influenced by so much history and by so many different people. Two incredibly important aspects of the Welsh lifestyle are the Welsh language, class, and social structure. The emergence of the political party Plaid Cymru is an indicator of cultural changes in Wales after WWII and the belief in a Welsh identity.

The Welsh language is not only one of the most distinctive languages in Western Europe, but has also been called "the only obvious remaining symbol of Welsh difference and identity."[10] The history of the language carries with it as many complexities as the language appears to carry itself. As

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[8] Jenkins P. A History of Modern Wales, 1536-1990.

[9] The National Assembly For Wales: The long Term Impacts of Recession

[10] Making Sense of Wales: A Sociological Perspective. Graham Day p. 172

previously mentioned, Welsh was almost eradicated by the English through the Laws in Wales Act of 1535-1542, and now only one-fifth of the population even speaks the native tongue. It was not until the 1960's when the Welsh people began to notice a decline in their language. At this point the language was "in danger of becoming the property of an elderly, declining population in the rural areas."[11] In other words, Welsh was on the verge of extinction, but economic decline in the late '70s and early '80s made the language crisis a secondary concern for most citizens.

Attempting to keep the concerns over the Welsh language a relevant issue was Plaid Cymru, the political party in Wales most well known for their advocacy of the establishment of an independent Welsh state. They were able to spread the growing concerns over Welsh in many rural areas of Wales, trying to keep the Welsh identity as an important issue in the national spotlight, and they were successful in doing so. The Welsh Language Act of 1993 completely abolished the language provision of the Laws in Wales Act and mandated equality between English and Welsh. This was a major step for Welsh and the Welsh identity because the language had finally earned its equality with English after four centuries.

The class structure of England is a very important part of their lifestyle and with England's influence on Wales, there is little surprise that the Welsh class system shares a very similar importance. The Welsh have generally been portrayed as working class, in comparison to the English, due to mining as such an integral part of the economy for so many years. Briefly, the Welsh language is brought in to explain Welsh social class and the separation it causes. People of lower incomes tend to speak Welsh more, especially in the north and west regions of the country. The use of Welsh quickly begins to dissipate as income rises, generally due to the fact that many people who are English-born represent larger portions of the upper percentiles in income. Also, the upper percentiles of each group (lower, middle, and upper class) are dominated by English natives. The social structure in Wales is based heavily on ethnicity, even within individual labor sectors. A possible reason for the increase in English and Welsh tension since World War II is that Wales has failed to improve jobs for Welsh citizens since that time. After mining left Wales, low wage labor still remained the dominant source of labor through the newly acquired service sector workforce, with higher income labor remaining disproportionally English. Furthermore, this could explain why Plaid Cymru was able to start competing seriously with the Labour Party in the 1960's due to a "failure of labourism to respond to the changing social and political climate of the region."[12]

Plaid Cymru is a political party in Wales most notably known for their belief that Wales should establish itself as an independent state. The party began in 1925, but was not able to achieve much political relevance until it

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[11] Making Sense of Wales: A Sociological Perspective. Graham Day. p. 180

[12] Making Sense of Wales: A Sociological Perspective. Graham Day. 191

won its first seat in the 1960s. The party currently holds the third most seats in the Welsh National Assembly, behind Labour and Conservative respectively, and holds three of the forty Welsh seats in the House of Commons. Plaid Cymru shares some of the ideological basics with the Labour Party, and in 2007 the two parties formed a coalition agreement. However, the two parties appeared to be rivals in the 1970's, with Plaid Cymru beginning to gain support with many working class voters, a group that the Labour Party previously had had a "hold over" historically. Plaid Cymru gained much of its support due to an increased sense of nationalism within the Welsh communities. They had been appealing to many Welsh voters due to the importance they place on the Welsh identity. As previously mentioned, Plaid Cymru was able to continue garnering support for the Welsh language and fed off of a new mentality in the working class driven by alternative ideologies, such as nationalism or the ambitions to one day gain Welsh independence. This gave the Welsh middle class the choice between "British-Oriented Labour, and a stronger sense of Welsh identity."[13] The support for Plaid Cymru, and some aspects of Labour, deeply characterizes the resurgence in the Welsh identity and possibly some ethnic tensions that still remain in Wales today, showing the profound effect nationalism has had on the Welsh political landscape.

The political, economic, and cultural histories of Wales are a very fascinating series of subjects. Wales, with its rich and complex history, has had a similarly rich and complicated effect on the UK and the world.

Data and Methods

This exploratory research seeks to understand Welsh identity, culture, and nationalism. The methods used to collect data for this research included participant observation, field notes, and face to face, in-depth interviews. Thematic Coding was utilized to draw conclusions (Miles and Huberman 1994).

A group of ten students from the University of North Carolina Wilmington lived in Swansea for five months. During this time we were able to immerse ourselves in the culture and day-to-day activities. Field notes were taken on a regular basis and coded thematically based on emerging themes in the literature review.

A total of thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted. The interviewees ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-five years old using a convenience sampling based on networks made through local contacts. The majority of them came from South Wales; there were a few from North Wales. The interviews lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to two hours. They were recorded on tape then transcribed, and were all conducted on a voluntary basis. Consent forms were agreed to and signed by both the

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[13] Making Sense of Wales: A Sociological Perspective. Graham Day. 195

interviewer and interviewee. The participants' identities were kept completely confidential and anonymous as names were changed to protect their identity.

All members of the team who conducted interviews went through Institutional Review Board (IRB) training and were certified before conducting the interview. The IRB is a social science training that prepared us with appropriate interview methods, treatment of human subjects, and many other topics related to the wellbeing of the interviewees.

The interview schedule was created based on emerging themes in the brief overview of Wales: tensions based on various aspects of history. Language and the social divide between the English and Welsh was a main focus in the creation of the questions since language is usually associated with culture and nationalism. The main focus in the interviews was to tease out Welsh identity and what caused the tension between Welsh and English cultures.

There were severe limitations to this study. One limitation was time. The time that was given was an insufficient amount of time to evaluate our topic to the extent we would have liked. The inability to access all of Wales gave a narrow data set that was focused on one major city instead of including the entire country. The study was also limited because the area of study was populated mostly by students who are university age. The study was mostly kept within the range of 18 to 22 year olds. A broader range of sampling would have made the findings stronger.

Findings

English-Welsh Tensions

Our research showed that there is actually a deeply rooted tension between the English and the Welsh people that has been borne of age-old conflicts and seeped into modern day interactions between neighboring nations. What was surprising for us to find was that there also lies a bit of tension or social divide within the Welsh nation itself. Here, we tease out the sources of tension, as well as identify a varying spectrum of what it means to be Welsh. Dominant culture is the culture of the most powerful group in a society. It is the cultural form that receive the most support from major institutions and that constitutes the major belief systems. Although the dominant culture is not the only culture in a society it is commonly believed to be "the" culture of a society despite the other cultures present. This creates tensions.[14] We also found that tension was complex in that it came from many sources in the relationship between the English and Welsh. There was a distinct divide between the two groups of people that was started by the English. The English and Welsh exhibited a hostile relationship, with the English trying to maintain dominance over the people they saw as weaker than them. The Welsh divide

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[14] Anderson, M. Sociology: The Essentials. 2006.

within the country came in the form of strained relationship between people in North and South Wales, which we attribute to the historical discord caused by the English.

"…there is an embedded hatred for the English from the Welsh. Every county has a sore spot, and I think for us that is the English."

Before even making the journey to Wales, several of the authors experienced this English-Welsh divide in the form of banter. When two of the authors mentioned that we would be spending a semester in Wales around Englishmen in the States, we were questioned why we would even want to spend our time in that place instead of England. "Why would you want to spend your time with those people?" One of us was even told, "All there is in Wales is a bunch of sheep-shaggers. There's nothing there for you." It is interesting that even being in America, with the English being outside of their own culture, these stereo-types were held onto.

The beginning of the strained relationship was caused by the fact that while it seems that Wales has its own government, it is still unable to make all of its decisions independent of the British law-governing party. The lack of a full autonomy has raised questions and debates over whether the English should still have a say in what Wales does because it has its own governing body. It does not help that the UK parliament still has legislative powers over foreign affairs and taxes; allowing the Welsh to feel as if the English are constantly hovering and oppressing them. The strain on the government comes from the two competing political bodies; the Welsh Assembly and the British Parliament, over power and rights to make decisions. This political backdrop impacts our second findings as it sets the stage for the strained relationship between the English and Welsh. Political decisions from the English led to the downfall of the Welsh economic industry and other government policies made by the English were the cause for the iron grip on language usage, which will be discussed in more detail later.

The rise of the Welsh economy saw a large number of people from the North flood the South to find work. When this happened, the countryside was left open for new buyers to come into the open real estate market. There was a rapid influx of Englishmen into the northern countryside and competition began between the outside Englishmen and the local Welshmen for their own land. English people bid to buy land as second or vacation homes, while the Welsh were just trying to buy into the land that they have always live on or owned. There are various stories of how the English unfairly obtained land and prevented the Welsh occupants from buying more of their own land. A northern Welsh housemate to one of the authors was discussing the history of Wales as told by her parents when she talked about the English coming into the North:

"There was this one time when my uncle wanted this piece of land for farming. He bid for it properly, but there's this English guy that comes in from nowhere and bids against him. Of course the English man won (sardonic tone of voice). But guess what?! He bid lower than my uncle did and won! How unfair is that?"

She went on to speak about how the English got unfair privileges and acted as if they were in the right. There was an evident bias for the English even within the borders of the Welsh nation. A sense of competition formed in order to live on their own land while the English were coming in to find land for vacation homes. From what was observed in the tone of the Welsh housemate, she insinuated a bitterness that her uncle held towards the English man that won the bid, and applied the distaste for all English people. The English coming into Wales seemed to have fueled the resentment that the Welsh held against them.

When English Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher closed the mines, there was a countrywide uproar concerning the decision made by the English Parliament. It was a political ruling made by the body of government that the Welsh have tried to separate themselves from since the formation of their own government of the Welsh Assembly. After Thatcher's decision to shut down the mines, workers who lost their mining jobs were understandably discontent with the decision; making this another reason to hate the English government for making a decision that ruined the Welsh economy and left very little in its wake. The legislation made by the English became another source of anger for the Welsh to build their dislike of the controlling neighboring country. At the point of the economy's downfall, the public opinion concerning Wales further plummeted. English views of the Welsh were also falling downhill.

Other authors had experiences with this negative English view of Wales when they were questioned as to why we would spend our time in Wales. When talking to an older English couple, one author was asked how she liked living in Swansea. She answered, "I love it! I'm so happy that I decided to study here." The couple responded, "Oh really?" with a puzzled attitude. Experiences like this were a common occurrence. There was an attitude among the English that nothing good comes out of Wales and in this case, Swansea specifically. The English generally hold this stigma of Welsh people despite the successful history of the mining dynasty that Wales once had.

Despite what the English may think about nothing coming from Wales, there is an unmistakable enthusiasm and willingness of the people to speak about their past. All of the authors took a trip to the Swansea Museum in the city center of Swansea which is a prime example of an unashamed display of the Welsh past. There is a sense of eagerness to share the details of how the country was run and what industry made it as affluent as it was. "I had a great grandpa who was a miner. He had died by the time they closed, but even if it wasn't a part of my family, I think every Welsh person would

say it's important because it links to our culture." The sheer size of the 'Copperopolis' display in a museum of a small size spoke volumes of how much the Welsh wanted any visitors to see how the once leading industry of the world operated within the country. Mining is definitely a source of pride for these Welsh people by how adamant they were to have students learn of the success in the previous centuries and the sheer details of every display. Mining was an integral part of the Welsh identity. It is what this nation was built on. It carried the nation through the Industrial Revolution and put them as a front runner of global industry. It was what made Wales matter to the rest of the world. Naturally, since it was such a major part of Welsh life, the identity of the Welsh became wrapped up in the industry and life of coal mining. Being the leading mineral producer, with 55% of minerals produced in Swansea alone, it is a success story that is an understandably good source of bragging rights for Wales.

> *"I think it [tradition] is very important. Otherwise we might as well be English. It's what makes us who we are. I'm proud of my past and what I am. We are not English. We are older than them. We were here before them. We've managed to keep our traditions alive. We are the only one of the original."*

Another source of bragging rights comes from the fact that Wales has the longest and richest history out of all the UK nations. Part of what really makes up Welsh culture includes customs and language. The Welsh beliefs and customs have been passed on by parents and grandparents whose experiences have been influenced by years of rule under an English government. The countless younger individuals have, to a certain degree, learned about the past and the history of their people. There are several behaviors and practices unique to the Welsh that are considered important to them. Many of the aspects of being Welsh have been instilled, in some way, into all of the interviewees.

One particular event is the Esitedffod Festival that allows the Welsh to enjoy the different regional cultures of Wales. As one interviewee replies, "It is important to celebrate Welsh cultural heritage and traditions because it shows that we are Welsh and not just 'not English.' The Esitedffod is an important cultural festival which is held in a different place in Wales every year. There is a national one and a youth one. These are big events." This response supports the idea that the Welsh have a strong belief in supporting their own culture and this is what they feel separates them from the other overshadowing countries, particularly England.

Saint David's Day is also another significant display of Welsh culture. As explained by one respondent, "Saint David's is a main Welsh celebration – schools retell the story of both Saint David and Saint Dwynwen every year leading up to the celebrations." Throughout the month of March, the authors saw one of the most noticeable displays of Welsh pride and culture. Almost

everyone had a daffodil pinned to their coat; the daffodil is one of the national symbols of Wales. When interviewing another person about the same holiday, she said, "I don't even know when or what [Saint David's day] is. I had to Google it." The interviewee did not know much about that particular celebration, but this person just knew that it was something that their family celebrated every year. This helps infer that the Welsh celebrate these holidays as a show of Welsh heritage, even if there are some Welsh people who are unfamiliar with it. Some Welsh people are losing the knowledge of the history behind their holidays, but continue to celebrate them to show pride. These celebrations are becoming something that the Welsh do so that traditions do not fade away and become forgotten.

What was even more intriguing to the authors was the knowledge certain people had of certain traditions and holidays. It was typical that the English did not know the Welsh traditions, but the Welsh typically knew both the Welsh and English traditions. What was observed by several authors was that their English housemates responded negatively in knowing any upcoming holidays in the country they had resided in for the better part of a year. The Welsh showed distaste when it came to the fact that they knew more about the English than the English knew about themselves or the Welsh.

The next aspect of Welsh culture, language, has the biggest part in Welsh history. As previously mentioned, there was a point in time that Welsh was nearly eradicated, leaving only a fifth of the current population able to speak it. This was supported in the fact that of the thirteen interviewees we spoke to, only one of them was able to speak it fluently and actually used it every day to speak to her family. Despite the lack of language knowledge in the rest of our interviewees, they still recognized a few words of Welsh. They also emphasized that while they were not able to learn Welsh from their parents when they were younger because there was no time to reinforce it at home, the idea that they have Welsh as a language of their own was important to them. Having their children learn it in school in the future was very important to them.

> *"Yes. I think they should. It would be a crying shame if the language died out. Next to Greek, it is the oldest language in the European Union and even though it would have no place in the political world it should still be kept alive for the cultural factor."*

There was an insistence made by all of our interviewees that the Welsh language was different and was something unique to their people. The way they spoke about the language, as well as an observation made by one of the authors while out in the city, reinforced that language remains one of the most distinct remaining symbols that sets a different standard in their identity. Strangers that we did not know would even try to talk to us about how important it was to hold onto and spread the Welsh language. An elderly Welsh man on the public city bus with the author found out that the person

was an exchange student, after which he went into a monologue about Wales. Part of the conversation included an emphases on how "strange the language may sound to a foreigner," but she should "learn a few words" because she would "never hear anything like it anywhere else." In this way he boasts to the female author that Welsh was well worth learning, even if only a little, and is a language that sounds so unique that it would amaze other peoples.

An observation was made while the authors were at the Big Pit Mines in South Wales and there was a man who would constantly translate things to Welsh. He was the tour guide and would speak in English, "only because I have to because of those English people," but would then say, "or, as we say it in Welsh..." as he continued the tour. These accounts imply two things about language. First, is that while history has played a significant role in reducing the use of the Welsh language in modern day to a very low number, it has not diminished the recognition of how important it is to know it and pass it on. Second, despite English becoming the dominant language throughout most of Wales, it has helped make the Welsh people become proud of the culture they have left. From a language stance, the strain comes from the blame on the English for the oppression of their language which started in the past and a group of people still trying to make Welsh known.

A particular observation that depicts language holding an important role in public is the observation from all the authors of the signs around town. These signs which point out the direction of places and establishments are all written in English and translated to Welsh. It is not always functional because many Welsh people in Swansea do not speak and cannot read Welsh, but it is more of a symbol of the age-old importance of the language. It says to the outside public, "we are Welsh and we have our own language, here it is." These signs are, in a way, forcing everyone to be immersed in Welsh and familiarize themselves with it. Even if you do not learn it, you become aware of the little nuances and come to recognize things by association. The signs with the both written languages exemplify how English has made its way into the culture, but Welsh has not totally been forced out. There is an importance for Welsh to still be displayed around the country.

There is little doubt that the people of Swansea, and of Wales, are unashamed of their spoken heritage. The tension against the English lies in the stereotype that the English have of the Welsh language that has been noted by several of the authors. There exists the notion that Welsh language is considered "uneducated." These stereotypes were often heard in the form of banter and teasing. The interaction between the Welsh and English roommates were interesting to witness for several of our authors. One conversation between the English and Welsh included joking about Wales being a third world country. Generally the teasing could be heard in the pubs on game days or around the student village where we lived. The interaction usually went something like this as one writer experienced between their English and Welsh housemates, "Did you know that Wales is a third world country? No? Well it is. Oh isn't that cute. You have a third world language for your third

world country!" In the statement, there was not only a hit on the economy, but also on the language which the English have a hand in suppressing. In this episode of playful mocking, the Englishman next turned to Scottish housemate to tease him further showing the English supremacy. It was common knowledge that the conversations were meant to be harmless jabs at the Welsh people, but it was borderline offensive, especially when the English were usually the first to insult the Welsh when given the chance. At times, there was the use of derogatory or demeaning terms in the conversations, like the "sheep-shaggers" quote from before which was the usual insult.

There are also extreme reactions when there is the misuse of how the people are identified. Calling everyone British is alright, but if a Welsh person was called English, a mistake that often occurred due to the ignorance of the difference in the people of two separate nations, there would be an indignant outcry and denial of being English. The same would happen if an English person was called Welsh, but it happened less often than the first scenario. This exposes the extreme distinction in who they are and how they are identified.

Ultimately, we wished to see how far Welsh nationalism went in regards to playing a part in the English-Welsh tension and found that patriotism has a dominant presence in this. The Welsh are very patriotic in an expressive way. We saw the Welsh flag hung everywhere, such as on the front of shops and inns, around various spots in the buildings on campus, and along the highway. As stated from one of the Welsh interviewees, "Welsh pride is patriotism, I suppose … and being different to everyone else in the U.K.... we are able to trace our roots further back than anyone in the UK as the original inhabitants." There is a strong belief in their values and culture, and the start of these tensions stem from the past where the English insisted on dominating. As such, many people today have a passionate need to prove the English wrong in that they do not dominate the Welsh.

An eagerness to show that Wales is not inferior to England comes in the form of competition and trying to one-up one another. There is an extremely vocal support of anything related to sports in the UK, but the hostility comes out in their support for rugby. "Rugby is a much loved sport in Wales...people travel from all over Wales to watch at Millennium Stadium. In a way Rugby has become an epitome of Welsh pride." Dominance in the sports scene allows for a respected view of the Welsh's power in an international scene. When discussing rugby in their interview, one of the author's participants gave this statement, "tension only exists because the English think they own us." This is a powerful statement to say coming from the Welsh side; the participant unknowingly admitted to the recognition of the dominance that the English are trying to establish. Further example of how important it is for each side to show dominance in rugby was the Six Nations game played in the spring of 2013. The English took a loss in the finals to the Welsh and there was a low blow to the English pride after their defeat. The tone of the city of London after they lost in the nations game was a quiet and

reserved one, noted by two of the authors who were in London during the match. On the other hand, there was a very loud uproar and celebration gloating not just the win, but also the utter defeat of the English at the hands of the Welsh team. Celebrations were long and loud in the city of Swansea, which was noted by at least three of the authors, giving Wales the bragging rights for the next year.

Nationalism can also be associated with the pride in trying to uphold traditions despite the lack of a strong familiarity with traditions or festivals. The younger generation wants to uphold and pass on traditions, even though they might not know everything that is entailed. The strong association with pride feeds into the strained relationship with the English who still regard themselves as 'better' than the 'backwards' Welsh. So there remains an undertone of dislike for one another which comes out vocally during sports games, banter, and talks of politics.

A Welsh Spectrum

Regarding our second findings, our research indicates that there is a large varying spectrum of Welshness ranging from Welsh-Welsh to English-Welsh as described by Day (2002). The Welsh-Welsh are defined as those who actively practice Welsh traditions, language, and lifestyle; whereas the English-Welsh are those that have been more Anglicized and follow a more English way of life (Day 2002). An example of this distinction is reflected in a quote by one of the respondents whilst describing his mother. He remarked that "she did not speak Welsh or cook Welsh food" because "she's not that Welsh." The interviewee saw his father as more Welsh than his mother and his paternal grandparents as even more Welsh than the rest of his family. This concept of a spectrum of Welshness can be seen throughout many of the interviews, exemplified through comments such as this one from another person who says, "I'm not the most Welsh person here," prior to the interview even starting.

Interestingly, we have observed something akin to a "gradient scale" of Welshness that each participant placed themselves upon to a certain degree, and this idea is furthered by their placement of others on the scale as well. The descriptions given to name the degrees of Welshness varied between participants. Terms to describe Day's (2002) Welsh-Welsh were given the name *Walean* and *Welshy-Welshy* by one interviewee. She used these names when describing the regional differences and language in Wales, stating that "there is tension between North and South Wales...the Welsh in the North are very... 'Welshy-welshy' and they speak it fluently."

Although the research shows a wide spectrum of the Welsh-Welsh and English-Welsh, there is a commonality among the interviews that led us to the creation of a new category on the spectrum called: *Preservational Welsh*. This can be defined as those individuals who believe it is important to preserve and continue the Welsh culture into future generations even though they

themselves do not practice the language and traditions on a large scale. In the interviews it was found that many Welsh language non-speakers, defined as those who speak minimal to no Welsh, still found it vital to have their children learn the language, and still saw the value in the language itself. This same theme was seen overall in regard to traditions, as many interviewees only recognized St. David's Day but were unsure about practices and facts surrounding the holiday. However, they still recalled positive childhood memories of the holiday and deemed it important to keep celebrating for Welsh culture and Welsh pride. Both language and tradition were overwhelmingly seen as important to this group and interviews emphasized the crucial aspect of preservation to these individuals.

There are many aspects that divide the North and South of Wales but one of the primary divides is the use of the Welsh language. In the quote below, the respondent uses the phrase "Welshy-Welshy" to describe her northern Wales family.

> *"I have family who lives in North Wales and they are much more patriotic that my family [in the South]. I have no idea why this is. There is tension between North and South Wales...the Welsh in the North are very...Welshy-Welshy and they speak it fluently. If you go up there a lot of them will speak Welsh to you and not speak English."*

When talking about the regional divide, the recurring theme of language-usage defines how Welsh a person is. The use of English over Welsh in the southern part of Wales in the major cities, such as Cardiff and Swansea, is something that has occurred over time due to the industrialization of these larger cities (Welsh Census 2011). Another difference in the north and the south divide is the dialect. "The main differences between north and south are dialect. Words may have two completely different meanings depending on where you are within the country; "there is no tension between us, we are just different, in both dialect and identity." Even though they are both Welsh they identify themselves differently whether they come from the North and South Wales.

Even though both the North and the South celebrate the same holidays and traditions, the North is still considered more Welsh and are said to "care more about heritage than the South". None of the respondents can give a certain reason to the divide of the North and South besides that the North is more Welsh. "It's hard to describe the differences but they are obvious," says one respondent. There is no explanation why but the Welsh just acknowledge there is a difference.

Conclusion

Before the authors even traveled abroad to study at Swansea University, a tension between the English and the Welsh was noted. As this tension was studied and observed, it was discovered that the tension was a residue of the economic, cultural, and political history. From invasion, suppression of language, and damage to the economy through closing the mines, these combined factors still manifest a palpable tension between the groups. This tension was empirically observed through face-to-face interviews, field trips, and field notes. Nationalism was found in English-Welsh banter, the prideful display of their past, use of language, celebrated traditions, and sport. As we spent our time in Wales we felt that these observations of tension were noteworthy and deserving of further exploration.

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APPENDIX ONE

Interview Schedule

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As part of research for a class I am taking at University I am trying to find out more about Welsh culture and heritage. Your responses will help inform my understanding and I greatly appreciate you taking the time to tell me more about Wales.

(BE SURE NOT TO READ THE HEADINGS WHEN YOU ARE CONDUCTING YOUR INTERVIEW!)

LANGUAGE

1. To begin, do you speak Welsh?

    If YES

    a. How often would you say you use Welsh in daily life?

    b. Does it differ based on who you are speaking to?

    c. At what age did you begin speaking Welsh?

    d. Do your parents speak Welsh at home? Do you speak Welsh at home?

    e. Do you intend to ensure that your kids speak Welsh also?

    f. Did you learn Welsh in school? Was it part of the curriculum?

    g. Do you think Welsh students today should learn language in school?

    h. Would you say there is a tension between those who are Welsh and who do not speak Welsh and those who are Welsh and do speak Welsh? How so?

If NO

    a. Why not?

    b. Are you interested?

    c. Do you use Welsh phrases or greetings?

    d. Has it ever affected you, either positively or negatively, in not speaking Welsh?

    e. Would you say there is a tension between those who are Welsh and who do not speak Welsh and those who are Welsh and do speak Welsh? How so?

    f. If you have kids, do you plan on ensuring that they learn/speak Welsh

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

We are going to turn our attention now to another topic that I am interested in learning more about.

1.   I understand that coal and copper were big industries in Wales. Can you tell me about these and why they were important?

    a. Are they important today?

    b. Did you or a family member feel especially connected to the coal industry?

2.   Did you follow the recent stories on Thatcher's death and funeral tributes? Do you have any thoughts about her or her death or legacy at all? If so, how so? Elaborate.

3. People keep talking about north-south differences in Wales. Can you tell me more about these differences?

4. Are there regional differences in celebrating Welsh traditions? How so?

TRADITIONS

We are going to continue talking about traditions in this next section.

1. St. David's seemed to have been a big celebration here. Can you tell me more about holidays that are specific to Wales?

    a. Are there specific Welsh traditions that you follow?

    b. What about Welsh food ways that you practice?

    c. Is there a big tradition around Welsh music? Can you share these with me?

2. Tell me more about Welsh cultural heritage.

    a. How important is it that you celebrate Welsh heritage and traditions?

    b. How involved are you in celebrating Welsh cultural heritage? Elaborate

    c. Tell me more about Varsity? How important is this? Is it significant?

    d. Will you ensure that you pass down cultural heritage traditions to your kids? Why or why not?

TENSIONS (BE SURE NOT TO READ THIS HEADING!)

Sports seem to be really big in Wales. Can you tell me more about the importance of sports here?

1. The Six Nations Rugby event seemed like a big deal. Could you tell me more about its importance?

2. Not thinking about sports, would you say there is a tension between England and Wales? How so?

3. What is your view of England?

4. If I asked an English person what they thought of Wales what do you think they would say?

5. Have you ever heard people talk about someone because they are Welsh? In what way?

6. Have you ever been targeted or been a brunt of a derogatory joke? How so?

7. Are you familiar with both English and Welsh traditions?

8. Do you feel that the English are familiar with Welsh traditions at all? Elaborate

PERCEPTIONS

1. Are the Welsh particularly proud of their famous citizens like Dylan Thomas, Richard Burton, etc.? How so and Why?

2. Finally, tell me something. Do you think there is something called WELSH PRIDE? If so, please describe it for me.

FINALLY –

Could you tell me your age _____

Occupation (for parents if student) _____

Educational attainment (for parents if student) _____

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR HELPING US UNDERSTAND WELSH LIFE BETTER. YOUR RESPONSES ARE INVALUABLE AND I REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR TIME WITH ME!