

**Post-Devolution Welsh Identity in Porthcawl: an  
ethnographic analysis of class, place and everyday  
nationhood in 'British Wales'**

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***To Mum and Dad***

## **Abstract**

Wales is commonly divided into 'more Welsh' and 'less Welsh' places, although very little is known about the 'least Welsh' parts of Wales (dubbed 'British Wales' in Balsom's 'Three Wales Model'). Indeed, some contemporary analyses claim that devolution has made Wales 'more Welsh' to the extent that British Wales no longer exists. However, these claims of cultural homogeneity overlook the persistence of regional class divisions in Wales, with the 'least Welsh' parts of Wales remaining the most affluent.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of this overlooked region by exploring Welsh identity in the British Wales town of Porthcawl. Using a longitudinal ethnographic approach, I investigate how locals negotiate a Welsh identity and whether class and place influence this process. Yet this is not just a study of local place: my analysis of everyday Welshness is located within a wider Gramscian theoretical framework which conceptualises devolution as a process of passive revolution.

My study finds that locals feel very Welsh, undermining ideas that British Wales is 'unWelsh', and that place influences local identification with Welshness. Locals understand Welshness to be hierarchical, and measure their own Welshness against discursively constructed ideals of linguistic Welshness and working class Welshness (the latter being more prominent). Using Bourdieu, I show how locals work to reconcile the clash between their local (middle class) habitus and the national (working class) habitus. Understood as a working class habitus, Welshness has both positive and negative connotations. Locals subsequently move towards and away from Welshness in different contexts. The micro helps illuminate the macro, and everyday life in Porthcawl is punctuated by Welshness, rather than being structured by it. Whilst the molecular changes of devolution are observable in Porthcawl, locals occupy a British cultural world, and the national deixis remains British. These findings are indicative of a post-devolution interregnum.

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“This you may say of man - when theories change and crash, when schools, philosophies, when narrow dark alleys of thought, national, religious, economic, grow and disintegrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back.”

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*



## Introduction

My thesis analyses Welsh identity in the underexplored and traditionally ambivalent 'British Wales' region, focusing on the town of Porthcawl. This introductory chapter establishes the origins of my investigation and the issues which naturally intersect it.

### *The invisibility of British Wales*

Although nationalism and national identity are both seen to be 'horizontal' or 'equalizing' concepts (see Anderson, 1983), in reality, societies frequently draw hierarchical distinctions within the national polity between those who are 'most' national, or most 'authentic', and those who are 'least' national. Triandafyllidou and Veikou (2002) for example, argue that Greek identity is organised as a '*hierarchy of Greekness*', which can be imagined as being ordered in concentric circles, with ethnic Greeks at the centre as the 'most Greek', and immigrants and refugee groups occupying the outer rings. Hoon Seol and Skrentny (2009) analyzing South Korea, similarly argue that *nationhood is hierarchical*: some groups within the nation are 'top tier' members, and some are deemed 'less national'. Tim Edensor (2002:67) argues that within the discursive construction of the nation, some *places* are viewed as 'more national' than others, iconic 'heartlands' which occupy special places within the national imagination, whilst others are relegated to the periphery of the national narrative.

There is a tradition within Wales of dividing the country into distinct cultural regions based on class, language and so on (see Evans, 2007: 124). As Balsom et al (1984:164) state:

"The obvious division between Welsh and English speakers within Wales, together with the geographic concentration of the Welsh speaking population, has led many commentators to devise various geographical subdivisions within Wales reflecting areas of greater homogeneity".

Following the historical and cultural geography of Emrys Bowen (1957), Carter and Thomas (1969) created a small 'essential culture' heartland region of Wales. Similarly Rose (1976) created categories of *Industrial, Mid, and Furthest Wales*, whilst Bowen and Carter (1975)

divided Wales along linguistic lines into *Y Fro Gymraeg*, *Cymru Cymraeg* and *Cymru ddi Gymraeg*. Chris Williams, meanwhile, (2005) reminds us that as far back as 1921, Alfred Zimmern, the inaugural professor of international relations at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, posited a Three Wales Model of his own, where Wales was divided into 'Welsh Wales'; a working class 'American Wales'; and an upper class 'English Wales' (Zimmern, 1921).

Despite the relatively consistent acknowledgement of 'peripheral areas' in the mapping of Welsh cultural regions, Welsh historiography (not to mention representations of Wales in popular culture) has focused on the 'two truths of Wales' (Raymond Williams, 1985): first, a rural Welsh speaking Wales, focused on the 'interior' parts of Wales; and second, the industrial working class associated with the South Wales coalfield (see Gruffudd, 1999; Day, 2002; Evans, 2004; Bohata, 2004). Welshness, in short, is *hierarchical*. If we were to adopt Triandafyllidou and Veikou's model of nationhood being about multiple levels of national authenticity (2002:201), Welshness can be conceptualized in *concentric circles*, with these two dominant images of Wales competing for the centre circles or core, with a residue or 'the rest' - known for example as 'British Wales' or 'English Wales'- occupying the 'outer circles' or *periphery*. Whilst these two images of rural and industrial Wales constitute 'thick' regions, widely understood and engrained in the popular tradition or imagination (Paasi, 1986, 1991; Terleow, 2012), the 'rest' of Wales is under-researched: although the 'outer fringes' of Wales help define the heartlands (without implicitly peripheral non-heartlands you cannot have heartlands) their exact make up is unclear. Although people seem instinctively aware of 'less Welsh' places, the aberrance of these places has not prompted much academic analysis (Johnes, 2012). Borsay (2008) argues that *coastal regions*, and indeed *towns more generally*, have been ignored because they lie outside the idealised image of Wales and Welsh society. Towns in Wales were seen as 'the transmitters of an alien culture' and a threat to Welsh identity (2008:94). Seaside resorts in particular were 'an entirely non-celtic idea' and "*more than any other sort of location would seem to represent the importation of an alien, and in particular English, form of settlement, drawing much of their culture and many of their migrants and visitors from outside Wales*" (2008: 102)

Welsh historiography's tendency to narrowly prioritize 'interior landscapes' of mountains and valleys over exterior ones of coast and beach, has led to the neglect of regions of Wales which do not correspond to any dominant notions of national identity (2008:104). As Williams (2005) puts it, within Wales there has been a reluctance to move beyond the dominant, 'straightforward' images of Welshness and to engage with the possibility that identity at the 'edges' of Wales may be 'fuzzy' and complicated.

Devolution, as I explain later on in the thesis, brought with it a new vocal advocacy, at least by the media and political class in Wales, of a new, democratic politics in Wales, which would be accompanied by a recalibration of *Welshness itself* towards a new, inclusive Welsh identity which encompassed these hitherto 'peripheral' experiences. Now more than ever, perhaps, attention was finally to be paid to what Day and Suggett (1985:96) call the 'many ways of being Welsh' which exist within the country. Accordingly, post-devolution Welsh sociology displayed a greater sensitivity and a renewed interest in the role of *place* and the *local* reproduction and interpretation of national identities (Fevre and Thompson, 1999:14). I outline many of these studies in chapter 2. But whilst these ethnographies of local identities have undoubtedly deepened our knowledge of Welsh identity, these studies have by and large retained their focus on identity within the aforementioned *heartlands*, with only Dafydd Evans' (2007) analysis of NE Wales really attempting to get to grips with the issue of 'peripheral' regional identities in post-devolution Wales.

There is, then, much work to be done in excavating and illuminating the peripheral or marginal regions of Wales. As far as I am aware, my thesis is the first ethnographic work to deal with Welsh identity within the Southern 'coastal belt'. It hopefully represents a large step towards addressing this lacuna.

## *Autobiography*

To properly understand the development of my research question and my focus on Porthcawl, it is necessary for me to firstly outline the 'autobiography of the question' (Miller, 1995, cited in Ward, 2013:8) which is intimately related to my own personal history. As Epstein and Johnson (1998; cited in Ward, 2013:8) state, it is important for readers to understand where we and our arguments stem from, in terms of *who we are* as well in terms of what we think

My engagement with Porthcawl and my interest in *place* and how it relates to identity, (both national and non-national) stems from my childhood and upbringing in Porthcawl, during which I wrestled with my own national identity and its relationship with class, and indeed with masculinity. I first became aware of things like national identity and class in my early teens. This, I think, coincided with my development of a musical taste. Alongside an immersion in all things American as a result of surfing and rollerblading, I soon became obsessed with Oasis and other Britpop groups. This interest was soon complemented by a deeper interest in local bands, specifically the Stereophonics and Manic Street Preachers (and to a lesser extent, Catatonia). I was raised culturally in the midst of what became known (hyperbolically) as 'Cool Cymru', (the counterpart to the manufactured 'Cool Britannia'), whereby Welsh popular culture seemed to blossom, signalling a greatly increased national confidence. In June 1998 I watched the Stereophonics live in Cardiff Castle. This was a profound experience, and central to the 'nationalization' of my teenage self. Like Oasis, the Stereophonics celebrated a working class identity, but one which was far more tangible to me. Kelly Jones, the frontman, sounded like my relatives and people I knew. I felt connected to the Stereophonics- my own life experiences and family history seemed to be reflected in these songs about Valleys life and community, of working men's clubs, boxing and alcohol- a world I felt I recognised through my family and friends (albeit not one I had *directly* experienced). The local, working class habitus eulogised in this music was synonymous with *Welshness*. Welsh flags were everywhere in this concert<sup>1</sup>. Welsh rugby clips were played on huge screens above the stage, and the crowd chanted

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<sup>1</sup> Footage which captures the prominence of Welsh symbolism can be found online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jze-JGjAfo0>

‘Wales! Wales!’ before the encore<sup>2</sup>. Alongside this new Welsh music scene, the Welsh rugby team’s fortunes started to pick up slightly, and iconic Welsh footballers began to make an impression on the wider stage. All this occurred in tandem with devolution, and I still remember me and my school friends being interviewed at school by ‘*Newsround*’ about the establishment of the Welsh Assembly. In short, Welshness was becoming a ‘thing’ which was quite salient and visible in everyday life.

At the same time, however, it was also becoming clear to me that Porthcawl did not seem to be like the rest of Wales. My Wales, my everyday experiences, weren’t reflected in the idea of Wales I saw being celebrated in the Stereophonics concert or during Welsh rugby internationals. I knew my accent didn’t sound like Kelly Jones’s or James Dean Bradfield’s, or like my Dad’s or Granddad’s for that matter. Compared to these people, I knew that I didn’t sound *Welsh*. I remember being genuinely upset at a Manic Street Preachers concert because I couldn’t ‘legitimately’ purchase a ‘Valleys Boy’ t-shirt being sold. I knew if I wore it in public that as soon as I opened my mouth my fraud would be exposed- I wasn’t from the valleys: I wasn’t *properly* Welsh.

My Granddad used to moan about the ‘bloody Tories’, and from my youthful and very basic interest in politics I learnt that Wales was meant to be a Labour stronghold- to be Welsh meant to vote Labour- yet in Porthcawl, Conservative election posters and signs dominated the local landscape.

But my main awareness of Porthcawl’s (and by extension my own) ‘difference’, came through frequent interaction with another Wales, another habitus, which was facilitated by my long standing membership of Porthcawl town football club and Porthcawl Comprehensive rugby team. Twice a week for over a decade I played against schools and teams from the surrounding areas, primarily Port Talbot and the surrounding Valleys. When we played these schools and teams, although no more than half an hour’s journey from Porthcawl, the difference was palpable. For starters, the built and physical landscape was the opposite of our experience of Porthcawl with its beaches and big detached houses. Here, the houses were terraced and small,

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<sup>2</sup> This period is vividly captured by Rebecca Edwards (2007)

and the pitches were often seemingly the only flat bit of land for miles. But the main difference was between ourselves and our opponents. These kids were tougher than us. They had different, stronger accents. They were louder. They swore. They fought. They wore different clothes. We had shinier, more expensive boots and kits. Our carefully cultivated long hair (which in Porthcawl was cool because it was associated with surfing and skating) got constantly ridiculed as feminine- 'Porthcawl poof!'- (our opponents had cropped hair). Through our accent and behaviours, we were marked as *posh*, and also, seemingly by extension, as somehow *unWelsh*.

These weekly trips and encounters with the working class Wales that the Stereophonics sung about was an early engagement with what I later learnt to be the process of *distinction*, or the cultural and aesthetic manifestations of social class. Class was understood not so much in terms of occupation, but in terms of behaviours, dispositions and consumption patterns. This was why my grandmother didn't watch ITV, and why my Dad refused to have Sky TV if it meant having a satellite dish on the front of the house.

In my early years of secondary school, undoubtedly influenced by Britpop's appropriation and repackaging of working class-ness as the definition of cool, I distinctly remember me and my friends ostentatiously attempting to claim working class links, to distance ourselves from being 'posh' and by extension feminine. This was a variation on 'my Dad is tougher than your dad', albeit done by proxy, as we tried to make ourselves 'cooler' and more masculine simply through citing tangential familial associations with a 'tough' working class and 'more Welsh' habitus- my family is from the Valleys, my family is from Merthyr and so on. Here at this early stage in my life, it became clear that class, behaviour, nationality and indeed masculinity were all bound up together, and intimately connected with 'where you were from', and being from Porthcawl was not enough.

As I aged, however, I also remember that some teachers and other students in school were *mocked* for having 'Welshy' accents. So at the same time that Welshness seemed to be getting 'popular' in the popular media, and where it was cool and masculine in some contexts, in other contexts it was undesirable. I remember many of my peers occasionally pouring scorn on all

things Welsh, in particular the Welsh language. The instructional videos we watched in Welsh class were mocked as hilariously outdated. When I became old enough to work in a local pub before setting off to University, punters seemed to moan continually about the nascent Assembly and the Welsh language. Porthcawl seemed somehow remote from 'real Wales', and many locals seemed very happy with that.

These issues of identity, class and place continued when I went to University in Aberystwyth in 2003. Many new friends from England instantly marked me out as Welsh because of my accent, (which I had hitherto had assumed was 'unWelsh') and I remember new friends from Cardiff saying I sounded 'Welshy', and explaining to our new English friends that Porthcawl was 'like the Valleys on Sea'- something which greatly surprised me. At the same time, however, I recall some friends from Llanelli not knowing I was Welsh until I referred to Wales as 'us' whilst we were watching Wales vs England in the campus bar. To them, my 'neutral' accent had marked me out as English.

It was here at University where I first realized that most people seemed to intuitively understand that there were areas of Wales which were more or less Welsh, and that people seemed to measure their own Welshness on a 'scale'. The presence of the Welsh language within Aberystwyth- something I had never encountered in day to day life before- added another dimension to everyday ethnicity within interaction<sup>3</sup>. Anglophone University friends from the Valleys (to me, 'very Welsh' people) spoke about Welsh speaking students in terms of 'proper Welshness' or as 'the Welshies', and viewed Pantycelyn (the Welsh medium hall of residence) and the Y Llew Ddu (the Welsh student's pub) as Welsh *spaces*. Amongst all this, the 'neutral' Aberystwyth accent added another layer of confusion: these locals seemed 'posh' or 'unWelsh' within English language interaction (such as on the football field), yet they could and would often switch to the Welsh language, thereby becoming 'Welsh'. It was an education in the contextual nature of identity and the widespread awareness of gradations of Welshness.

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<sup>3</sup> Unbeknownst to me, a study of this 'micro-level othering' and the Welshness of the micro-geography within Aberystwyth was simultaneously being undertaken by Jones and Desforges (2003).

During my Undergraduate studies, I took modules on devolution and was very surprised when I read optimistic accounts which seemed to emphasize a widespread growth in Welsh identity and positive attitudes towards the Welsh Assembly: I could not help but contrast these 'optimistic' accounts with my own experience of Porthcawl, where locals often seemed to want to distance themselves from all things Welsh and which seemed inoculated from the effects of devolution. It was during my first year at Aberystwyth that I encountered Denis Balsom's '*Three Wales Model*' (1985) and had something of an Archimedean moment. Here for the first time was a work which recognised my own experience of Welshness in Porthcawl, which finally acknowledged my *type* of Welshness. Balsom's 'British Wales' region, with its 'weaker' Welshness seemed to describe Porthcawl as a place: a region with a weaker sense of national identity, and moreover, seemed to *explain* this 'weak Welshness'. The 'weak Welshness' of this British Wales region was, as I understood it initially, related to being 'middle class' and to 'high levels of in-migration'. This explanation resonated with my cosmetic youthful knowledge of Porthcawl: I knew I was 'posh' and that a large proportion of my friends had English parents. The problem seemed to be solved. Throughout the rest of my undergraduate studies I attempted to find out more about this British Wales region, yet this was like looking for a needle in a haystack. This 'peripheral' region was conspicuous by its absence within the political and sociological literature on Wales. It was here that I began to think how bizarre it was that the most populous regions of Wales (Cardiff, Newport, Wrexham) and the experiences of their inhabitants were overlooked within Welsh political discourse.

#### *Initial research proposal, pilot fieldwork and changing course*

The focus of my thesis shifted significantly the more I got to know the British Wales region, and I think it is important to outline the reasons behind change of approach. Eager to uncover why certain regions remained 'less Welsh', my initial research proposal stemmed from my earlier, rather simplistic reading of the TWM, whereby I interpreted *features* of British Wales as *causes*. In particular, I hypothesized that Porthcawl was 'less Welsh' because of high levels of in-migration from England, and my initial research proposal was '*An Analysis Of The Impact Of In-Migration On National Identity In British Wales*'. Porthcawl, as a commuter town, has a



relatively high level of in-migration, with 17% of residents born in England (see table 4 and appendix 1). This relatively high percentage seemed like a straightforward explanation for Porthcawl's weak Welshness, or high rate of British identifiers- also 17% (ONS, 2011). This assumption about the correlation between in-migration and the 'unWelshness' of a local place was, perhaps, not unreasonable. Analyses of the geographical distribution of the Welsh language have emphasized the deleterious impact that in-migration and second home ownership have on the Welsh language (e.g. Aitchison & Carter, 1989, 1994; Carter, 1988; Phillips and Thomas, 2001). Quantitative analysis, to my mind, also seemed to keep reinforcing the correlation between birthplace/in-migration and 'weak Welshness'. Wyn Jones and Trystan (1999, 2000), for example, note that 'those born outside Wales' (i.e. England), were generally more likely to identify as 'more British than Welsh' and to vote for 'anti-devolution' parties. Such accounts further reinforced the inference that Britishness was something associated with the English born, obscuring the Britishness of the Welsh born. Some ethnographic accounts of in-migration seemed to emphasize *conflict* between Welsh speaking locals and English speaking in-migrants (e.g. Morris, 1989), and local respondents within these studies spoke of 'swamping' and English in-migrants 'changing the character' of a Welsh *place* (see Cloke and Milburne, 1995:32). Griffiths (1992) explicitly links in-migration to acculturation and 'weak Welshness' and to the character of places. More generally, within Welsh historiography in-migration has traditionally been associated with acculturation (e.g. Phillip N Jones, 1987; Williams, 2005:14), and going back further, the particularly Anglicized nature of places like the Vale of Glamorgan, for example, has been linked to the Norman heritage of the Southern coastal belt (James, 1972; Coupland & Ball, 1989).

In-migration remained my focus for at least the first 6 months of my thesis, until I actually got round to returning to Porthcawl to conduct pilot fieldwork. I begun by practicing my interview techniques and question sequencing on close friends and 'friends of friends' with English parentage or who had themselves been born in England. These interviews threw me: I had expected more ambivalence and unease about Welshness, but instead of rejecting Welshness and embracing Britishness, my friends felt 'very Welsh'. I then attended a town meeting organised by the local SHOUT group (a forum for elderly residents) about the forthcoming

referendum on further powers for the Assembly. Before the debate had started, the organizer of the meeting, an elderly man with a distinctive 'Valleys' accent, approached me and said 'I don't even know why we're having this debate- the Assembly's a load of bloody rubbish isn't it?'. This set the tone for the rest of the debate, as the pro-further powers speaker got booed and interrupted at every turn, whilst the 'True Wales' speaker's Unionist soundbytes were roundly cheered. At the end of the meeting when the floor was opened to questions, a local lady complained about her children being forced to learn Welsh. This was loudly cheered and applauded. At the end of the meeting the chairman approached me again with a satisfied smile on his face 'Duw, he took a bloody hammering didn't he?'

I came away from this meeting rather confused. On the one hand, it was clear that *place* still seemed to matter- here was a large group of people talking about Porthcawl as a somehow detached setting which, in their view, was not being served well by 'them down the Bay'. There was also palpable hostility towards other places in the borough and Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) in particular. Moreover, these people seemed to regard the perceived 'Welshification' of Wales with hostility and suspicion, indeed as something 'alien' and threatening. On the other hand, however, it was clear that my initial assumptions about in-migration being central to the character of Porthcawl as a place were misguided, or at least unsatisfactory. Here, in the main, it was local people with Welsh accents reacting against the perception that Wales was becoming more Welsh, reacting against the Welsh assembly, not English people (although this is not to deny the relevance of this topic entirely, because several English accents were prominent within the meeting). Conversely, during my pilot interviews, here were many English born people with 'very Welsh' identities. Thus, like more recent and nuanced analysis of in-migration (e.g. Day et al, 2006; 2007; 2008; 2010) the experience of English people in Porthcawl was highly complex. As well as there clearly being many *types* of in-migration (Day, 1989:149), it soon became clear that in-migrants were evidently not a homogeneous group. In this short period of time I spoke to in-migrants who had lived in Porthcawl for most of their life, who had learnt Welsh, who felt Welsh (i.e. were 'more Welsh') than people born and raised in the area.

Following this early fieldwork I abandoned my focus on in-migration (although I remained acutely aware of it as a topic throughout my subsequent fieldwork), because this focus seemed to me to obscure the complexity of place and the myriad forces which influence the 'feel' of towns like Porthcawl. Ultimately, I felt it was too simplistic to associate the weak Welshness of Porthcawl with English in-migration. The redundancy of my initial approach and vindication for my change was encapsulated in an exchange I had with the chef at the hotel I worked at. In his mid forties and from the West Midlands, he had lived in Porthcawl for half his life, moving to Wales for work. Interested in my research, I told him my thesis was about Welsh identity in Porthcawl. Noting that his two sons had grown up in Porthcawl and felt Welsh, he remarked that "I'm more bloody Welsh than this lot down here", and observed that locals wanted 'nothing to do with Wales'.

#### *Welshness in Porthcawl from above and below*

My pilot study also demonstrated to me firstly, the weaknesses of quantitative analysis, and the disjuncture between inferences gleaned from data (i.e. that English born people were 'less Welsh', and that Porthcawl's Welshness could be explained by in-migration) and the complex realities to be found 'on the ground'. Instead, I became convinced of the need for an extended ethnographic analysis of Porthcawl if I was to understand how people related to Welshness and why certain places may be considered to be more or less Welsh.

Secondly, these early forays convinced me of the need to study the wider national context alongside my analysis of Porthcawl. The ambivalence towards the Welsh Assembly, the ambivalence towards the Welsh language and so on, posed the question of the impact and influence of devolution- *why* had the changes which seemed so profound in 1997 not registered in Porthcawl? More generally, as I reflected upon the devolution settlement, it became evident that Welshness was simply not as prominent in everyday life as it had seemed when I was a teenager: the optimism of 1997 had unmistakably receded. The backdrop to my analysis, the wider national context, had changed. Could it be that devolution was not the revolutionary force that it had seemed in 1997? It thus became absolutely critical to interrogate the wider national context alongside my analysis of Porthcawl.

Hobsbawm (1990:10-11) argues that nationhood is a 'dual phenomenon': constructed essentially 'from above', (discursively), by politicians, historians, the media and so on; yet can only be properly understood if studied 'from below'. Accordingly, the challenge is to integrate these two perspectives and to study nationhood from above *and* from below (Brubaker et al, 2006:13). This thesis proceeds from the argument put forth in Michael Burawoy's treatise, '*The extended case method*' (1998), that the macro and micro, national and local are *complementary* scales of analysis. Studying developments at the national scale helps to contextualise everyday life and identity within local places. At the same time, developments at the local scale can tell us much about developments at the national scale (Brubaker et al, 2006:362).

### *Research Questions*

It is now an appropriate time to introduce the research questions which structured and informed my investigation of Welsh identity in Porthcawl.

- The *general* aim of my thesis is to assess Welsh identity within Porthcawl, and to explore the condition of the *British Wales* region through this local lens. This aim subsumes myriad subsidiary questions: do locals feel Welsh? What does Welshness mean to them? What are the referents and markers of Welshness? How do they place themselves in the nation? When and how does the nation occur in everyday life?
- This analysis of Welsh identity in Porthcawl is intersected by an analysis of the role of *local place* in this process. Does place matter in negotiations of Welshness, and, if so, how?
- In chapter 1, I show that *class* continually crops up in 'top down' analyses of British Wales, as the 'objective' middle class composition of the region is frequently correlated with its 'unWelshness'. Related intimately to issues of place, my thesis therefore investigates the extent to which *social class* intersects with national categories within everyday life in Porthcawl. If class emerges as a significant variable in explaining a weakened national identity, how does this manifest itself in everyday life?

As I have stated in this introductory chapter, one cannot divorce the micro level from the wider structural forces which shape everyday life. My investigation of Porthcawl is therefore also focused on saying something about developments at the national scale by asking ‘how Welsh is everyday life in Porthcawl?’, and analyzing what these empirical observations can tell us about post-devolution Wales. The methodological implications of these research questions and my epistemological position are discussed in chapter 6, and I develop my discussion of how Porthcawl illuminates post-devolution Wales in Chapter 10

### *Structure of the thesis*

My thesis is structured as follows. The first two chapters collate and review the literature on regionally constituted Welshness and outline the British Wales region from two different angles. **Chapter 1** is a ‘top down’ analysis, and builds an overview of regional variations in Welshness and the peripheral ‘British Wales’ region, focusing on Denis Balsom’s **Three Wales Model** (TWM). The chapter introduces the two main themes to intersect the British Wales region and which course through the rest of the thesis. The first is the advent of **devolution** and the impact of this development upon regional models of Welshness. Second is the persistence of **regional inequalities** and **social class** divides within contemporary Wales, and the role these fissures may play in the reproduction of regional identities.

**Chapter 2** approaches British Wales from the ‘bottom up’ and outlines some of the recent ethnographic approaches to local refractions of national identity within Wales. As well as outlining the need to study ‘**everyday nationhood**’, and how the nation is ‘done’ in everyday life, the chapter looks at how and why **place** matters to people when it comes to claiming national identity. In particular the chapter focuses on ‘ambivalence’ and why people from certain areas may feel more or less national. The chapter concludes by looking at the blindspots within contemporary Welsh ethnography and how my thesis aims to overcome these. **Chapter 3** introduces **Porthcawl** as a place. I briefly outline Porthcawl’s history, culture and make up and how it fits the description of a ‘British Wales’ town.

**Chapter 4 & 5** ‘zoom out’ from the local/regional focus and outline the wider national context which forms the backdrop to my analysis. This section focuses on the ebb and flow of

Welshness ‘from above’, and is vital to contextualize my locally situated analysis. **Chapter 4** outlines the **role of the state in Wales**. The chapter breaks with dominant readings of the state in Wales and applies a **neo-Gramscian** theoretical framework to the British state, characterising the post-war British state as a flexible and sophisticated **historic bloc**. Understanding the nature of hegemony within this bloc is vital to understanding the complexity of (regional) identity in Wales and also to our understanding of devolution as a process, which must be located in the wider context of the bloc. Chapter 4 demonstrates the need to locate the national habitus within the wider context of hegemony. I argue that the **discursive construction of Welshness**, and what we instinctively consider ‘authentic Welshness’ to be, is rooted in a hegemonic strategy within the bloc.

**Chapter 5** builds on the arguments of chapter 4, and analyses devolution in light of the Gramscian analysis of the state and how it may be transformed. In this chapter I argue that the sophistication and elasticity of the state is demonstrated in its reaction to crises, and that devolution must be conceptualised as a process of **passive revolution**. Rather than a revolutionary rupture, devolution represents a ‘statisized’ transition, whereby ‘change’ is led by the Labour party, designed to *prevent* far reaching structural change and to perpetuate the status quo. The instability of the post-devolution period was characteristic of the aftermath of a passive revolution, and the Labour party employed political strategies of **transformismo** to right the ship. Bearing in mind the concrete concessions and changes made to Welsh society as part of the passive revolution, this chapter leads us to the central issue of how these changes have impacted on what it means to be Welsh, and how these ‘changes’ may be felt in everyday life.

**Chapter 6** concerns **methodology**. It outlines the epistemological considerations which informed my analysis, the methods I used to study everyday life in Porthcawl, the problems I faced during my research and how I overcame them.

**Chapter 7** begins the introduction of my empirical evidence. In this chapter I summarise the complex ways in which locals negotiated their Welshness. I note how in some ways, Porthcawl’s Welshness is highly straightforward, and in others it is complicated. The chapter notes the awareness of the subtle gradations of Porthcawl’s position within the hierarchy of Welshness.

The chapter finishes with an analysis of the influence of the **Welsh language** on locals' sense of place and Welshness.

**Chapter 8** begins my discussion of the role of **social class** upon locals' understanding of Welshness and their own place within the nation. I demonstrate that most locals instinctively measured their own Welshness against a dominant image of Welshness which was tied to working classness. I utilize **Bourdieu's** concept of **distinction** to show how locals understood Porthcawl as a middle class place, at some distance from 'proper' working class Welshness. How locals reacted to Welshness was therefore very much linked with how they perceived the working class habitus. Often, locals held both positive and negative views of this working class Welshness, and moved towards and away from it.

**Chapter 9** focuses on my analysis of younger people in Porthcawl, focusing in particular on the fieldwork I conducted in Porthcawl Comprehensive School. The chapter shows how younger locals, like their forebears, understood their standing within the national hierarchy vis a vis their middle classness, which was based on their understanding of Porthcawl as a 'posh' place. Unlike their older peers, however, younger locals performed a more crude class identity. Their repertoire of classifiers within the process of distinction was different. The chapter draws attention to the role played by contemporary **popular culture** in reproducing national habitus codes, which in the Welsh context means the perpetuation of a **classed national habitus**. The chapter concludes by analyzing the attitudes of younger folk towards the Welsh language.

**Chapter 10** analyzes the **unreflexive** ways in which the nation embeds in everyday life, and how this contributes to the distinctive 'feel' of a place. The chapter focuses on the **ethno-symbolic geography** of Porthcawl, i.e. the 'latent' or material manifestations of the nation within the local, in particular the prevalence of visual 'condensation symbols' of the nation like **flags**. The chapter focuses on the role of **institutions** and the cultural apparatuses of the nation within Porthcawl and their contribution to the Welshness of the town. Finally the chapter moves away from cosmetic material manifestations of Welshness to address wider issues of power and how the **national deixis** is arrived at.

Finally, in my **conclusion**, I restate the central findings of my research and set out my original contributions to the field, before extending out from Porthcawl and British Wales and discussing the implications of my findings for wider theoretical debates.



## Chapter 1

### British Wales 'from above'

This chapter sketches the outline of the allegedly 'ambivalent' or 'less Welsh' British Wales region, before looking at the two main themes to intersect my study of British Wales: firstly, **devolution**; and second, **social class**.

The chapter is roughly divided into three sections. The first section introduces the 'less Welsh' region. The starting point for this section is Denis Balsom's (1985) '*Three Wales Model*' (henceforth, TWM) which presents a tripartite version of Wales in which the strength or 'intensity' of Welsh identity varies between distinct geographic regions, which are each associated strongly with particular socio-cultural groups and traits. Through a thorough reading of Balsom's model I explore the outstanding features of this region and what makes it different. The second section discusses the process of devolution and interpretations of its influence on place and regional cultural differences within Wales. Finally, I engage with the issue of social class and its impact on Welsh identity. This section points to the stark regional inequalities which persist in post-devolution Wales, and I suggest that class analysis is of particular relevance when discussing the issue of regional boundaries and cultural distinctiveness within contemporary Wales.

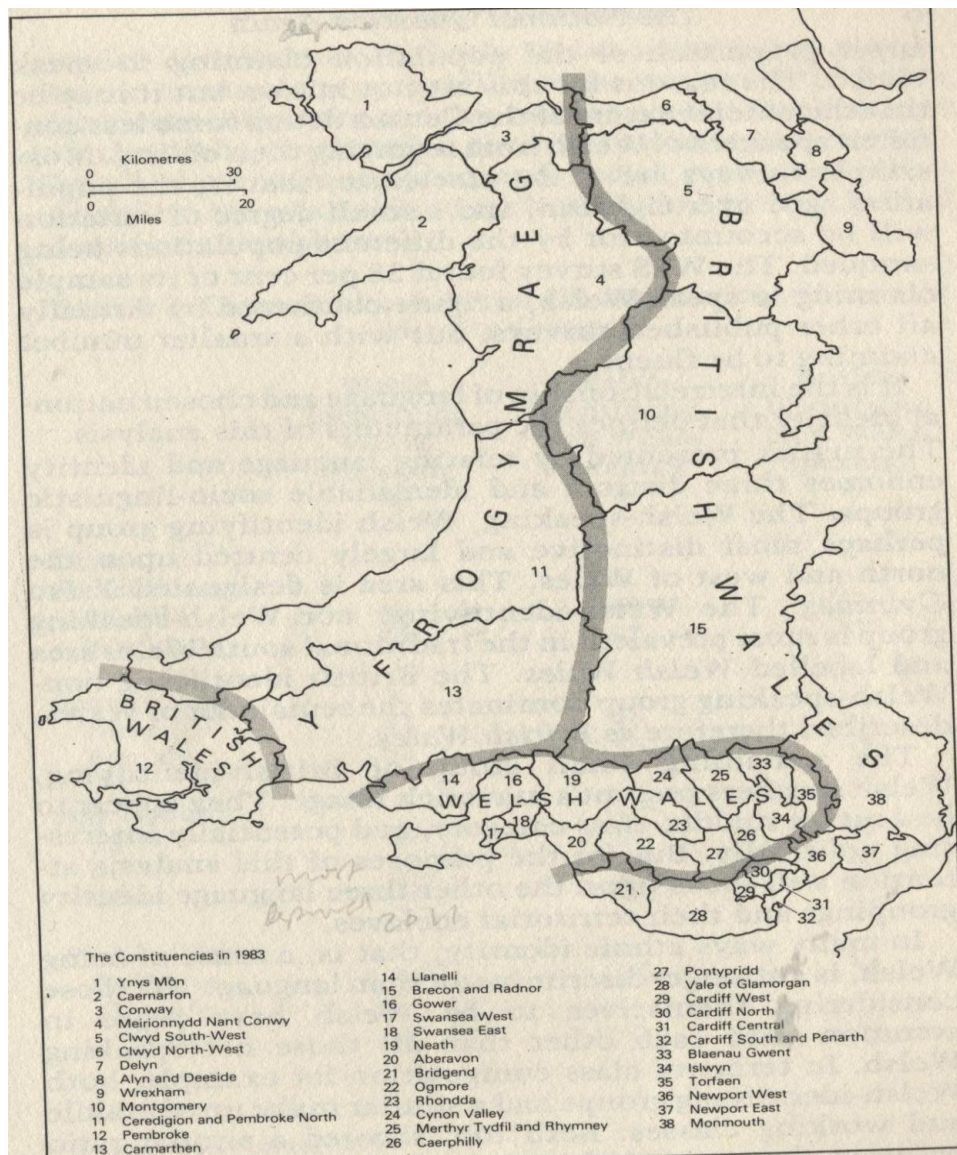
#### *The Three Wales Model and British Wales*

Denis Balsom's TWM is essentially a condensed and simplified version of his earlier works with Peter Madgwick and Denis Van Mechelen '*The Red and The Green: Patterns of Partisan Choice in Wales* (1983) and '*The Political Consequences of Welsh Identity*' (1984), and should ideally be read in tandem with these works. These precursors were detailed political studies (far more so, in fact than the TWM), based like the TWM on the 1979 Welsh Electoral Survey (WES), which attempted to tackle the highly complex relationships between identity, class, cultural attachment and political affiliation in Wales. The TWM imposed an explicit geographical framework on to the findings of these earlier works. Because these earlier works may help

explain the issue of 'regionally constituted Welshness' (Evans 2007: 124), i.e. why some people and places may be more or less Welsh, I refer to them in the following discussion.

Posing the question '*Do you normally consider yourself Welsh, British, English or something else?*' the WES survey found that 57% of respondents in Wales said Welsh; 34% said British; 8% said English, and 1% said something else. Balsom then mapped these identity groups according to their regional concentration.

**Map 1. The Three Wales Model**



(Source: Balsom, 1985)

As illustrated in the above map, these distinct identity groups are geographically concentrated. Balsom demonstrates that there are two areas where two-thirds of the population identify as Welsh: the North and West of Wales; and the traditional south Wales mining area. Elsewhere, a British identity is prevalent though *not necessarily dominant*. In his own words:

“The Welsh speaking, Welsh identifying group is perhaps the most distinctive and largely centred on North and west of Wales. This area is designated *Y Fro Gymraeg*. The Welsh-identifying, non-Welsh speaking group is most prevalent in the traditional South Wales area and labelled *Welsh Wales*. The British identifying non-Welsh speaking group dominates the remainder of Wales, described therefore as *British Wales*” (1985: 6, my italics).

The strength of Welsh identity, then, varies between social groups and between regions of Wales. Some places, and by extension some *people*, are *less Welsh*.

A central point to make at this juncture, and one which is vital to my thesis, is that the *Welshness of the British Wales region* is frequently overlooked, and Balsom may have emphasized this better. The TWM states that the region has a *majority of Welsh identifiers*, (50.5%) but is dubbed ‘British Wales’ because of a *relatively* higher percentage of British identifiers (43.0%), rather than a majority (see table 1, below, taken from the TWM).

**Table 1.** Regional dispersion of National Identity Groups in Wales (1979)

4 *The National Question Again*

TABLE 1: *Geographic Dispersion of National Identity Groups*

	Region*		
	Welsh Wales	Y Fro Gymraeg	British Wales
Welsh	63.0	62.1	50.5
British	30.7	31.8	43.0

\*Regions comprise the following Parliamentary constituencies:

Y Fro Gymraeg: Caernarfon, Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Pembroke North, Conwy, Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Ynys Môn.

Welsh Wales: Aberavon, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Cynon Valley, Gower, Islwyn, Llanelli, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, Neath, Ogmore, Pontypridd, Rhondda, Swansea East, Swansea West, Torfaen.

British Wales: Alyn and Deeside, Brecon and Radnor, Bridgend, Cardiff Central, Cardiff North, Cardiff South and Penarth, Cardiff West, Clwyd North West, Clwyd South West, Delyn, Monmouth, Montgomery, Newport East, Newport West, Pembroke, Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham.

Source: WES Survey 1979

(Source: Balsom, 1985)

The social profile of these groups, which the TWM links with particular regions, is significant. Analysing the demographic breakdown of the respective groups, *Welsh language ability* was very strongly correlated with Welsh identity, and negatively with a British identity (1985:4). Balsom outlines how both Welsh identifying groups have a similar *class composition*, with a very slight working class bias in each. Significantly for my purposes, Balsom states that “on all these demographic and social measures Welsh identifiers are *more akin to each other than to their British identifying neighbours*” (1985:7, my emphasis). Indeed, looking at the British identifying non-Welsh speaking enclave, the population was more middle class; had a higher ratio of males to females; had a relatively old population; and a very significant minority (47%) of the population *born outside Wales*, in contrast with the Welsh identifying groups (both Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking), the majority of whom were born in Wales. The region is also distinguished by its tendency to vote Conservative.

British Wales, in other words, emerges as the odd region out. Despite being predominantly Welsh identifying, one may infer from the TWM that the region’s *relatively* ‘less Welsh’ nature

is linked to English born people, middle class-ness, and political conservatism.

*Socio-economic change within the TWM and the relevance of place*

Balsom's model importantly acknowledges the impact that wider socio-economic change has on the basis of Welsh identity in *general*. He acknowledges that Welsh identity as a whole fluctuates over time (1985: 3, 14) and that although Welshness may vary from region to region, the nature of Welsh identity *right across Wales* is ultimately dependent upon the durability of Welshness in the face of a culturally dominant Anglo-American world (1985:14). He does not, therefore, reify place as immutable and static. Crucially, however, he argues that the extent of *acculturation* will vary by region, and by examining his 'prognosis' for the durability of a Welsh identity we can uncover his thoughts about the nature of *place*, or why certain regions may or may not *remain* more or less Welsh than others; and about the nature of the British Wales region specifically. He argues that the ability to resist the dominant hegemonic culture (Britishness), i.e., whether the region becomes 'incorporated or assimilated' (see Raymond Williams, 1980:41) depends on the *intensity* of Welsh identity within the region, and how capable each region is of shielding itself against the forces of acculturation (Balsom, 1985:9). Outlining *how* regions inoculate themselves against dominant ideologies, he emphasises the role of *micro-level institutions* and *local cultural apparatuses* in determining inhabitants' relationship to Welshness. Taking the regions one by one, he writes that in Y Fro Gymraeg, the prevalence of the Welsh language means that Welsh identity in this region is likely to be the most secure and enduring. Balsom identifies *political nationalism* in the form of Plaid Cymru as a localised oppositional bulwark against this hegemony, and as the 'pace setters' within regional political life they have served to mobilise local councils to be aware of their 'cultural responsibilities'. He also states that the development of a distinctive Welsh language *media* in Y Fro Gymraeg "goes some way to combat, if not fully to compete with, the total dominance of the English language" (1985: 15).

As for Welsh Wales, Balsom offers a gloomier prognosis, stating that:

“economic recession and the absence of any likely industrial recovery seem destined to fundamentally undermine this classic Welsh milieu. Thus the viability of a Welsh identity expressed and developed through the medium of the English language is thrown into question. In Y Fro Gymraeg the language and the social apparatus that now surrounds it, offers an alternative to a standard, homogenous Britishness. In Welsh Wales, although a nominal sense of Welsh identity is high, the *intensity and potential for development based upon this identity remains weak*” (1985: 15, my emphasis).

For Balsom, Welsh Wales’ cultural distinctiveness and indeed strong Welshness (i.e. difference from the ‘mainstream’ of the UK) emanates from a specific Anglo-Welsh working class culture sustained by localised cultural apparatuses (see, e.g., Lovering, 1978; Day, 2002: 107-10). However, the dependence of this ‘local patriotism’ on a working class habitus leaves it vulnerable to erosion once wider economic forces undermine this particular way of life. The question Balsom poses is ‘what is left in this region which is distinctive once the working class cultural apparatus disappears?’ The one potential ‘vehicle of Welshness’ in this area, political Labourism, which Balsom elsewhere identifies as acting as a *surrogate form of Welshness* (Balsom et al, 1983) also seemed to him irreparably damaged by the decline of heavy industry. He thus predicted that this region would also gradually become acculturated and bleed into British Wales.

### *British Wales*

Balsom’s prognosis for British Wales reveals much about the complexity of this region. He argues that British Wales, through its transport links, is an integrated part of *Southern Britain* (1985: 16). Furthermore, Balsom argues that “the logic of modernisation and development inevitably leads to standardisation and acculturation” (1985: 16). Possessing neither the

'linguistic inoculation' of Y Fro Gymraeg or the radical 'alternative' culture of Welsh Wales, he states there is seemingly little in the British Wales region capable of refracting the dominant British culture. In other words, there is, for Balsom, ostensibly *nothing different or distinctively Welsh in this region* which marks it out from England or the Anglo-American world: no distinct 'local patriotism'. Its economic integration into the core is thus also *cultural*- evidenced by the fact that voting patterns in British Wales remain consistent with British-wide fluctuations- and is evidently not inoculated from the 'mainstream' by localised cultural norms as the other regions of Wales are.

Paradoxically, however, Balsom notes that the British Welsh region also contains the ostensible vehicle of Welsh cultural resurgence in the form of nascent devolved political institutions, which as well as potentially strengthening the *national* sense of distinctiveness, could also potentially catalyze and transform the Welshness of the *region*.

The precursor to the TWM, '*The Red and the Green...*' (1983) offers some additional insights as to why particular regions and places may be more or less Welsh. Most intriguingly, the study argues that *strength of Welsh identity varies with class identity* (1983:304). Analysing the role of place on identity, they argue that within a working class milieu, Welsh identity was far higher for all social classes. In a mixed class milieu, all classes (upper-middle; lower-middle; working class) felt 'less Welsh' (1983:304-5). Balsom et al therefore conclude that "plainly Welsh identification relates to class and class environment" (ibid 304). In other words, working class 'places' in Wales possess a stronger Welsh identity than middle class places, and this strong sense of Welshness 'rubs off' on all the inhabitants, regardless of their 'objective' class. Equally, 'weak Welshness' is linked to '*middle classness*' and the *feel* of the place may impact on the Welshness of all inhabitants, regardless of 'objective class', suggesting a '*neighbourhood effect*' (Savage and Warde, 1993) whereby the identity of the local place may influence the identity of *all* within it, regardless of objective class.

### *Problems with the TWM*

Despite its prominence and 'orthodoxy' within Wales, (Coupland et al, 2006; Wyn Jones & Scully, 2012b), the TWM has significant weaknesses which in my view have contributed to misunderstandings when it comes to regional variations in Welshness in Wales. As a general point, by utilising the exclusive categories of the Welsh Election Survey to measure national identity - 'Do you think of yourself as Welsh, British, English or something else?'- the model posits Welshness and Britishness as mutually exclusive categories. This necessarily obscures the fact that people possess multiple identities, and that in multinational states like the UK, identity is '*nested*', with people having both 'national' and 'state' identities (Bechhofer et al, 1999: 518). In Wales, as I will argue in more detail later, Welshness has been the 'national' or cultural identity, and Britishness has been the 'state' or political identity- this 'dualism' or '*nestedness*' was demonstrated clearly by the 1979 referendum. The exclusive nature of these categories in the TWM has contributed to the somewhat warped reading of Balsom's model.

Relatedly, linking the particular regions to certain demographics means that we are left with something of a caricatured image of each region, and also of their inhabitants<sup>4</sup>. The plurality of identities *within* the regions are obscured, for example the prevalence of *British identifiers* in YFG and Welsh Wales and the prevalence of Welsh speakers within British Wales; the significant political conservatism within YFG and the Labourist tradition within British Wales; the presence of middle class enclaves within Welsh Wales, the presence of working class enclaves within British Wales, and so on. In particular, the TWM obfuscates the complexity of the British Wales region. Most obviously, the name 'British Wales' is unhelpful since it means that this region becomes associated with the 'non-welsh speaking, British identifying' group, despite the aforementioned fact that a *Welsh identity is dominant in this region* (50.5%). The binary drawn between Welshness and Britishness by the WES means the *Welshness* of this

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<sup>4</sup> In Balsom's defence, in a precursor work he explicitly acknowledges the limitations of these blunt heuristic models: "boundaries are not distinct, and the differences, with the exception of language, may easily merge into the mosaic of Welsh society....earlier divisions of Wales, into rural and urban, North West and South East, or a 'heartland' and 'south Wales', are inadequate to encompass the variety of Welsh culture and politics" (1984: 166).



region is therefore frequently obscured as the attention is inevitably drawn to its (relatively strong) 'Britishness'.

To demonstrate the complexity of the British Wales region, it is worth recalling that the 'British Wales' region was an amalgamation of the 'NE & Mid Wales' and the 'Lower South Wales' regions put forward in *'The political consequences of Welsh Identity'* (Balsom et al, 1984). Within this earlier model, 'Lower South Wales' recorded a similar percentage of 'Welsh speaking non-Welsh identifiers' (40%) to 'Upper South Wales' (later to become 'Welsh Wales') (48%); whilst 'NE & Mid Wales' significantly recorded the second highest number of 'Welsh speaking Welsh identifiers' (16%) (1984:165). Upon closer inspection then, in terms of 'Welshness', the Southern, coastal part of British Wales does not show up as significantly different from 'Welsh Wales', and the Northern sector of British Wales displayed a significant degree of linguistic Welshness. So some parts of British Wales may be 'more Welsh' than others, or indeed contain different 'strains' of Welshness.

#### *Devolution, 'Welshification' and the fading of 'British Wales'*

Much has changed since Balsom's analysis, which let us not forget, was written nearly thirty years ago. Of course, he himself predicted that the rigidity of regional boundaries was contingent on wider structural changes to society. Regions are fluid and dependent upon wider structural developments. They are not static, but may evolve, disappear, or indeed new regions may form over time (Paasi, 2004: 542-3). It is therefore entirely proper to question the validity of this regional model in light of structural developments at the national scale.

The most obvious and profound change to occur within Welsh society has been the advent of *Devolution*. Although I deal with devolution in more detail in chapters 4 and 5, it is worth very briefly stating the importance of devolution and its impact on Welsh society and why it matters for my thesis. The 'Yes' vote for Welsh Devolution in 1997 and the establishment of the Welsh Assembly in 1999 was interpreted by many as a *radical* structural change to the UK (e.g.

Bogdanor, 1999). The new Assembly simultaneously ‘embodied and imbued’ a heightened sense of Welsh identity across Wales (Wyn Jones and Lewis, 1998: 9) and represented a growing national *self confidence* (Morgan and Mungham, 2000:209). Simply put, the establishment of the Welsh Assembly was interpreted by some as both reflecting and constituting a heightened sense of Welsh identity across Wales, so that the changes wrought by devolution mean that post-devolution Wales is ostensibly now ‘more Welsh’ than it was when the TWM was written. These changes were evident across Welsh society. The creation of the Assembly and the devolution of powers over a (limited) range of domestic policy areas and apparatuses were interpreted as laying the groundwork for a distinct Welsh ‘civil society’, something previously lacking within Wales (Wyn Jones and Lewis, 1998; Mann, 2006). The impact of the new responsibilities was that Wales would now be treated as a distinct administrative unit, but perhaps more important (yet less tangible) than the transferring of particular administrative duties was the concomitant recognition of Wales as a distinct polity. This made it the “single most important investment in the *national identity* of Wales” (Morgan and Mungham, 2000:209, original emphasis).

Moreover, the creation of the Assembly and the establishment of new devolved institutions and apparatuses would mean that *Welshness itself* (i.e., what it meant to be Welsh) would undergo a recalibration, moving towards a national identity based on ‘civic’ values and articulated through institutions and progressive policies and values rather than through ‘ethnic’ markers such as language (Wyn Jones and Lewis, 1998:9; see also Osmond, 1998; Blandford, 2005; 2010; MacKay, 2010). In 1997, the playwright Ed Thomas proclaimed that:

“Old Wales is dead. The Wales of stereotype, leeks, daffodils, look-you-now boyo rugby supporters singing Max Boyce songs...has gone...So where does it leave us? Free to make up, re-invent, redefine our own versions of Wales...Old Wales is dead and new Wales is already a possibility” (quoted in Blandford, 2005:177).

As well as catalyzing ‘new ways of being Welsh’, new ‘truths’ of Wales (Coupland, 2013), devolution was also hoped to usher in a new ‘inclusive’ and co-operative politics shorn of the damaging partisanship which had previously defined Welsh politics. This new way of doing things was evidenced in the cross-party ‘Yes’ campaign itself and the de-facto early coalition between Labour and Plaid Cymru (Morgan and Mungham, 2000: 197). The post-devolution milieu witnessed the establishment of a new ‘*Welsh public discourse*’<sup>5</sup>(Bradbury & Andrews 2010) – essentially a widespread acceptance and promotion of Welshness within political society- which ostensibly had a far reaching effect on all the major ‘British’ parties in Wales, all of whom soon became ‘more Welsh’ or ‘*Welshified*’ in both their decision making processes and image, seemingly recognising and legitimising the distinctiveness of Wales as a political arena (e.g. Taylor, 2003; Osmond and Jones, 2003; Trystan et al, 2004; Scully, 2010). Phillips (2005) shows how devolution was interpreted as a watershed moment in the campaign for the protection of the *Welsh language*, as the new devolved institution promised to safeguard, enshrine and promote the Welsh language right across Wales, exemplified by the ‘Iath Pawb’ blueprint for a bilingual Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003). Moreover, the increased demand for Welsh language education in Anglophone areas (e.g. Hodges, 2009), with Anglophone parents displaying great enthusiasm for Welsh Medium education (Hodges, 2012), seemingly demonstrated a new post-devolution ‘collective ownership’ of the language, further demonstrating new national unity and self-confidence.

These changes were not limited to the political sphere/‘elite’ level, either. The ostensible resurgence of Welsh identity was reflected by a vibrant wave of Welsh popular culture, represented by the ‘Cool Cymru’ blossoming of Welsh music and sport, a development which seemed to embody the increased national ‘self-confidence’ (see Andrews, 1999:195; Ellis, 2000; Edwards, 2007; J Harris, 2007). The symbiotic relationship between Welsh popular music, rugby and nationhood was neatly encapsulated after a Welsh rugby victory against England in 1999, when an editorial in the *Western Mail* stated: “confidence is a wonderful state of mind. The Welsh team now has it in abundance and, more importantly, it has rubbed off on the rest of the

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<sup>5</sup> A concept related to Habermas’ notion of ‘the public sphere’ (see Calhoun, 1992; Andrews, 2012)

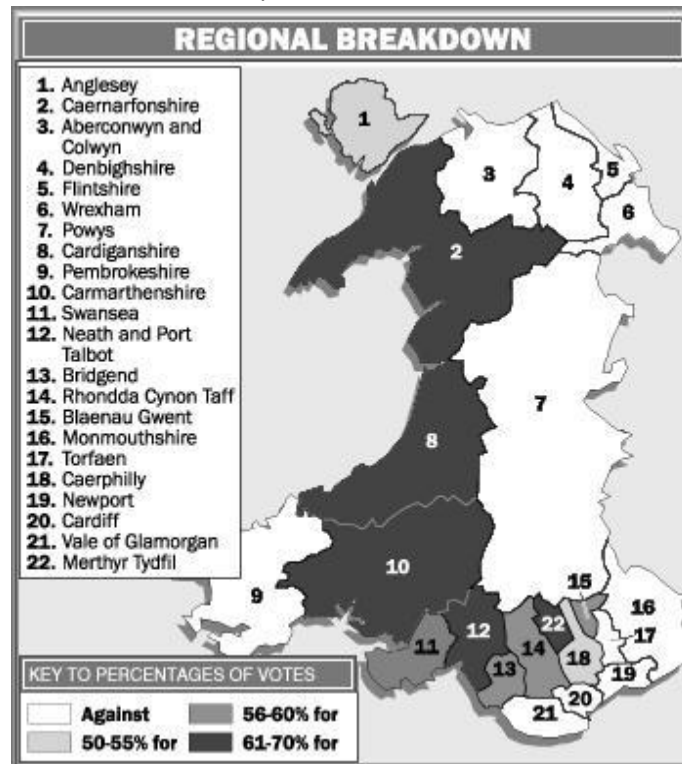
nation. It's a day to be proud" (cited in Johnes, 2004:58). This excerpt seems to capture the optimistic interpretation of the impact of devolution, the symbiotic relationship between culture and national identity, and the direction Wales as a nation was moving in. Davidson and Piette (2000) reflecting on the cumulative impact of this increased Welshness on everyday life, claim that in post-devolution Wales, 'little things' have changed, such as Anglophone people learning smatterings of Welsh and so on. Significantly, (perhaps because of the binary drawn between Welshness and Britishness in Welsh political discourse) this new, popular Welshness, coupled with these institutional changes, was seen to have *displaced* a declining Britishness. Thompson (2007), for example, argues that since devolution, 'everyday life' has become 'more Welsh' and that Welshness is now prominent or visible in people's lives in a way it has not been previously, whilst Britishness is receding from everyday life. Top down developments were thus alleged to have impacted on everyday life.

#### *The Persistence of Regional Cleavages: The 1997 Devolution Referendum*

So what did devolution mean for less Welsh regions? Despite Balsom's own pessimism regarding the longevity of the TWM, voting patterns in the 1997 referendum seemed to correspond neatly with the TWM, with the 'British Wales' areas again displaying the least enthusiasm towards devolution (see map 2). On the result, the Labour politician Leighton Andrews wrote "Denis Balsom can relax, his three-Wales model still largely holds good" (1999: 182). Bogdanor (1999:200) whilst claiming that the 'Yes' result was evidence that Welsh identity 'was becoming less divisive', noted that what he called '*English Wales*' voted No and remained somewhat anomalous in the midst of a growing national consciousness. Thus despite the predictions about the dissolution of the regional model, a decade later, regional disparities in enthusiasm for devolution seemed to reflect a Wales which was *still* divided between 'less Welsh' and 'more Welsh' regions (see Bradbury & Andrews, 2010: 3) although as Wyn Jones and Scully (2012a:64-66) point out, in 1997, every region of Wales was *internally* divided, demonstrating the inherent complexity of the situation.

Nonetheless, Balsom's suggestion that British Wales could potentially become 'more Welsh' over time because of the development of nascent Welsh institutions within it seemed not to have come to fruition: the region's 'weak Welshness' seemingly remained constant.

**Map 2.** Regional Distribution of YES/NO votes in 1997 referendum



(Source:<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn/devoplan.htm>)

*'One Wales' and the death knell of the regional model?*

Despite the resilience of regional distinctions in the 1997 referendum, the apparent increase in popular Welshness precipitated by devolution led to critical re-engagements with regional models of Welshness, and in particular the persistence of 'less Welsh' regions.

Coupland, Bishop and Garrett, in their work *'One Wales: Reassessing Diversity in Welsh Ethnolinguistic Identification'* (2006) confront the TWM and the existence of a regional

hierarchy of Welshness within contemporary Wales. This reappraisal of Welsh identity and its geographical dispersal hinges on an 'optimistic' interpretation of devolution. They argue that the creation of a Welsh civil society and the Welsh Assembly Government have been the harbinger of a hegemonic national popular Welshness and the concomitant decline of the overarching British identity. According to Coupland et al, this rampant Welsh national consciousness has rendered any regional divisions null and void, showing that mapping Welshness in geo-spatial terms risks "over determining the role of place in the production of subjective feelings towards the imagined social category 'Wales'" (2006: 21). Aiming to disprove Balsom's regional model, they conducted interviews and surveys in town centres across Wales in an attempt to gauge 'how Welsh' people felt. Their findings showed that regardless of location, high levels of 'Welshness' were recorded. For Coupland et al, one of the most important indicators of the strong Welshness of contemporary Wales is a widespread support and 'good will' towards the Welsh language (2006: 23) right across Wales. Such is the level of this new popular Welshness, models which stress the regional variations in Welshness- namely, the TWM- are now completely redundant, since '*all of Wales is the real Wales*' (2006: 2). In short, they claim that British Wales is now 'just as Welsh as the rest of Wales' and no longer exists as a meaningful, 'less Welsh' cultural entity.

Despite these claims, however, in their own study of 'mean affiliation levels' (of Welshness), the areas that corresponded with Balsom's YFG still scored the highest on the variables 'how Welsh do you feel?'; '*feel Wales is real home*' and '*important to let other people know you're Welsh*'. The region corresponding to Balsom's 'Welsh Wales' scored highest on the '*Feel proud to be Welsh*' variable, whilst crucially, the areas which corresponded with British Wales scored the *lowest* on each variable relating to Welsh identity (2006:12-13). This analysis, therefore, does not really depart in any meaningful way from the TWM. The crux of their argument is that levels of affiliation to Welshness in post-devolution Wales are high right across Wales, and that British Wales is Welsh. Yet as previously noted, the Welshness of British Wales is stated in the TWM. Whilst Coupland et al claim that regions can only be distinguished by 'relative degrees of positivity', one could argue that this is really dependent on how you interpret the significance

of these degrees of difference: YFG still generally had the highest levels of Welsh affiliation, with British Wales the lowest, and whether or not the degree of difference negates any attempt to create a gradation of Welshness would appear entirely subjective. This engagement with the TWM and regionally constituted Welshness fails to shed any significant light on the role of place in contemporary Wales or on British Wales as a region, apart from to simply deny the region exists.

Next to lock horns with the TWM is Christopher Bryant (2006), whose analysis likewise relates the relevance of regional models of Welshness to the changes precipitated by devolution. Bryant attempts to supplant the regional model with a taxonomy of *representations* and constructions of Wales and Welshness which are not related or limited to any particular region. He states that most Welsh people, in their negotiation of their Welsh identity, switch between these various constructions of Welshness according to circumstance. His new model therefore avoids the *exclusivity* between images of Wales that he sees as inherent in the regional model (2006: 123). From the outset he relates fluctuations in Welsh identity to wider structural developments, including the changing fortunes of British identity. Unlike Coupland et al's analysis, which largely ignores Wales' relationship to external hegemonic forces and structural socio-economic processes, Bryant states that "what the Welsh think about Wales is related to what they think about Britain, and that itself is complex" (2006: 119). Whilst an analysis of the macro level is welcome, this assumption, however, seems again to imply a binary between Welshness and Britishness, and that when one is weak, the other is strong.

Bryant seeks to update the various 'ways' of being Welsh, claiming: "Balsom's three Waleses can be reworked as three constructions of Wales (among others) with application to the whole of the country" (2006: 124). He argues that:

"the *partisans* of Y Fro Gymraeg in Cymdeithas yr Iath Gymraeg, for example, want to reverse its historical contraction and make Welsh speaking the norm wherever they can- a process that has been called *recymrifcation*. Balsom's Welsh Wales is also misleadingly named in so far as most of the Welsh, and most commentators

Welsh and non-Welsh, refer to Y Fro Gymraeg as Welsh Wales; it is better designated *Labour Wales*. Labour Wales has had its heartland in industrial South Wales but has *also appealed beyond it*. Finally the idea of British Wales may have found favour among, for example, most people in Radnor, but British Wales is really a kind of *plural Wales* which has a currency beyond just the East and the parts of the South where Balsom locates it” (2006: 124, my emphasis).

This redefinition of the nomenclature is useful insofar as it uncouples ‘British Wales’ from its unhelpful ‘alien’ or ‘non-Welsh’ stigma which has incorrectly accompanied it since Balsom’s model. It is useful in that it also states that types of identity, whilst associated with particular places, may find purchase right across Wales, and that *there may be different types of Welshness within the same region of Wales*. Bryant claims that YFG and Welsh Wales are ‘oriented to the past’ and are no longer relevant in contemporary Wales. Turning finally to *British Wales* (tellingly, the shortest section) he writes that:

“There does not seem to have been much research on constructions of Wales that had a currency among the Anglophone Welsh who did not identify with an Y Fro Gymraeg which excluded or marginalised them or with a Labour Wales whose principles were not their own” (2006: 139).

He poses the question: ‘*what of their Wales?*’ (2006: 139). This, of course, is exactly the point of this thesis: to uncover what Welsh identity means to those who occupy this ‘hinterland’. Whilst importantly acknowledging the ‘Welshness’ of British Wales, Bryant then undermines this contribution by then linking the region to first, ‘*the under researched Welsh bourgeoisie*’ (2006: 139) and second, the *English population in Wales*. This is a simplistic view of British Wales, as not everyone in this populous swathe is an in-migrant or middle class. What about the working classes of British Wales? Of the inhabitants of British Wales, Bryant suggests that “*Perhaps they just kept their distance from questions of national identity, or perhaps they identified with Britain*” (2006: 139). The options here, then, are stark: avoid the uncomfortable question of Wales, or merely identify with Britishness. Is there not a grey area here to explore? Is there not



a distinct type of Welsh identity within this region? Bryant helpfully acknowledges the Welshness of British Wales, but then contributes to the simplistic notion of this region as being middle class, 'English' and so on: he does not address the 'Welshness' of this region.

Like Coupland et al, Bryant's rejection of these 'outdated' bases of identity (the linguistic tradition and the Labourist tradition) is based on the presumption that devolution has catalysed Wales and Welshness to the extent that place no longer matters. Bryant states that "Cymru-Wales [his model of the emergent Welsh polity] is bilingual *and* civic" and that the National Assembly is both the guarantor of the Welsh language and "the advocate and promoter of the development of a Welsh civil society to supersede the language as a basis for Welsh national identification" (2006: 146). Thus the emergent new *civic Welshness* has undermined place based models of Welshness and the concomitant notion that some areas are less Welsh than others.

Wyn Jones and Scully (2012a) analyze the 2011 referendum result on further powers for the Assembly to determine the degree of geographical variation in attitude towards devolution (which can also be taken as a gauge of national sentiment). This analysis engages with the British Wales region and provides an interesting assessment of the contemporary British Wales region and its status as a 'less Welsh' enclave within Wales. Comparing the results of the 2011 election directly to the TWM, they state that results are partially supportive of the idea that 'more Welsh' identifying areas and areas with a higher proportion of Welsh speakers had higher voter turnout, whilst more 'anglicized' regions displayed a lower turnout. Despite these persistent differences, however, they tentatively suggest that the overall tendency across Wales is towards *homogenization*, pointing out that it was the 'British Wales' regions, formerly hostile to devolution, which recorded the highest swing in favour of the new settlement, suggesting a far more positive attitude towards devolution within these traditionally 'less Welsh' regions. They note for example that North East Wales, a 'British Wales' region traditionally 'culturally disengaged' from the rest of Wales, recorded a significant swing towards a more favourable attitude to devolution (2012a:122). Thus whilst Wales was not entirely united, divisions seemed less glaring than before, and British Wales, in some ways at least, was

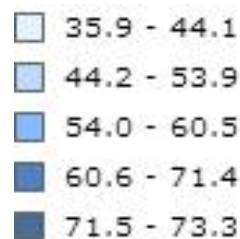
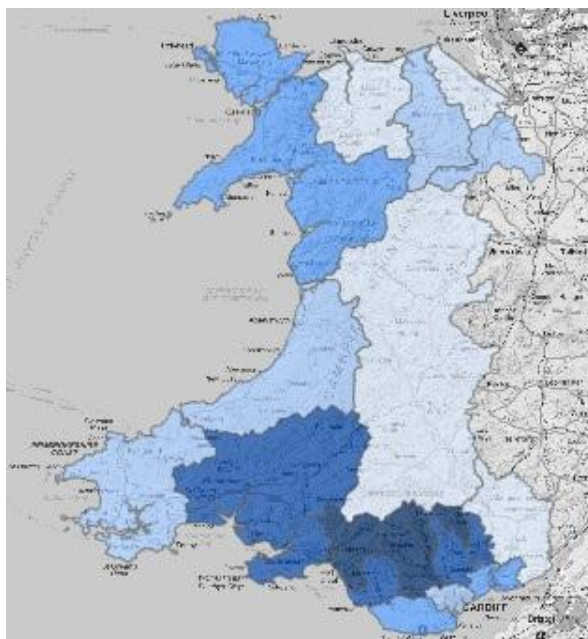
perceived to be moving towards the rest of Wales. This analysis seems to point to a more subtle gradation of identities across Wales, with British Wales perhaps ‘more Welsh’ than previously considered.

### *Evidence for the persistence of Regional Cleavages*

Whilst the above works generally seek to move away from the notion of ‘regionally constituted Welshness’, other recent developments point to the *persistence* of regional variations in Welshness in post-devolution Wales. Recently published figures on national identity from the 2011 *census* again seem to demonstrate the persistence of regional variations in the strength of Welshness, and again these largely correspond to the TWM. Counties, towns and cities corresponding to British Wales- Flintshire, Conwy, Monmouth, Denbigh, Cardiff, Wrexham, Pembrokeshire, Newport- all recorded low percentages on the ‘Welsh Only’ option, generally recording under 50%, whilst again recording the highest amounts of respondents with ‘no Welsh identity (see table 2). Whilst crude gauge which does not account for the plurality of identity, these figures suggest that, despite the assumptions regarding the ‘Welshification’ of Wales some regions remain stubbornly ‘less Welsh’.

**Map 3.** ‘Welsh Only’ identity by region, 2011.

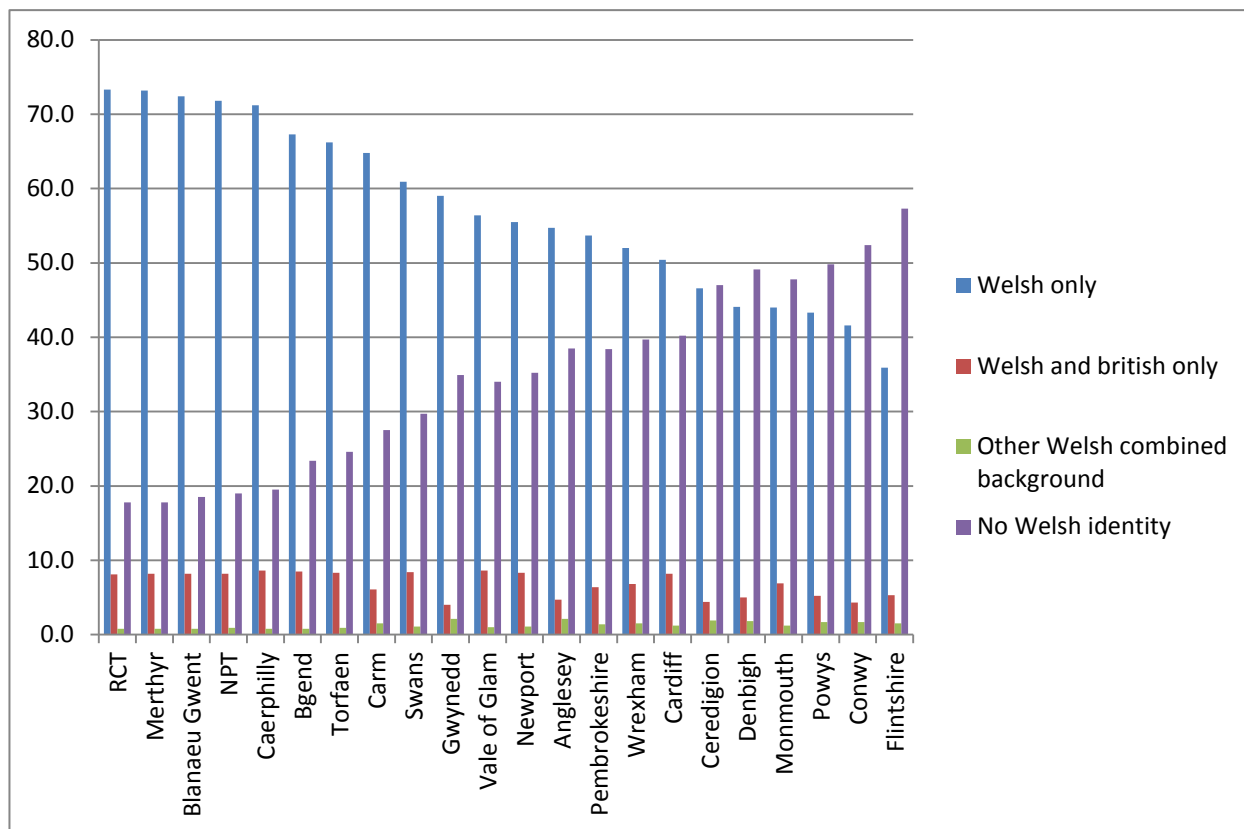
(Key: % selecting ‘Welsh only’ identity)



(Source: InfobaseCymru)

**Table 2.** Regional dispersion of national identity groups in Wales (2011)

(Source: ONS,



2011

)

The figures also allude to some interesting developments and anomalies with regards to the other TWM regions. Most noticeably, 'Welsh Wales' seems to have become 'more Welsh' than YFG, which has slipped down the rankings, as it were, perhaps giving strength to Carter's (1976) claim that YFG is being subjected to inexorable erosion, something which has recently been re-stated by Hywel Jones (2011). So despite Balsom's pessimistic prognosis for the Welsh Wales valleys regions, this working class swathe seems to remain distinctive and 'very Welsh'.

### *Persistence of linguistic divisions/heartlands*

The mapping of regional variations in cultural identity in Wales has frequently hinged on the geographical distribution of the Welsh language. Whilst devolution has led to the institutionalisation/protection and ostensible promotion of the language across Wales (often demonstrated by the proliferation of Welsh language schools in 'Anglo-Welsh' areas) Jones and Fowler (2007) illustrate the continued narration of 'heartland' linguistic regions post-devolution. Indeed, in contrast with the aforementioned works which stresses the erosion of place following devolution, they argue that the narration of the Y Fro Gymraeg as a *distinct place*, both in everyday life and at the level of policy, has become *more* pronounced post-devolution, as a response to the unabated acculturation of this region in post-devolution Wales. In this case then, regional awareness and the need to define this distinct place has *accelerated* in order to influence policy making. This example of the persistence of place and regional boundaries directly contrasts with the previously discussed work which implies a post-devolution drift towards homogeneity across Wales.

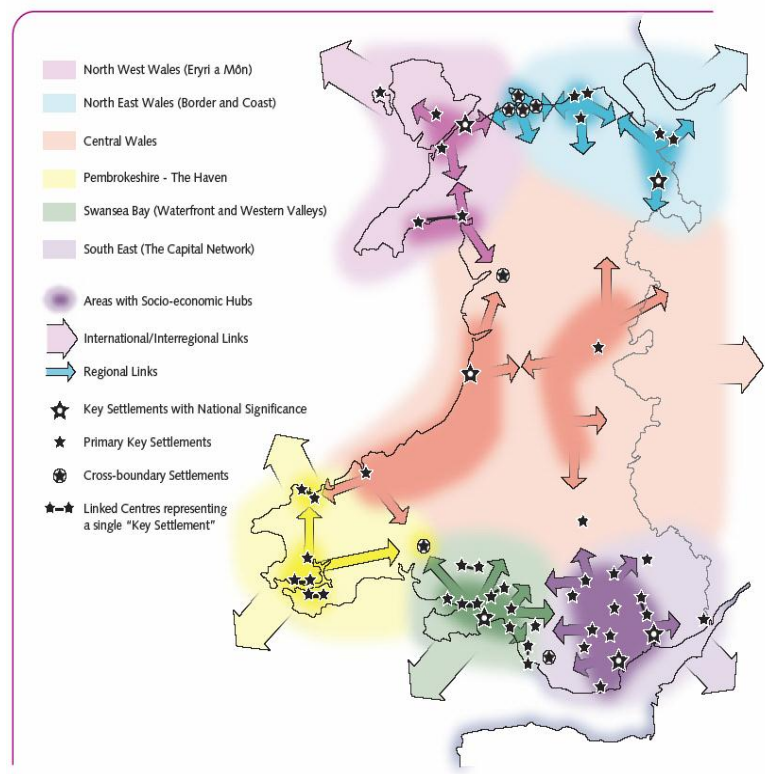
### *Developmental and neo-liberal influences*

Again contrasting with the argument that regional cultural differences are melting away in post-devolution Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government's '*Wales Spatial Plan*' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008) has explicitly recognised and institutionalised spatial divisions in Wales (see map 4). The Wales Spatial Plan breaks Wales down into six distinct regions: Central Wales; North East Wales- 'Border and Coast'; North West Wales- 'Eryri a Môn'; Pembrokeshire- 'The Haven'; South East Wales- 'Capital Network', and Swansea Bay- 'Waterfront and Western Valleys'. Not only does this policy document recognise demographic and topographical differences between regions, it endorses the notion of regional *cultural distinctiveness* and indeed ostensibly *encourages* the cultivation of place based identity. Such models are part of the neo-liberal economic orthodoxy which states that *regions* are better frameworks for communication and co-operation than nation states, better able to offer 'tailor made'

environments for companies and *inward investment* (Terlouw, 2009; Paasi, 2009b). As such, the regional identities constructed and espoused by such business led planning are 'thin', based on 'networks' and economic links, rather than on the traditional cultural iconography which normally underpins regions (Terlouw, 2012; Day, 2002: 236-4). So whilst they are therefore unlikely to influence *everyday* understandings of regions, at least in the short term, this institutionalisation of longstanding regional cleavages represents an interesting counterpoint to theories of post-devolution cultural homogenization. Indeed this suggests the possibility that *new*, smaller regions may gradually emerge within post-devolution Wales. The acceptance of this neo-liberal 'development' logic should also draw our attention to the fact that Welshness, regional identity and everyday life in Wales are not just contingent upon developments emanating from *within* Wales, but the desire to attract inward investment from external sources. This desire for investment has undoubtedly impacted, via regional 'marketing strategies, on the 'image' of Wales and the Welsh regions (see, for example, Kompotis, 2006; Housley et al, 2009).

#### Map 4. The Wales Spatial Plan

##### The National Vision



(Source: Wales Spatial Plan, 2008)

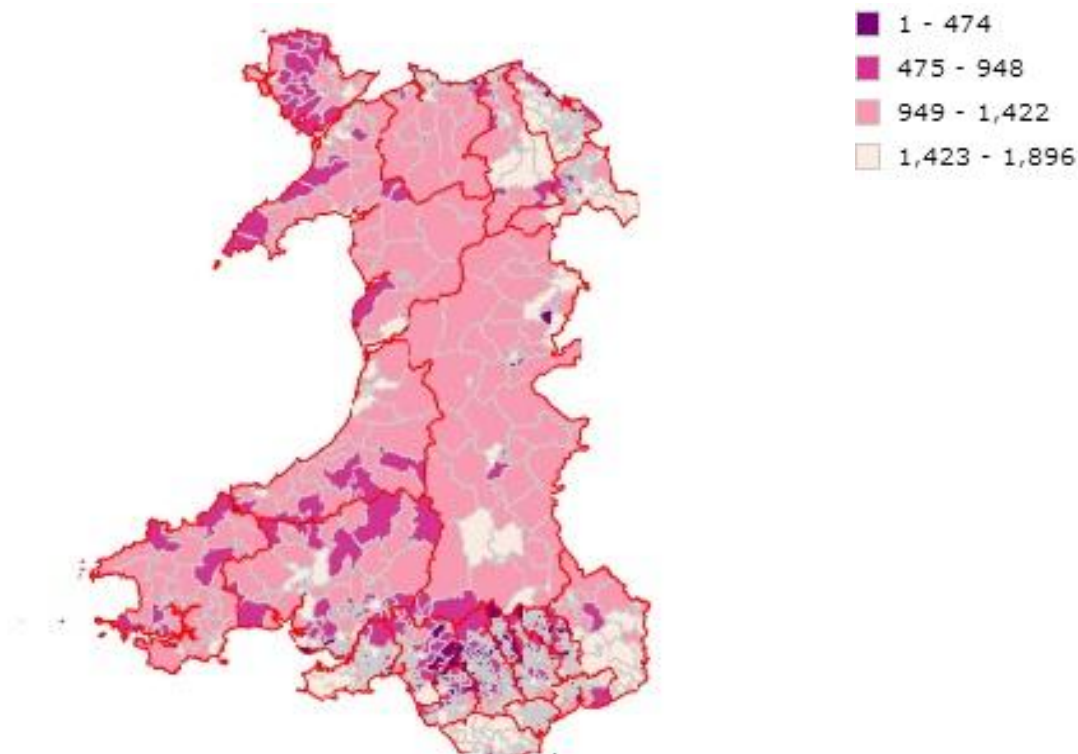
### *Social Class, Regional Divides and Welshness*

Missing from the analysis of regionally constituted Welshness is an engagement with the glaring regional class divides within post-devolution Wales and their correspondence with regional cultural boundaries.

Uneven regional development is an inherent feature of capitalism. Capital's tendency towards agglomeration in certain places leads to the social divisions of labour being paralleled in geography (see, e.g., Harvey 1975; 2011; Walker 1978: 30; Goldsmith 1978: 14). The restructuring of the Welsh economy during the twentieth century has resulted in stark regional inequalities developing within Wales (see, e.g. Rees and Rees, 1980; Cooke, 1980, 1983; Day, 1980; Rawkins 1983; Morgan and Sayer, 1988). Crucially, the regions corresponding to British Wales have been the 'winners', and the former industrial regions corresponding to Welsh Wales have been the 'losers' (see Morris & Wilkinson, 1989; 1995; Adamson, 1991; 1996; 2008; Jones and Fowler, 2007:92-93). This is significant because regions or 'scales' are not simply materializations of social forces and processes. They are also 'active progenitors of social processes' (Smith, 1992: 66). Place thus "both contains social activity, and at the same time provides an already partitioned geography within which social activity takes place" (Smith, 1992:66). Regions develop distinct cultural identities rooted in the class practices and experiences of work and leisure which occur and become normalised within them (Smith, 1992: 66- 73. See also Cooke, 1985:213; Lefebvre, 1991). Adamson (1991), analysing the growing spatial inequality between the former industrial areas of Welsh Wales and the Southern coastal plain corresponding to British Wales, noted the growing *ideological and cultural divide* between the two regions, with the coastal plain (i.e. British Wales) becoming increasingly detached from the traditional working class political culture of South Wales, symbolised by a growing conservative vote in this region (1991:175). This widening wealth and cultural gap between regions has not been considered by the 'optimistic' 'one Wales' argument.

**Map 5.** Deprivation by region in Wales, 2011

Key: local area ranks from 1- 1896 on WIMD, 2011 (1 being most deprived)



(Source: infobaseCymru).

As the map above shows, the border and coastal regions corresponding to British Wales remain the least deprived, whilst the most deprived areas are concentrated in YFG and in the Welsh Wales valleys region

Day (2010) argues for the reinsertion of a class perspective in the discussion of the role of place in Welsh identity formation. He writes that Balsom's cultural enclaves, whilst in reality far more complex than promulgated,

*“are said to possess different sets of attributes, with associated meanings, or regional cultures, reflecting not only the size and distribution of their population, but also differences of class, occupation and lifestyle, which present their*

*inhabitants with contrasting problems and opportunities” (2010: 31, my emphasis)*

Social and cultural divisions, therefore,

“are not just a matter of material provisions and inequalities- the life chances- people encounter- *but extend to how people think about where they live*, and its positive and negative features. *This can translate into different social and political attitudes and concerns” (2010:31 my emphasis)*

Hout et al (1993) argue that the ignorance or rejection of class as a salient category is at odds with our *everyday visual experiences of class*. This, I would argue, is an appropriate way of illustrating why class must be factored into any investigation of regional identity and regionally constituted Welshness. Quite simply, it is obvious from looking around us that class still matters. We instinctively know that some people and *places* are less affluent than others, that class is inherently *spatial*. The ‘one Wales’ narrative overlooks the fact that someone living in one of the most deprived places in Wales may have a very different life to someone living in the most affluent. John Lovering (1999) vividly illustrates the polarization of Welsh society, summarizing how, whilst former mining regions are locked in a spiral of decline, some regions of Wales have ‘done very well for themselves’. It is worth quoting his overview at length:

“The Vale of Glamorgan is the western tip of an arrow of high income areas stretching from London. Average per capita disposable incomes in the Vale are well above the Welsh average and similar to those of Bath and Bristol over the border. Accordingly it is not short of golf courses, luxury housing, out of town shopping malls and BMW dealerships- just the kind of high visibility developments which regional development professionals, inward investment consultants, politicians and the media like to hold up as signs of economic development. But the vale is encircled and cut off from the bulk of Wales by a zone of exceptionally low per capita incomes, low activity rates and poverty” (1999: 381-382).



This passage, as well as highlighting the integration of 'British Wales' into the southern UK economy, highlights the stark nature of regional class boundaries within Wales, implying as it does a type of segregation between regions of different socio-economic class. It also alludes to the salience of aesthetics and consumption patterns as indicators of wealth and status, and ultimately the essential *visibility* and obviousness of class divisions within South Wales. This view at the very least problematizes claims of cultural homogeneity, and reframes the issue of place and regional cultural differences in Wales in terms of class boundaries.

So whilst devolution is said to have erased cultural distinctions between regions, class divisions between Welsh 'cultural' regions have increased. These class divisions largely correspond to the cultural geography mapped out in the TWM. Thus the permanently 'less Welsh' British Wales region is also persistently the most affluent region in Wales: the 'odd one out' in class as well as 'Welshness'

### *Conclusion*

The TWM itself, although formally recognising and enshrining the British Wales region within the popular imagination, does not tell us too much about the region or indeed *why* the region may be different. The TWM *infers* a correlation between middle classness, birthplace and political conservatism and the British Wales region; and states that the region lacks distinctive *local* cultural and political apparatuses to distinguish it out from the rest of the UK. In a precursor to the TWM, Balsom et al (1983) posit an interesting link between a working class milieu and strong Welshness, and a middle class milieu with weak Welshness, although this link is not elaborated upon in the TWM. The chief problem with the TWM and British Wales is that the model, albeit unintentionally, obfuscates the important fact that the British Wales region is predominantly *Welsh identifying*. Because of the exclusive binary between Welsh/British used by the WES and which subsequently permeates the TWM, the region's *relatively* high percentage of British identifiers has led to the region being viewed as 'unWelsh' or at the very least 'less Welsh'. Because of the limitations of this binary, we don't know how many people

who picked 'British' also felt Welsh and vice versa.

Contemporary engagements with the notion of regionally constituted Welshness have failed to adequately illuminate British Wales. Some analyses, largely underpinned by an 'optimistic' interpretation of devolution and its impact on society, emphasize a move towards cultural homogenization within post-devolution Wales. British Wales, according to this interpretation, is becoming *more Welsh*, and cultural distinctions between regions is lessening. Coupland et al's analysis, at the extreme end of this spectrum, argues that the strength of post-devolution Welshness is such that the British Wales region no longer exists as a distinct cultural entity. Other analyses, however, point to the continued resilience of regional cultural boundaries within post-devolution Wales. There is, in other words, no consensus as to whether certain regions remain more or less Welsh in post-devolution Wales, and British Wales in particular remains murky.

The failure to illuminate the British Wales region or why certain places may be more or less Welsh is a question of *method*. By relying on quantitative analysis alone to assess the validity of regionally constituted Welshness we can draw *inferences* about regional identity but not much more. The predominance of statistical analysis means that the notion of a 'less Welsh' region still represents a significant lacuna within Welsh discourse: we ultimately know very little about whether or not some groups of people may be disengaged from Welshness, let alone *why* this might occur. Even if we move past the unhelpful Welsh/British binary and utilize more sophisticated survey methods like the Moreno or Likert scales, we are nonetheless still only ticking a box and not developing our understanding of why people feel more or less Welsh and what influence place has on Welshness. Day (2010) reminds us that officially defined, large-scale models can only provide us with a *sketched overview* of the variations within Wales, and are not likely to chime with the impressions of ordinary people, who see things from a different, local or 'micro' perspective, formed 'on the ground' rather than the knowledge sociologists glean from 'cold' statistics. Similarly, Paasi (2009a:28) reminds us that there is no neat link between regional identity as sketched in heuristic models and the actual identity of

people on the ground. The question of regional and national identity is complex since people are today highly mobile and have myriad cultural influences. The broad strokes of top down statistical analyses do not allow us to distinguish between the abstract idea of 'British Wales' the region, and its inhabitants- they are anonymized and lumped together with the identity of the region (Paasi, 2009a: 32).

So although quantitative analyses of regions point out useful trends from data, in order to truly understand British Wales and how its inhabitants relate to Welshness, we have to *ask them* and *observe them* (Becker, 1996). My thesis will therefore move beyond statistics to analyze the nature of Welsh identity in this region. In the next chapter I demonstrate the benefits of *ethnographic analysis* and how it will help illuminate the British Wales region and the question of why living in a different part of Wales may make you feel more or less Welsh.

This chapter has drawn attention to the two issues which must surely intersect any analysis of the British Wales region. First, the idea that, thanks to devolution, British Wales is becoming 'more Welsh' has to factor into my study of 'British Wales'. As I mentioned in the introduction, following the *extended case method* means one has to analyze the macro alongside the micro, and consequently my ethnography is accompanied by a critical analysis of devolution and its effects. Second, any investigation into regionally constituted Welshness in contemporary Wales needs to consider the persistence of class inequalities between regions in Wales. The fact that the 'less Welsh' regions are also the most affluent seems to me a glaring issue, worthy of analysis

## Chapter 2

### British Wales from below.

The previous chapter demonstrated that ‘top down’ analyses of regionally constituted Welshness have not succeeded in fully illuminating British Wales as a region, and can only offer inferences about place and why people in different regions may view Welshness differently. This chapter introduces contemporary ethnographic perspectives on Welsh identity, and may be considered a ‘heuristic revisit’ (Burawoy, 2009:130-131). By approaching Welsh identity and the issue of place from the ‘bottom up’, we can deepen our understanding of regionally constituted Welshness, and the nature of British Wales in particular.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is primarily theoretical, and looks at the contemporary move towards an analysis of ‘everyday nationhood’ and how national identity is actively ‘done’ by individuals. Investigating national identity in this way helps us to understand the complexities of national identity and also help us to understand the role that place and locality plays in the process of ‘doing’ national identity. The second section introduces contemporary ethnographic analyses of Welsh identity, focusing in particular on British Wales. This section examines the idea of ‘less Welsh’ places (and ambivalence more generally), before comparing the salient features of identity construction within ‘British Wales’ to the process in ‘more Welsh’ regions. The chapter concludes by pointing to interesting issues raised in the surveyed ethnographies, as well as what I perceive to be their limitations, and illustrates how my thesis will explore the outstanding issues and overcome these problems.

#### *Everyday Nationalism*

Within the study of national identity there has been something of a paradigm shift away from macro-analytic studies which focus on national identity from ‘above’, towards a post-modern influenced study of national identity ‘from below’, arriving at the concept of ‘*everyday nationhood*’ (Smith, 2008: 564). Cohen (1996, cited in Mann and Fenton, 2009: 518) argues that macro-level conceptions of the nation frequently ‘anonymize’ the human subject in their discussion of identity, too often implicitly denying that individuals must work to construct their

own identities. That is, humans are not merely members of collectivities to which we can simply ascribe identities based on statistical likelihoods. To use the example of British Wales, it is too simplistic to assume, based on the TWM, that people in this region are automatically 'less Welsh'. Moreover, individuals do not simply 'imbibe culture' (Helbling, 2007: 15), rather the culture in which they are socialised leaves opportunities for choice and variation. So, as Fox & Miller-Idriss & Miller-Idriss (2008) and Jenkins (2011) argue, there is a disjuncture between 'top down' or 'elite'/'state' discourses or narratives about the nation and the ways in which people 'on the ground' actually understand or interpret narratives about the nation: "nationalism does not resonate evenly or resoundingly in everyday life" (Fox & Miller-Idriss & Miller-Idriss, 2008: 554). National identity, then, is not something people simply 'have', but is rather a fluid and dynamic process of negotiation and renegotiation that people 'do' (Jenkins, 2011:12). As Jenkins (2011:15) puts it:

"if we wish to understand how the macro patterns that are to be found in large scale quantitative data are produced and reproduced, how they are made and changed, there is no substitute for exploring in depth the lives of real people, from whose real behaviour those data are an abstraction"

Ethnography is simply the *methodological tool* which facilitates this understanding of 'everyday life' and its relationship to the nation, the way in which people 'on the ground' interpellate the national discourses emanating from the macro level (De Cillia et al: 1999, 152-3). My methodology is returned to and elaborated upon in chapter 6.

I have just argued the nation is actively 'done'. But *how* is it done? This section introduces a number of interrelated theoretical perspectives which help demonstrate how people engage with the nation in everyday life, and why where you live may impact on your relationship to the nation.

Pierre Bourdieu's flexible concept of *habitus*, initially developed to overcome the dichotomy between structure and agency (Maguire and Tuck, 2005:111) (and largely utilized to explain

*class*) has recently been utilized in the study of national identity. Briefly, the concept of the habitus was designed to explain the actions and practices of individuals within society, traversed and moulded as they are by the external structural forces of their *environment*. Bourdieu (1977:72) defines the habitus:

“The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment...produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures...the practices produced by the habitus are the strategy generating principles enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever changing situations”.

Quite simply, one's habitus means that one's behaviours and dispositions reflect one's socialization within a particular environment. The habitus is an intuitive 'feel for the game' or 'second nature' which is the result of a lifetime of inculcation, beginning in childhood, which governs individuals' behaviour and practice (Johnson, 1993:5). De Cillia et al (1999:153) state that *national identity* can be regarded as a sort of *habitus*, meaning a complex of 'common ideas, concepts or perception schemes', behaviours and emotional attitudes implicitly shared with a specific group of people (See also Elias, 1991, 1996, Maguire & Tuck, 2005). Thus our awareness of what it is to be Welsh, who 'we' are, is second nature, a 'sleeping memory' (Maguire & Tuck, 2005: 111); we are socialized into an intuitive grasp of these 'rules of the game' regarding who or what is Welsh.

Informed by Goffman's (1959) idea of identity as being about *presentation* and *performance* and Anthony Cohen's (1985) work on the mobilisation of symbolic representations of the nation in order to depict one's own cultural identity, McCrone, Bechhofer and Kiely (1999, 2000, 2001, 2008, 2010) have developed a fecund and relatively straightforward theory of how 'everyday ethnicity' works, i.e., the 'practical strategies' individuals employ to construct national identity. Their framework is allied to and supplements the aforementioned application of the habitus and can be utilised to illuminate the issue of less Welsh regions and how place factors into our

common sense understanding of the nation. McCrone et al argue that actors make identity *claims* utilising *identity markers*. These *referents* are commonly things like birthplace, residence, accent, appearance, language, dress and so on; indeed markers can be anything which may act as an indicator of national identity (2008:1247) our knowledge of these referents reflects our socialization within the nation. Crucially, *attitudes*, for example how 'positive' or 'committed' someone is about the nation, may also be used as surrogate markers, especially for 'incomers' who lack the 'natural repertoire' of markers (1999: 528). People overtly *activate/mobilise* these markers or 'signals' (1999: 528) to illustrate their own *nation-ness*, and also to attribute identity to others. This in turn influences how they think others attribute identity to them (2008, 1246; 2010, 1.4, 1.5). So if I have a 'Welsh' accent, a marker of ethnicity, I can assume, for example, that others recognise this feature, and in doing so validate my overt claim to be part of the nation. Jenkins (1996:5) summarises this approach:

"Social identity is a game of playing the *vis a vis*. Social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us)."

Crucially, then, who we are, how we perceive how 'national' we are, depends on how well our claims are judged (or how we assume they will be judged) by those around us, especially by those significant others who manage national identity (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2008: 1246). The notion of *acceptance* is key here: the ability to mobilise certain markers- to 'prove' membership of the nation- may determine who is and who is not national, who is 'beyond the pale' and who is 'one of us' (ibid 1246). What markers we utilise depends on the likelihood of these claims being accepted, thus the flip side of making a claim/mobilising a marker is the decision not to mobilise certain other markers (McCrone et al, 1999: 524). These markers are buttressed by identity *rules*, 'probabilistic rules of thumb' (McCrone and Bechhofer 2008:1247), whereby, dependent on circumstance and context, identity markers are read, interpreted or given precedence over others (ibid). People can deploy or mobilize national markers and make national judgements about others because it is assumed that within the national habitus,

everyone understands the same rules of the game, everyone knows what markers and referents are more or less national and so on.

*The Significance of Place: are some places 'more national' than others?*

How then might place, where you live, influence how you interpret and understand your national identity, or your standing within the nation? I now briefly explore the theoretical reasoning behind the emphasis on the importance of place before exploring the relevance of place in contemporary constructions of Welshness.

Now is a propitious time to analytically distinguish between the concepts of *region* and *place*. Although the concepts are necessarily allied, they refer to different levels of analysis. Paasi (1991) conceptualizes *region* as a 'socio-spatial unit,' (249) often with a long cultural history, e.g. *Y Fro Gymraeg* or British Wales. It is a 'higher scale' concept or heuristic unit of analysis (1991:249). *Place*, on the other hand, refers to sensory individual *human experience* which has a specific geographical dimension (249), it is a "human spatial experience" which is "structured in everyday practice through one's biography" (248), i.e. how people experience and are influenced by the sedimented history of the region. A regional habitus or structure of feeling "structures the present in terms of a logic derived from past experience which is itself structured by the [local] habitus" (ibid). This is how 'regional identity'- as we have seen, a 'top down' discursive construct- is 'domesticated' into individual experience. Escobar (2001) argues that place and community are *intuitively important* to individuals. And that "it is our inevitable immersion in place, and not the absoluteness of space, that has *ontological priority* in the generation of life and the real" (2001: 143). Within all cultures and societies, we always find ourselves first and foremost in places and communities. In other words, people make sense of the world and abstract ideas like the nation through their immediate social environment, through the norms they encounter in their villages, towns and cities. The influence of our immediate social environment is such that Escobar argues that human beings may be considered *placelings* (143).

Emphasizing that 'place matters' may seem myopic and expose us to accusations of



parochialism, yet to make these assertions about the importance of place does not mean that place and the community is 'the other' of space and globalisation, since communities are evidently connected to and to a large extent produced by external global forces; nor is it to claim that place and communities are 'fixed, permanent, unreconstructed or unconnected' (Escobar, 2001:147). It is to simply assert that *place based dynamics are important in refracting and mediating these wider social forces* (i.e. hegemonic ideologies) for people within communities (Escobar, 2001: 147). That is, places do not remain 'outside' hegemonic narratives or outside society (Escobar, 2001:164). Escobar states that naturally, places and localities are:

'...brought into the politics of commodification and cultural massification, *but the knowledge of place and identity can contribute to produce different meanings-of economy, nature and each other- within the conditions of capitalism and modernity that surround it*" (2001:164).

Similarly Massey (1999) argues that space, i.e. our communities, are best imagined as spheres of narratives and power filled social relations which are socially constructed:

"Within this context, 'places' may be imagined as *particular articulations* of these social relations, including local relations 'within' the place and those many connections which stretch way beyond it...this is a notion of place where specificity (local uniqueness, a sense of place) derives *not from some mythical internal roots nor from a history of relative isolation- not to be disrupted by globalisation- but precisely from the absolute particularity of the mixture of influences found together there*" (Massey 1999:18, cited in Escobar,2001: 164 my emphasis).

Hegemonic narratives, therefore, whilst permeating *all* communities, are often refracted and rearticulated within the community in highly specific ways.

### *National identity at the local scale*

Bringing these theoretical points to bear, we can ask, then, what Welsh ethnography can tell us about regional differences in Welshness and the ontological role of place in determining levels of Welsh identity? How does *locality* influence *nationality*?

Jenkins (2011) argues that all nations are comprised of even smaller places which are tangible and used by people to frame and make sense of the wider national context:

“If the modern nation-state is an extensive ‘imagined community’, then it is, at least in part- and actually in large part- constructed out of, and during, everyday life in communities of much smaller scale, right down to face to face relationships in neighbourhoods” (2011: 290).

Day and Thompson (1999) illustrate how understandings about the nation and what it is to be ‘properly national’ are frequently influenced by highly *local* social norms. They state that the locally situated nature of national identity manifests itself in a series of ‘rules’, ‘categories’ and a stock of ‘common knowledge’ regarding Welshness, which ultimately inform locals’ perceptions about wider ‘rules’ regarding national identity. In Bangor, for example, classifying oneself as ‘English’ is a popular code for ‘being an English speaking Welsh person’ as opposed to a Welsh speaking Welsh person. This is because the role of the language as *the* measure of identity is locally accepted, whereas perhaps in other regions it would not be. The rather exclusionary notion that one has to speak Welsh to be ‘properly’ Welsh is seen as unproblematic *in this locality*: part of the ‘rules of the game’ that everyone accepts. Such rules are believed to be obvious and universal: individuals assume their own notions regarding Welshness are implicitly accepted by everyone in the area and by extension the nation (1999: 32, 36-37). If we relate this back to McCrone et al’s work on identity claims and the role of national referents or markers, what this effectively means is that what it means to be Welsh- the understanding of and interaction with the nation- may *potentially* differ from locality to locality. The rules of the national habitus *may* (we should not assume that this is automatic) be refracted and rearticulated by the rules of the *local habitus*. So how ‘Welsh’ one person appears to be may depend on the particular ‘rules’ or norms of the locality, e.g. someone who

is 'unproblematically' perceived as strongly Welsh in south Wales (because they possess a strong accent, for example) may not be perceived as Welsh in north West Wales because the markers and norms for 'authentic Welshness' have changed.

### *Welshness in British Wales*

Cloke and Milbourne (1992) analyze the different understandings of Welshness between different rural communities and regions. Their study makes a number of interesting points. Firstly, they emphasise the *persistence of regional identities* despite popular assumptions of greater homogenisation in the face of technological advancements. They argue the persistence of rural difference depends on a dialectical relationship between stereotypical 'traditional' images of the rural perpetuated by top down marketing processes e.g. labelling and commodifying regions for tourist purposes, and on the other hand the bottom up ways in which people internalise and rejuvenate these images of the rural region. The notion of 'the rural' is thus reproduced both in discourse and in everyday life (1992: 363), i.e., 'top down' and 'bottom up' factors contribute. A second reason for the persistence of regional difference is the frequency with which regions become foci for struggle and conflict. Ultimately, these disparate forces and narratives, both discursive and 'organic', contribute to the sustenance of regional cultural consciousness (1992: 363).

Finally, they engage with the TWM and the idea that Welshness has a regional component (1992: 367) by comparing attitudes towards in-migrants in a locality in YFG and in a locality in British Wales. This comparison seemed to reassert regionally *distinct cultural 'priorities' or values*. Hostility to in-migrants in YFG utilised national markers, and in-migrants were seen as a hindrance because of the deleterious impact they were seen to have on the Welsh language and culture. In British Wales, by contrast, any negativity towards in-migrants was not couched in 'national' categories, leading Cloke and Milbourne to conclude that the two regions each contained different types of Welshness and different levels of intensity of identity (1992: 370). They note that "there exists not just one identity, but a whole host of expressions of Welshness.

Welsh identity is selected by the individual from a variety of arenas- local, regional, national and international” (1992: 366). Therefore where you live provides you with rules and assumptions regarding the nation, but it does not provide you with *all* your knowledge- the local is not necessarily more influential than national developments.

Dafydd Evans’ (2007) ethnographic exploration of the traditionally ambivalent or ‘less Welsh’ North East Wales region is of critical importance to my study. His work illustrates the significance of place in everyday understandings of Welshness in British Wales. Evans’ account outlines the issues faced by individuals within traditionally ‘less Welsh’ places and ultimately offers insights as to why people may display different types or intensities of Welsh identity. Addressing the notion that this region may be ‘different’, Evans notes the recurring theme of ‘*Anglicisation*’ amongst his interviewees. Although the actual meaning of the theme was problematic and was interpreted in a range of ways, both positive and negative (2007: 130-133), it was nonetheless taken for granted by most respondents. Anglicization,:

“...was often an implicit assumption on which much of the ensuing discussion (regarding national identity) would be based and its articulation frequently came as a precursor or a caveat in people’s deliberations- as a primary aspect that needed to be explained before the area could be fully understood” (2007, 130).

For many of those living in this British Welsh area, the concept of Anglicization was a proxy way of saying that the region was ‘less Welsh’. The concept signified an instinctive awareness that where they lived was ‘different’: living in a ‘less Welsh’ area had produced a localised ‘structure of expectation’ (Paasi, 1991:249) based on their internalisation of the distinctiveness of their border region.

### *The localised other*

Constructing one’s identity against an ‘other’ is common. Cohen (1985:12) refers to this process

as the *symbolic construction of boundaries*. He states that:

“by definition, the boundary marks the beginning and the end of a community...boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished”.

This ‘boundary’ work, the demarcation of ‘us’ from ‘them’, is part of Jenkins’ (2011) *‘Internal-external dialectic of identification’*. ‘We’ know that ‘our group’ or community is different from ‘them’, and that ‘they’, simultaneously think ‘we’ are different to ‘them’. ‘Othering’ is thus an *ontological necessity* and part of the understanding of community and boundaries (see Karner, 2007: 32). Whilst ‘othering’ is often assumed to refer to distinctions drawn between nations, it can also occur on a smaller, more local scale. The issue of *‘localised othering’* and its influence upon perceptions of place and Welshness is discussed by Desforges and Jones (2000), who state that *‘the micro geographies of place’* are important in the quotidian constitution of national identities (2000:40). Othering, whilst normally assumed to occur at the *national* scale, thus also occurs *within* the nation. They state that:

“...much can be gained from interrogating the ways in which real communities of people at far smaller spatial scales negotiate their national identities in relation to each other, and in relation to other, somehow ‘different’ people” (2000:43).

In Evans’ study, such *localised* boundary work was central to locals’ understanding of their own ‘less Welsh’ place, as local, *regional* identity became imbued with considerations of ‘nation-ness’, pregnant with notions of *national* hierarchies. Within North East Wales, respondents constructed symbolic regional boundaries between their own ambivalent border region and the neighbouring North West Wales region (YFG), which was viewed as ‘really’ or ‘hardcore’ Welsh. This divide was to a large extent based on language ability. The existence of this ‘more Welsh’

localised other was central to the narration of an 'Anglicised North East' (Evans, 2007: 134). We understand the distinctiveness of our region or locality vis a vis other regions, who we are different from. Crucially, Evans (2007) draws attention to the *discursive construction of the nation* and its role in reproducing regional hierarchies. He notes that when discourses of 'heartlands' are present within the nation, this will often result in these regions being used as scales against which to measure 'nationality', and whether one is 'more' or 'less' national. In Evans' study, locals in NE Wales felt it was 'obvious' that they were less Welsh than the neighbouring YFG.

#### *Lacking individual markers of nationhood*

The influence of place on local attitudes towards national identity are also explored in Kiely et al's work on ambivalent national identities in the English border town of Berwick upon Tweed (2000). This study into 'problematic national identity' in an ambivalent region illustrates that possessing *contradictory markers* makes asserting one's place within the nation problematic. They state that "*incongruous identity markers suggest a nationality other than the one which is claimed, and may lead others to question the validity of the actual claim being made*" (2000: 4.8). So, for example, claiming to be Welsh but possessing neither a Welsh accent nor Welsh language ability naturally makes such a claim harder to sustain. This is the case in Evans' analysis of North East Wales. The perception that others might not 'accept' you, or question your membership of the nation can influence how you view your own relationship with the nation. In NE Wales, locals' understanding of their Welshness was based on how they perceived this 'hardcore Welsh' regional other would receive their claims to be national. This focus on *embodied qualities* and the problems of mobilising *individual* markers such as accent is built on by Mann's (2011) argument that how people perceive the 'nation-ness' of their locality is not simply down to the nature of place as a 'thing' possessed of its own innate features. Rather, when people talk of the national character of their *community* they refer to the personal characteristics of the *people* living there.

Returning once more to Evans' study, the narration of the 'ambivalent region' area was often based on experience of interaction with those who had branded them as 'English' or 'inauthentic'. Specifically, many locals in North East Wales were frustrated by what they perceived to be unfair labelling by their 'more Welsh' neighbours from North West Wales, who would assume because of their accent that they were 'English'. The 'unWelshness' of the North East thus referred to the *individuals* inhabiting the area, not just the abstract notion of region or place. 'External' perceptions of the area were internalised to reproduce the understanding of the difference of local place, to entrench the localised structure of expectation.

So an instinctive awareness of place- which as aforementioned is frequently seen to function as a way of providing ontological security and an intuitive awareness of national categories- may in fact induce *insecurity* amongst locals. Evans writes

“For some participants it seemed that the ‘place’ of North East Wales and its inherently ‘Anglicized’ facets rendered understandings of their location in a Welsh national community somewhat problematic. *Even where Welsh identification was very vocal, respondents had to grapple constantly with the nature of their locality in order to accomplish that identity*” (2007: 139. My emphasis).

The unWelshness of the NE Wales region- ‘being from the border’- thus represented an *obstacle* to be overcome in order to claim a Welsh identity. Jetten et al (2003) argue that peripheral groups are interesting because of their *varied reactions to being marginalized*. Some may attempt to actively deviate from or reject the norm as a result of their marginality, or they may actually *try harder* to place themselves within the group. Evans' study similarly illustrated varied reactions to the British Wales 'structure of expectation'. Some locals were resigned to being forever on the sidelines of the national community. Their status as outsiders, as being 'less Welsh', whether real or imagined, had been internalized. This acceptance of their peripherality resulted in them acknowledging a 'half-hearted' Welshness, a 'sitting on the fence' sort of identity (2007: 138). Similarly in Kiely et al's equally peripheral Berwick upon

Tweed, the possession of problematic markers led some locals to attempt to 'sidestep' the question of national identity, or else adopt weakened, 'hybrid' identities as a way of dealing with their ambiguous position as neither 'properly' English or Scottish. Other respondents, however, although accepting the concept of Anglicization, refuted the suggestion that living in this 'Anglicised' locale rendered them as *individuals* 'less' or 'un- Welsh' (2007: 137). An ambiguous identity and not possessing significant national markers is therefore not *necessarily* a barrier to locating oneself within the nation. It can in fact, as shown in many of Evans' respondents, lead to a strong *reassertion* of Welshness via a utilization of other (frequently ethnic) identity markers which help place the individual in the nation, such as citing birthplace, language ability to prove they are 'as Welsh as anyone else' (2007: 133, 137). This negotiation process, however, firstly involved dispelling the external categorisation of themselves and their region as 'less Welsh'. Since it was assumed that certain national markers would be rejected out of hand, locals had to mobilize other signifiers of belonging. In other words, those who claimed a Welsh identity in this region were Welsh *in spite* of where they lived.

#### *Comparisons with 'more Welsh' areas*

As I emphasized in Chapter 1, analysis of a 'less Welsh' region cannot be divorced from wider national developments. It would be inappropriate, therefore, to solely focus on the daily engagement and understanding of Welshness in British Wales without considering how these processes occur in 'more Welsh' regions. How can we say that one region is 'less Welsh' or different unless we understand how Welshness is 'done' in 'unproblematic' regions? Does the negotiation of a Welsh identity in British Wales emerge as distinctly different or problematic against a 'straightforward' Welshness in other parts of Wales? Although the focus of this thesis is on British Wales, one must be careful not to 'zoom in' too far and miss the bigger picture. Since the TWM there have been numerous ethnographic analyses of (English speaking) Welsh identity conducted in the 'unproblematic' regions of 'Welsh Wales' (e.g., Griffiths, 1994; Roberts, 1999; Aull Davies et al, 2006) and Y Fro Gymraeg (e.g. Day and Thompson, 1999) I now very briefly collate the more salient issues to emerge from these studies and consider how they relate to British Wales, place, and Welshness in general.



Whilst the awareness of the 'unWelshness' of their 'Anglicised' local place complicated Welshness for many locals in Evans' study, when compared with ethnographies of other regions, the region emerges as highly 'conventional' in other respects. Mobilization of the standard markers or 'raw materials' (McCrone et al, 2008) of individual nationhood such as birthplace, residence, heritage etc for example, appears right across Wales. Similarly, Welsh language ability and a 'proprietary view' of the language is referred to as a way of claiming 'authenticity' or as 'proof of Welshness' right across Wales (see Spears, 2008). This was the case in Welsh Wales regions (e.g. Griffiths, 1994; Roberts, 1995; Aull Davies, 2005) and in YFG (Day & Thompson, 1999). Likewise, a reliance on 'softer' markers of identity such as the 'social communalism' (Corrado, 1975, cited in Adamson, 1991:168) of supporting Welsh sports teams emerges as a feature of identity construction right across Wales. So certain elements of Welsh identity, or the process of 'claiming Welshness', seem to remain fairly constant regardless of whether you come from a 'properly Welsh' or 'not very Welsh' place.

In addition to a general reliance on the same markers, 'micro-level othering' or the *symbolic construction of boundaries* against an internal 'Welsh other' also occurred within these ostensibly 'secure' or 'properly Welsh' regions. Roberts' Valleys respondents, for example, defined themselves not only against the English 'other', but also against '*internal* others': both a Welsh speaking, rural 'other', and also against a more affluent and distant lower South Wales (Roberts, 1999: 113), suggesting that residents in the Valleys consider themselves less Welsh than some but more Welsh than others. Indeed, Roberts suggests that there are a range of social images of Welshness, and that these are at least in part defined *against one another* (1999:112). Similarly in Griffiths' (1994) study of national identity in a rural village in South Wales, her (relatively securely Welsh) respondents also defined their 'type' of Welshness against a nouveau 'Cardiff Welsh'. Griffiths notes how her respondents considered this as a 'rural/urban' divide, with the Cardiff Welsh posing as "posing a threat to rural determined Welsh identities and symbolize a constructed, simulacral Welsh identity with anglicized pretensions" (1994: 6). In Day and Thompson's study of Bangor (1999) locals defined their own degree of Welshness against 'more Welsh' neighbouring regions (in this case, Bangor was seen as less Welsh than Caernarfon). Again, one's degree of type of Welshness was related to where

one lived (see also Thompson, 2007:131).

The process of localised othering in these areas was based on an implicit assumption that Welshness was *hierarchical*. Interestingly, whilst the Welsh language emerged in these studies as a way of orienting oneself towards Welshness, it was also routinely invoked in this othering process as inextricably linked to the ‘more Welsh’ other. Roberts, for example, states that some locals displayed concern that the ‘reassertion’ of Welsh within the valley would be used as an indicator of status within the community, and that “to be non-Welsh speaking Welsh creates a doubt about identity, since Welsh speakers elsewhere (and those in the valley learning the language) are often seen as making a claim of *greater exclusivity* and identity” (1999: 119, my emphasis). So within Roberts’ study, as in Evans’, Valleys residents defined themselves against a rural Wales which they felt didn’t accept them as ‘properly Welsh’ (1999:123). Moreover, within Roberts’ study the language carried *negative* connotations of ‘extremism’ (1999:125). This conflict and ‘paranoia’ regarding the ‘authenticity’ of an individual’s Welshness is apparent in Griffiths’ study, wherein Welsh speaking respondents reacted angrily to the ‘Cardiff Welsh’ who were perceived to have appropriated the language as a status symbol which was wielded to exclude other sections of society (Griffiths, 1994). These ethnographies, of course, are *pre-devolution*, but despite the changes wrought by devolution discussed in the previous chapter, Welsh language ability was central to the division between ‘English Bangor’ and ‘Welsh Caernarfon’ in Day & Thompson’s post-devolution analysis (1999). This work, although carried out in YFG, echoes Evans’ findings in alluding to an implicit awareness of a ‘hierarchy of Welshness’ amongst Bangor locals, who suggested one could be ‘sort of’ Welsh, or ‘half and half’, i.e., not ‘*proper*’ Welsh, based on one’s language ability (1999: 40-41). These ethnographies of ‘unproblematic’ regions suggest that ambivalence and insecurity is not restricted to British Wales, but is also present in ‘very Welsh’ places. *Place* played an important role in these other regions, and was reproduced by the construction of symbolic boundaries against local others. Moreover, these local regional boundaries were frequently associated with a national *hierarchy of Welshness*, and locals understood their own Welshness via the Welshness of their local place.

### *Theoretical Reflections*

Approaching the notion of regionally constituted Welshness through the ethnographic lens 'from below' has shed light on the British Wales region; the issue of place and how it impacts upon national identity in everyday life. The material reviewed in this chapter demonstrates that national identity, and perhaps Welshness in particular, is profoundly social and relational, a negotiated process which often depends on others' receipt of our claims to be national (Bechhofer and McCrone, 1999: 521). What we can also see is that place and locality may play a central and often *complicating role* in the process of claiming a Welsh identity. Place mattered for locals in Evans' British Wales- the instinctive understanding that their own local place was not perceived as particularly Welsh was central to their *personal* negotiation of a Welsh national identity: there is clearly a dialectical relationship at work within the locality whereby the nature of the 'place' and the 'individual' both constitute and are constituted by one another. Claiming Welshness is harder when the 'structure of expectation' produced by living in a particular place instinctively tells you that you are less Welsh. This, as Evans suggests, is based upon the widespread internalization of the notion that Welshness is *hierarchical*. The above analysis suggests that people in 'ambivalent' regions are not *necessarily* condemned to be 'less Welsh', since there are other markers of belonging they can utilize to establish membership, but they do seem to have *to work harder* to place themselves within the nation.

The ethnographies reviewed in this chapter, in particular Evans' analysis, suggests that place continues to have a large bearing on how we understand the nation and our own 'nation-ness'. It reinforces Paasi's (1991, 2004) distinction between a regional identity as a socio-spatial concept mobilized by policy makers on one hand, and a regional identity claimed by *individuals* at the local level on the other (i.e. the difference between 'region' and 'place'). That is, when we talk about borders and regions, we must appreciate they are substantiated less by the distribution of social and political characteristics than by their successful *narration and internalization by individuals and groups* in everyday life. Regional identity, a sense of difference, is learned, internalized and reproduced in everyday life (see Evans, 2007:130). Coupland et al's (2006) dismissal of the salience of place in post-devolution Wales therefore fails to adequately consider the *ontological significance* of place within everyday life and its role in identity construction. Regions are not just lines on a map, but often a deeply sedimented and

intuitively understood part of everyday life, although once again this is not to imply that regions are static. The 'One Wales' thesis seems to confuse *region* with *place*.

Conversely, this chapter has also demonstrated the dangers of assuming or reifying the distinctiveness of place as immutable or static. Whilst Evans' analysis shows the continued distinctiveness of British Wales, the region nonetheless remains avowedly Welsh. Moreover, British Wales is seemingly very close to the rest of Wales in some ways. Or, perhaps another way of looking at it, the more 'secure' regions of Wales exhibit some of the same 'problems' of identity construction found in British Wales. In the brief collation of other regional ethnographies, I demonstrated that in Wales there seems to be a widespread awareness and indeed reproduction of regional cultural boundaries, which are also used to measure Welshness itself. Whilst issues of 'insecurity' seem particularly acute in British Wales, an implicit understanding that Welshness is innately *hierarchical* (and that this hierarchy is spatial) is not confined to such 'less Welsh' places, and serves to reproduce regional identities and gradations of Welshness.

### *The limitations of current ethnographies*

Before I move on, however, I believe that within the current canon of work on regionally constituted Welshness there are blind spots which need to be remedied, and interesting issues which need to be explored further. Evans' work on British Wales in particular raises interesting points which I attempt to incorporate into my own analysis.

First and foremost, I believe that the Welsh ethnographies discussed above, whilst extremely useful, nonetheless veer too close to isolating their communities from the 'bigger picture' and wider structural issues which impact on everyday life and on towns and regions. Localities

cannot be separated from their nation states just as the nation cannot be considered separate from the forces of the world economy (Burawoy, 2003). Studies of ethnography and ‘everyday nationhood’, particularly those which take a regional focus, must therefore be careful not to privilege place and locality as a producer of culture and identity, or to isolate regions from the wider structural and political issues which buffet them. Smith (2008) argues that whilst micro-level analyses ask ‘*how* is the nation performed?’, and ‘*what* is the nation to normal folk?’ they often ignore the main questions within the field of national identity studies: ‘*why* is the nation?’ In doing so, they ignore the underlying questions of history and *power* which necessarily traverse and impact upon local places and regions. After all, ‘everyday life’ and ‘ordinary people’ are situated within a specific historical and political context (Smith, 2008: 565). So instead of isolating micro-level analysis from wider structuring forces and theory, ethnography should rather be ‘disciplined’ by sociology’s comparative history and theoretical traditions (Burawoy, 2003:674), and should function as part of a wider, holistic approach to studying the nation (Smith, 2008:571). It is the duty of ethnographers not just to *describe* developments at the micro-level but to critically interrogate them in light of wider developments at the national scale, and indeed to analyze the national scale in light of developments at the micro-level (Burawoy, 1998).

As Wacquant (2002) might put it, where is *the state* in these ethnographies? In Evans’ analysis, for example, the instinctive awareness of the ‘peripherality’ of NE Wales inevitably necessitates a discussion about power and the *discursive construction of Welshness*. These ideas about who or what is properly national do not simply appear out of the ether, but are *man made*. When investigating everyday life, we must be guided at every stage by *theory* if we are to properly understand and interpret our findings (Burawoy, 1998, Wacquant, 2002). The epistemological underpinnings of my approach are outlined further in chapter 6.

### *Class and symbolic regional boundaries*

*Second*, in these explorations of regionally constituted Welshness, *class* is still absent. In the previous chapter, I outlined the polarization of the Welsh regions along class lines, and how this

potentially problematizes the idea of cultural homogeneity. The above accounts demonstrate the salience of symbolic regional boundaries and micro-level othering in everyday identity construction, yet although class is *alluded to* in some accounts, its role in reinforcing and reproducing these symbolic local boundaries (and perhaps the Welshness of localities) is not fully explored. It is my view that class can help us to understand place and the persistence of regional boundaries and identities in contemporary Wales. It is unhelpful to study ethnicity in isolation from other social experiences which constitute everyday life. By focusing solely on Welshness there is a risk of arriving at an 'over-ethnicised' view of everyday life (Brubaker et al, 2006:15). Mann (2009) demonstrates that Welshness has 'non-ethnic' overtones, and:

“...the personal and local salience of Welshness is precisely to do with its multidimensionality, that is, its close interrelation with both social experiences connected to class, language, place and religion, and particular material contexts such as housing, schooling and employment” (2009: 521).

Within Evans' work, for example, the role of class is *implicit* within the symbolic construction of a binary between the 'hardcore' Welsh rural West and the 'anglicized' Eastern border region. Anglicization, whilst denoting 'weakened Welshness', was also positioned as '*cosmopolitan*' as opposed to the intolerant and unsophisticated West. As Southerton (2002:187) argues, cosmopolitanism implies a knowledge of other cultures and capacity for critical thinking, and when utilized in the context of 'us and them' at the local scale, is about cultural capital and status, and is ultimately a signifier of *class*.

Roberts' analysis of the Welsh valleys also notes the role of class in reproducing regional identity, yet bemoans the rigid way that class identity has been approached in Wales:

“...the way in which working class consciousness has been perceived by writers in the past has insufficiently recognized the diversity of experience, the change in traditions and circumstance, the variety of expression of class identity” (1999:116).

Indeed he, like Mann, calls for a more sophisticated analysis of the interpenetration of regional, social and national identities in Wales (1999: 116).

This is now a propitious point at which to introduce the theoretical perspective on class which will inform the rest of the thesis, and in my view help to arrive at a fuller understanding of the British Wales region. Pierre Bourdieu, whose concept of *habitus* has already been introduced in this chapter, has greatly developed our understanding of how individuals become aware of their place in the class structure. Bourdieu does not doubt the salience of class (or indeed class struggle), but disagrees with the assumption, inherent in much orthodox Marxism and evident in much of the ‘top down’, quantitative analysis of class and nation in Wales, that ‘classes on paper’, (or ‘classes in themselves’), inexorably become ‘actual classes’ (i.e. ‘class *for* itself’) in the sense of a conscious, subjective group mobilized for struggle (Bourdieu, 1985). So just as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter that regions in Wales are divided along class lines, this does not mean that people in each region actually have a class based identity. Calling explicitly for a *micro-level analysis of class*, he argues that sociologists must distinguish between classifications *of* groups produced by social sciences (e.g. top down, quantitative analyses of class), and “the classifications that the agents *themselves* constantly produce in their ordinary existence, and through which they seek to modify their position within the objective classifications or to modify the very principles which underlie these classifications” (1985: 727, my emphasis). This, of course, is an epistemological issue which parallels the debates about ‘everyday nationhood’ and about ‘region vs place’ outlined previously. For Bourdieu, ‘top down’ analyses of class and class identity treats people as ‘things’ or ‘objects’ which simply ‘have’ class (Bourdieu, 1987:1). People are separated into sketched ‘probable’ classes: working class, middle class and so on, based on ‘objective’ things like occupation. It is then assumed that these people ‘automatically’ identify as working class, middle class, upper class and so on. For Bourdieu, this approach is more suited to ‘zoologists and botanists’ (1985: 725), not to human beings. This approach does not acknowledge the role of the individual (Savage and Bennett, 2005: 3), the complexity of class, or how people actually understand class in everyday life- if, indeed, people do actually classify themselves as belonging to particular classes.

Bourdieu’s contribution, then, is to refocus the attention on the individual and everyday life, and to illuminate when, where and *how* people become conscious of their class identity. For Bourdieu, a class is defined as much by its *being-perceived* and by its *being* as by its ‘objective’

position within the social structure (Johnson, 1993:5). For Bourdieu, one's social class is represented and manifested in terms of intuitive and learned *dispositions* and behaviours. As I have already illustrated, Bourdieu calls this the *habitus*. Bourdieu states that the *behavioural patterns* of the habitus are *embedded in individuals* and manifest themselves in everyday human interaction: not just through one's ideology but also through the corporeal feats of 'standing, speaking and thereby of feeling and thinking' (Wolfreys, 2000). Class habitus is thus inscribed and manifest in the *individual*, in their 'character, bearing, manners, or 'demeanour'. As Bourdieu puts it, '*the body is the social world but the social world is also in the body*' (Bourdieu, 1990: 190). The embodied traits of the habitus are also called the *hexis*. Just as the national habitus means that people in the same nation have the same behaviours and traits, class habitus means that people in the same social classes have the same behaviours and dispositions, and this is how classes recognise and understand one another.

Through the concept of *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu developed his work on the everyday manifestations of class and how class is understood in everyday life. Emphasizing the inherent *relationality* of class, he argued that *symbolism* was central to defining the implicitly understood *boundaries* between classes (Bourdieu, 1984:49. See also Weininger, 2002:119). One's class habitus is therefore expressed and understood *aesthetically*, through *lifestyle and taste*. Bourdieu thereby creates a link between 'objective' economic status/class and the *symbolic* representation of class position. He writes that:

"...the social world achieves, objectively, the status of a symbolic system, which...is organized according to the logic of difference, differential deviation, thereby constituted a significant distinction. The social space, and the differences that 'spontaneously' emerge within it, *tends to function symbolically as a space of lifestyles*" (Bourdieu 1985: 730).

Within the symbolic class system, *taste* becomes a supreme arbiter of social class which expresses the division of labour within everyday life (Bourdieu, 1984:49; 468-9). By



conceptualising social class in terms of *taste*, cultural intake and consumption patterns, art, culture and other ‘mundane’ things such as food and fashion (whether consciously or not) fulfil a social function as markers of social class which distinguish classes from one another in everyday life (Lamont & Molnar, 2002:172). People learn the tastes and cultural mores of their own class, and understand their position within the class structure vis a vis other groups who are also defined by their distinct *lifestyles* and dispositions/behaviours which signify their class. An implicit awareness of other classes and collectives is necessary, since one cannot understand one’s own position unless one understands what class one is *not*. Bourdieu writes that individuals construct antagonistic binaries between themselves and others (1984: 468-9), hence ‘classifying [others] classifies the classifier’.

The Bourdieusian perspective can also help explain how regional boundaries and regional identities are sustained, as distinction is also invariably *spatial* (Tugal, 2009: 30). In the previous chapter, I mentioned Lovering’s (1999) claim that divisions between Welsh regions are self-evident because of the different lifestyles of each region. Savage & Warde (1993:178-181) explicitly adopt a Bourdieusian perspective on region and place, and claim that *symbolization of place and space* help reproduce regional boundaries and identities, as certain *places* may become associated with particular lifestyles and lifestyle imagery. These lifestyle aesthetics and ‘attitudes’ may become central to reproducing local structures of expectation and in distinguishing certain places from ‘others’ within everyday life.

#### *The unreflexive element of everyday nationhood*

The third and final issue is the need to remedy a general focus, in studies of nationality, on ‘talking the nation’ (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008) at the expense of the ‘unreflexive’ elements of everyday national identity which exist ‘outside the channel of consciousness’ (Edensor, 2002: 102). Focusing on ‘talk’ within ethnographic methods overlooks the ‘daily unnoticed actions’ which bind us to our ‘I/WE’ identity (Maguire and Poulton, 1999: 20). Any examination of national characteristics and the role of place should, in my view, involve an examination of the interconnected ways of knowing the nation that Giddens (1984) terms ‘*practical consciousness*’

which exist *alongside* 'discursive consciousness'. Michael Billig's (1995) theory of 'banal nationalism' for example, in contrast to other micro level analyses, which emphasise the active negotiation of the national narrative by individuals, instead focuses on the 'unremarkable' visual symbols/signifiers of the nation which continuously 'flag' the nation to people in their everyday life, contributing greatly to the 'commonsensical' nature of national identity within everyday life.

Airriess et al (2012) argue that although the 'banal nationalism' thesis has yielded revealing work at the national scale, its utility in analysing how the nation is reproduced and represented at the *local level* has not properly been explored despite the fact that the nation is continually reproduced and 'domesticated' at the *local scale* (see, e.g. Jones and Desforges, 2003; Edensor, 2002:58-65). They call for more investigation into the *spatiality of banal nationalism* and how material displays of the nation proliferate at the local level and what this can tell us about the *nation-ness of local places*. Brubaker et al's (2006) ethnography of Cluj, Romania and Kiely et al's exploration of Berwick upon Tweed (2000) similarly engage with the '*ethno-symbolic geography*' of local places, noting how the saturation of local public spaces with national symbols can give a specifically 'national' *feel* to a town. In other words, the perceived 'nation-ness' of a local place may be determined at least in part by the prevalence of visual symbols within the locality. Evans' study of the North East touches on the role played by unreflexive processes in the construction of Welshness within the locality. Following Billig's (1995:8) analysis that national identity is to be found in the 'embodied habits of social life and the everyday' he adds that that "the national habitus is likely to be partly induced in the mundane conditions and practices of the everyday locale" (Evans 2007:127). He continues that it is conceivable that "the habitual acts of identifying, categorizing, behaving and responding in national terms are often brought about by 'local' or taken-for-granted contexts" (2007:128). He demonstrates that the nation penetrates the local in an unnoticed, subtle fashion, and that unreflexive embodied habits may 'nationalise' a region. *Visual symbols* play a particularly important role in this inculcation, with things like bilingual road signs acting as a steady 'drip drip' reinforcement of Welsh national difference within the locality. Evans refers to these processes as the '*latent aspects*' of '*Welsh around me*' (2007: 128). Flags, signs, the visual and

aural presence of the Welsh language, not to mention locally situated 'rules' and behaviours, provide a steady stream of unconsciously accepted Welsh signifiers for many respondents- they help nationalise the local place.

Any study of how 'national' a local place is must therefore be sensitive to these unreflexive ways (and forms) in which the nation embeds in the locality, and through which the locality displays and understands its 'nation-ness'. The methodological implications of this assumption are discussed in chapter 6, and I develop this discussion further in chapter 10. The following chapter introduces Porthcawl, my area of study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Introducing Porthcawl**

This chapter briefly paints a picture of Porthcawl, my area of study, and its suitability as a favourable locale to explore the British Wales region and the concomitant issues of ambivalence, class and place within Welsh identity.

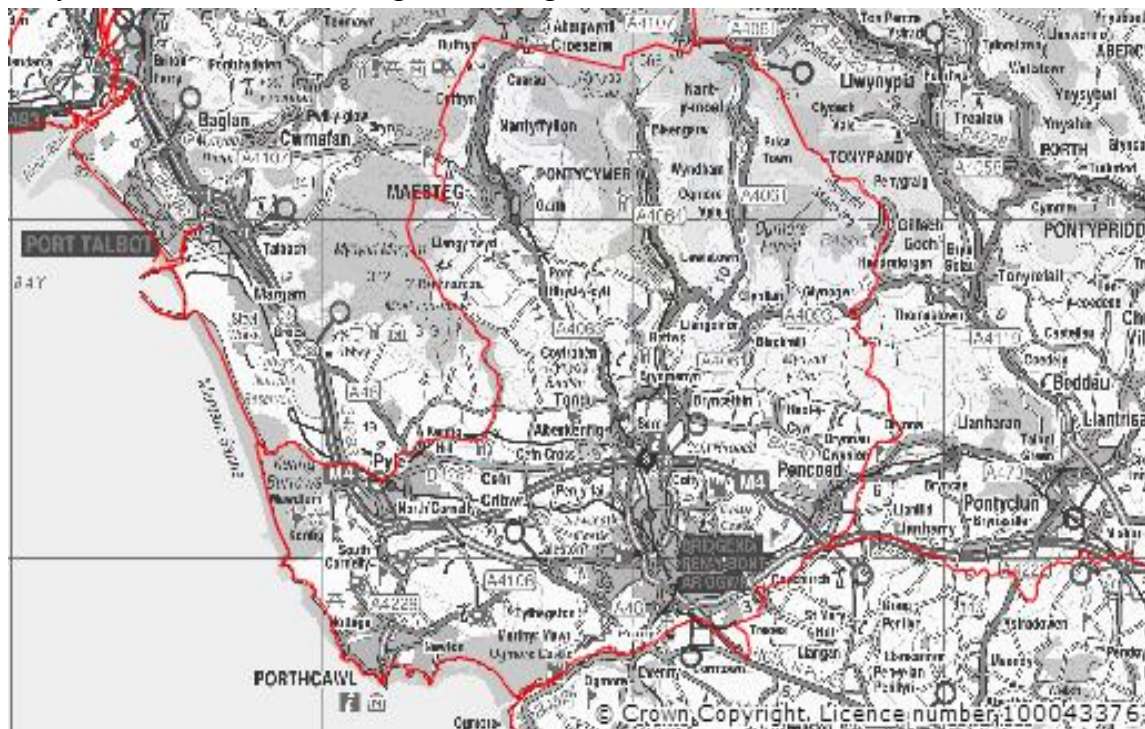
Porthcawl is a town of 16,000 inhabitants located on the South East coast of Wales. Lying 5 miles south of the M4, it is one of the three main towns in the county of Bridgend, and is nearly equidistant between the Cardiff city region and Swansea (see maps 6 & 7). Within the immediate locality, the town is bordered to the North by the former mining villages of Kenfig Hill, Pyle and Cornelly, to the West by the steel town of Port Talbot. Bridgend County itself is of complex character. Intersected by the M4, it borders the Vale of Glamorgan to the East, Neath Port Talbot to the West and Rhondda Cynon Taff to the North. Reflecting the diverse nature of regions, Bridgend is divided between the deprived former mining areas concentrated in the Llynfi Valley to the North of the county, and more affluent rural and coastal regions (see appendix 1). Bridgend County contains some of the most deprived wards in Wales (Caerau) and in certain suburbs of Porthcawl, some of the richest (House et al, 2011). The northern area of the county is very much a traditional 'Welsh Wales' region, whilst the rural and coastal areas represent the image of 'British Wales' more accurately. Bridgend, and indeed Porthcawl, therefore represent something of a confluence between the images of a traditional working class habitus and the 'classic' idea of affluent 'British Wales'.

**Map 6.** Porthcawl's location within South Wales



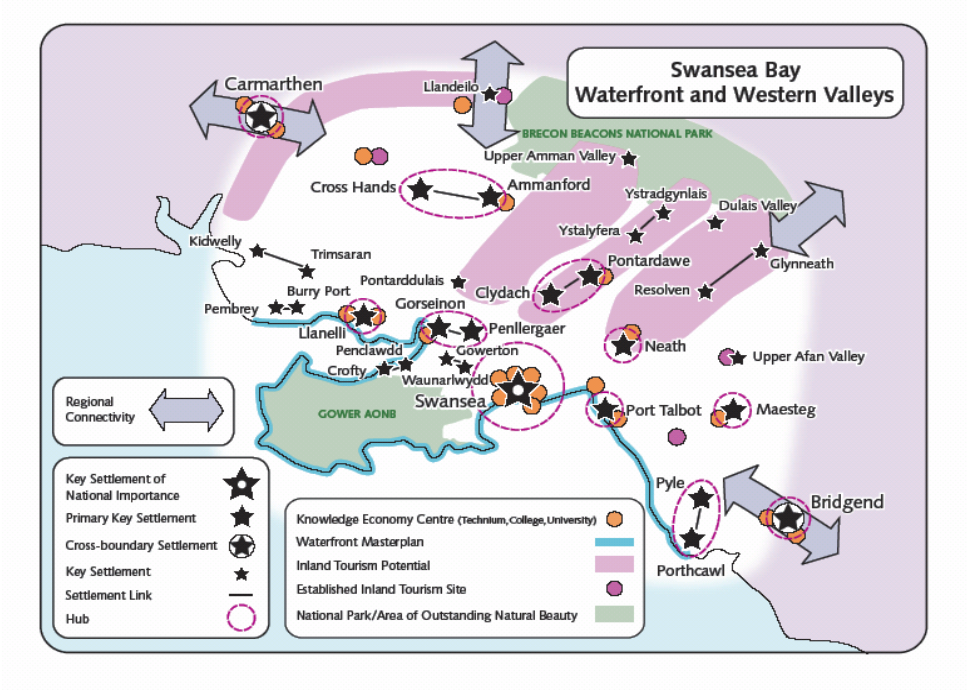
(Source: infobaseCymru)

**Map 7.** Porthcawl within Bridgend Borough



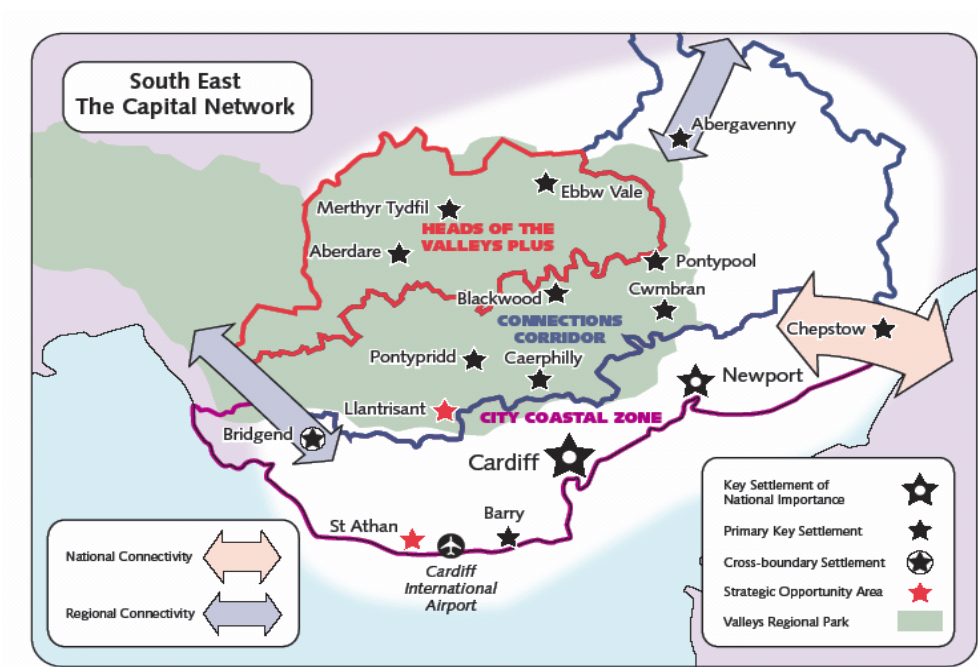
(Source: infobaseCymru)

Map 8. Porthcawl within the ‘Swansea network’



(Source: Wales Spatial Plan, 2008)

Map 9. Porthcawl in the ‘city coastal zone’ within the Cardiff city network



(Source: Wales Spatial Plan, 2008)



## *History of Porthcawl*

Pincombe's (2011) recent history of Porthcawl is of a town in search of an identity. A town awash with contradictions, a place which, "has long been a stage on which Wales has acted out aspects of its histories in microcosm" (2011:521), and where the trajectories of Welsh society intersect with the development of the town as a place (2011:549). It is, therefore, a supremely interesting site for research.

Porthcawl is today mainly recognised as a tourist resort, and indeed tourist related employment accounts for one-fifth of total employment in the town (Pincombe, 2011:522). Unlike most seaside resorts, however, Porthcawl's roots lie in the early development of primary industry within South Wales, within which Porthcawl's initial 'industrial-maritime' function as a port serving the burgeoning coalfields to the North was central (2011; 524). However, in 1898 the opening of docks in neighbouring Port Talbot to the West and Barry to the East marked the beginning of the end of Porthcawl as a port, and its role declined dramatically until it closed for exports in 1907. Far from spelling disaster, however, the function of the town simply shifted to one of *leisure*. The infrastructure developed to aid industry (primarily the breakwater and a railway line) facilitated the seamlessness of this transition to resort. Sensing a lucrative opportunity, the Great Western Railway Corporation closed the harbour and constructed an esplanade to develop tourism and aid their company. Porthcawl began to blossom as a resort as the railway attracted frequent day trippers from Cardiff and Swansea, but more significantly from the coalfield. By the 1920s, Porthcawl was regularly hosting up to 7,000 day trippers, mainly from the surrounding Valleys communities, as well as attracting the more middle class golfing community from Cardiff and London (2011: 526).

Porthcawl's development as a resort was intimately linked to the industrialisation of Wales and the emergence of "an increasingly autonomous working class in the hinterland" (Pincombe, 2011:533). After the First World War, Porthcawl's 'Funfairism' took off, as it developed in tandem with the industrialisation in the Welsh valleys. At first, the industrial workers from the surrounding valleys and the English midlands came mainly as day trippers. After the Second

World War, however, conditions became more favourable for the development of the town as a resort, as the post-war government nationalized the coal industry in 1947, and in the process gave the miners two weeks paid holiday per year. At the same time, the Trecco Bay site occupying the sand dunes on Coney Beach (to the East of Porthcawl) was defined as a distinct holiday site (aided by the American army's wartime transformation of the area). Commercial caravan ownership began to take off, and on site showering sanitation was established as the site soon began to attract thousands of workers from the surrounding areas (plate 1). Soon, the miner's fortnightly holiday became synonymous with Porthcawl, the 'spiritual home of the industrial working class' (2011:544), with Porthcawl Pavilion hosting the annual Miner's Eisteddfod and other gatherings. Yet it was the reservation-like Trecco Bay site to the East of the town (somewhat sealed off from the town itself) which became the 'miner's Mecca' (2011:545) and what Pincombe describes as a 'worker's leisure republic' (2011:546), as Trecco began to host entire Valleys communities during the summer months. The Trecco Bay site was developed and influenced by the initiative of the tourists themselves: "it was South Wales's working class who defined its contours and filled it with meaning" (2011:546). The nature of the communality of the site was demonstrated by its nicknames, 'Hiya Butty Bay', 'Butty Boy Bay' (after the standard on-site greeting), Senghenydd by Sea, Rhondda by Sea, Valleys Valhalla, and so on (2011: 549). Upon retirement, many miners would buy their own caravans and move to the site for the entire summer or longer. Others retired to the town itself.

Despite this long association and interconnectedness between the town and the industrial heartlands, Porthcawl's history is of a struggle over the 'social tone' or *image* of the town. Pincombe notes that as far back as the 1890s, locals, and retirees in particular, were complaining about tourists 'lowering the tone' of the town (2011:532). The local businessmen looking to develop the town during its transition from port to resort complained about the lack of 'civilised hotels' within the town, "suggesting a modulation of social tone that proved (and remains) too hard on the ear for some" (Pincombe, 2011:534). Jealous comparisons were made with resort towns of a 'higher social register' like Tenby, Aberystwyth, Llandudno, Margate or Ramsgate (2011: 535). For some in the town, this quest for a 'higher social register' or *respectability* meant the miner's fortnight and long term presence in Porthcawl was akin to a



‘bad dream’ (2011:546). Pincombe attributes some agency to local ‘burghers’ and ‘boosters’ in establishing the ‘image’ of the place, although ultimately he argues *the lack of consensus* over what direction Porthcawl should in fact take meant the town never developed a clear identity. As I will show, the tension over the *class identity* of the town remains in place today.

#### *A town with a split personality: cleaning up Porthcawl’s image*

Wider structural developments have impacted on Porthcawl’s development and its subsequent ‘social tone’ or ‘character’. The decline of heavy industry to the North and the development of services and manufacturing industry around the M4 corridor and the coastal belt (see Morgan and Sayer, 1988; Adamson, 1991) has changed the make up of South Wales. The coastal plain or belt around the Cardiff city region has flourished, whilst the industrial heartlands have remained locked in a spiral of decline (see Adamson, 1996; 2008). Up until the 1960s, Porthcawl largely consisted of the town centre (now West Central ward); the residential areas and the council estate around the Trecco Bay and New Road site (now East Central ward); and the outlying, rural villages of Newton and Nottage. Porthcawl has been influenced by two main demographic trends in recent years which have seen the town grow dramatically and which have also influenced a change in its character. Firstly, as the M4 corridor around ‘British Wales’ flourished, Porthcawl, with its attractive coastal setting and easy access to the M4, attracted managers and workers (*‘spiralists’*- see Bell, 1968) from the new industries. Raymond Williams himself uses the town in his example of the spatiality of capital:

“...the stratification at work is reproduced physically in the new communities. You can see it at Margam: this really beneficial making of steel and everything around it ugly as hell. The main workers’ estates are there in the mill’s shadow, while the managers and the executives drive away to live in unspoiled places like Gower and Porthcawl” (Williams, 1960, cited in Bell, 1968:9).

This movement was both from England and ‘short range’ internal migration from within Wales (Adamson, 1991:159), in particular from elements of the younger and more educated strata of the former industrial areas who relocated themselves on the coastal plain to take advantage of the greater employment opportunities (Adamson, 1991: 165).

The subsequent demand for housing led to the rapid development of large, sprawling housing estates in the outlying areas of Porthcawl, chiefly Nottage, Rest Bay and the Danygraig areas. Secondly, building on a historic trend (Pincombe, 2011), as property markets in England boomed, Porthcawl attracted many elderly retirees from the South East of England to add to the pre-existing tradition of retirement from the Valleys. The development of Porthcawl as a retirement *and* a dormitory town coincided with massive changes to the tourism industry which impacted on many seaside resorts across the UK<sup>6</sup>. In Porthcawl's case, the decline of heavy industry in South Wales and a free spending working class deprived it of its core tourist demographic. On top of this, the cumulative impact of losing the rail link in 1963 and its replacement with an unattractive plot of wasteland (Salt Lake Carpark) and the shift to low cost foreign holidays meant that Porthcawl's status as the 'lodestone of the South Wales working class' (Pincombe, 2011:549) was threatened.

A 1994 report on the planned regeneration of Porthcawl (Wales Tourist Board, 1994) paints a picture of a resort in serious decline, exhibiting many of the structural problems faced by British seaside towns at this time. Summing up the problems facing Porthcawl, the report cites the 'negative image of the resort', the prevalence of 'eyesores' within the town and a lack of major local employers. It is a picture of a resort peddling a 'dated product' (WTB, 1994:1), attracting visitors from 'social groups C & D', overwhelmingly drawn from Mid Glamorgan, but with significant number from Gwent, South and West Glamorgan (6-7). However, the report also stated that:

"Porthcawl is considered by the consultants to have a *split personality*. Part of it is a town of sixteen thousand people with attractive housing and a reasonably successful town centre. Part of it is a traditional seaside resort, drawing both day and staying visitors mainly from the industrial hinterland of the Welsh valleys. These two aspects exist to a large extent independently of each other, and there are major

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<sup>6</sup> Between 1978 and 1988 some 39 million visitors were lost by British seaside resorts- see Cooper (1997)

tensions between them which must be overcome if effective urban regeneration is to take place” (1994: 30 my emphasis).

The report recognised the historical tension between Porthcawl as an upwardly mobile commuter/retirement town and as a struggling working class resort. This ‘split personality’ between the upwardly and downwardly mobile was also expressed *spatially* within Porthcawl. As the new suburbs of Porthcawl have developed further, with bigger and bigger properties springing up, the report noted that Eastern ward, (particularly New Road), the former hub of the traditional resort, had become locked into a spiral of decline (1994: 35), ‘severed’ from the rest of the town. The report recommended a number of initiatives to develop Porthcawl, which essentially focused on moving the town’s *image* away from that of a traditional working class resort and instead focusing on appealing to higher social classes and to new demographics of the West Midlands and the South East of England (1994:41) by emphasizing golfing holidays; outdoor pursuits such as windsurfing and walking; and by improving the standard of hotels and eateries in the town so as to attract more prestigious clientele. Porthcawl was being urged to become more middle class.

#### *Contemporary Porthcawl: Still a split personality*

These recommendations have largely been followed through, and the alterations are visible in contemporary Porthcawl, although class differences *within* the town remain palpable (BCBC, 2004). Porthcawl’s quest for a new ‘social tone’ has proceeded alongside an increasing gulf in wealth between the coastal belt and the valleys. The divide between the two images of Porthcawl, one a working class resort, and the other a gentrified commuter town, has grown stark, as the new image of Porthcawl as an affluent and ‘classy’ resort has gradually displaced the old image as a working class cultural hub, although the latter image retains a strong residual presence in parts of the town. Porthcawl’s new (classed) image in tourist literature overwhelmingly emphasises the natural environment of the town and its dramatic coastline, with the fairground taking a back seat. Now closely linked to the Cardiff ‘capital network’ (see map 10), new restaurants, hotels and coffee shops adorn the Western promenade, and the town centre has a number of successful boutique stores (BBC, 2012a). New luxury apartments

and retirement complexes have been built on the seafront, and the town's popularity as a golfing and surfing resort has grown. Large, prestigious new housing estates have developed around the affluent suburbs of Nottage, Rest Bay and Danygraig, as the suburbs of Porthcawl have continued to spread. At the time of writing, a Marina is under construction in the revamped Porthcawl harbour with the aim of turning Porthcawl into a '21<sup>st</sup> century seaside resort' (BBC, 2012b). In addition, Trecco Bay itself has been gentrified: in the mid Nineties, new owners overhauled the site in a bid to attract more affluent clientele, and a pool was built, the caravans improved dramatically and areas were greened.

Despite this new image, however, the Eastern ward remains dilapidated, the Funfair in disrepair, and the town centre has also become home to many 'low register' shops such as Poundland, Greggs, B&M bargains, cash for gold centres, betting shops, tattoo parlours and tanning salons. In addition, a relatively large amount of the housing stock in the West Central ward (i.e. the town centre) and East central is now rented and temporary, demonstrating relatively high levels of housing deprivation (see appendix 1) The funfair and Trecco Bay still attract working class tourists and Porthcawl is still popular with day trippers from the Valleys, who favour the funfair, Coney Beach and the bars in the town centre and the east whilst the middle class visitors avoid the town centre and go for long walks on the common and frequent the hotels and coffee shops on the promenade. Thus Porthcawl retains, in some parts at least, a strong 'working classness'. It therefore remains a confluence of working class valleys life and middle classness. The local poet Robert Minhinnick describes the stubborn residue of this heritage, writing that Porthcawl is still home to "the ex miners, the ex-fitters, the ex-Hoover Doubleshifters" (2010:74)<sup>7</sup>, although there is "no fighting for space now. These days there's always room on the sand" (ibid).

Porthcawl's duality is reflected in its civic initiatives, which range from the infamous *Elvis Festival*, characterized in the local popular imagination as a 'working class Eisteddfod' defined by prodigious alcohol consumption (Minhinnick, 2012); to the more middle class annual Porthcawl Jazz Festival and Sea Festival (which celebrates Porthcawl's nautical heritage).

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<sup>7</sup> The 'Hoover double-shifters' here refers to the famous Hoover factory in Merthyr Tydfil, which closed in 2009. This reference assumes a local knowledge of where Porthcawl's working class tourists are from.

## Accent

Accent is an important marker of region and identity (Paasi, 1991) and plays a large role in distinguishing Porthcawl within the local social structure. Coupland and Ball (1989) acknowledge the role played by accent within spoken English in Wales in marking 'Welshness'. The Welsh accent in English is more or less influenced by the Welsh language (such as intonation, loan words, etc) and this varies *geographically* (1989: 26-27). Coupland and Ball posit two main varieties of English in South Wales. One, associated with South West Wales (the 'classic' Welsh accent) shows significant substratal influence from Welsh (including intonation, loan words, etc) whilst another, associated with the South Wales coastal belt (i.e., British Wales), a 'corridor of Anglicization' with historical and contemporary high levels of in-migration, exhibits very little substratal influence from the Welsh language and is far closer to RP. The latter accent is entrenched around Barry, Cardiff and Newport, and exhibits similarities with the southern and West country English accents. In addition, a distinctively 'non-Welsh' anglicized accent is present in South Pembrokeshire, parts of Gwent and the Marches (see Parry, 1990). Although a non-academic work, Edwards' (1985) light hearted exploration of South Walian dialect '*Talk Tidy: The art of speaking Wenglish*' recognises that:

"Wenglish...is not for speaking to foreigners. It is obvious that foreigners in a geographical sense who make their presence felt from Calais onward will not understand our local speech. But there are also foreigners in the linguistic sense of the word- and they begin at Cardiff (Cairdiff), Brecon, Abergavenny and West Swansea- who will not readily understand Wenglish" (1985:6).

The degree of Welsh language influence increases incrementally East to West across the South towards Port Talbot and further West. Porthcawl (and indeed Bridgend), occupying a midpoint between Cardiff and Swansea, is often understood to have an 'English' accent. Certainly, the local dialect belongs neither to the Cardiff/Barry English or the 'classic' Welsh accent of 'Welsh Wales'. As in Coupland's (1988) study of Cardiffians routine exaggerated Anglicization of Welsh language place names, the name Porthcawl is overwhelmingly pronounced Porth-*Call*, rather than the correct Porth-Cow-l. Complicating the situation further, because of traditionally high

in-migration to the town from the industrial 'Welsh Wales' heartlands *and* from England, familial influence produces significant variation *within* the town depending on primary socialisation.

*Porthcawl in figures: a 'British Wales' town*

On paper, Porthcawl shares many of the basic features of Balsom's 'British Wales' or a 'less Welsh' town. To demonstrate its 'tone', I consider its relationship with what Adamson (2008) calls the 'poverty triangle' of housing, health and education (see table 3). On all these indicators, Porthcawl emerges as relatively affluent. As way of comparison, I contrast Porthcawl with Maesteg, a town of very similar size, located in the Llynfi Valley, as well as with the neighbouring former mining villages of Cornelly and Pyle. Housing in Porthcawl is expensive, and the stock includes a relatively high percentage of houses which are owned (45.6%), as well as a high percentage of detached houses (38.6%). The town also has a relatively high percentage of people educated to degree level (17%) compared to 12% in the borough and 14% in Wales as a whole. Using the relatively crude 'social grade classification', 25% of locals fall into social classes AB, compared to 18% in the county and 18% in Wales as a whole. Porthcawl is relatively affluent with low levels of deprivation (see appendix 1) in particularly the outlying suburbs of Rest Bay (see House et al, 2011), although the East central ward displays relatively high levels of deprivation. The town has generally voted Conservative whilst the rest of Bridgend County has traditionally voted Labour, although the Eastern ward of Porthcawl is anomalous in that it has traditionally voted Labour. The neighbouring Vale of Glamorgan has also often voted Conservative in local and general elections.

Porthcawl has a high percentage of residents born in England (17%), compared to just 4.9% in Maesteg. Using as a crude gauge the (exclusive) 'national identities' within the town, 8% identified as 'English only' (3% in Maesteg); 17% identified as 'British only' (7.4% in Maesteg); whilst 60.3% identified as 'Welsh only', less than the county average of 67.3% (Maesteg recording 79.5%) but higher than the Welsh average of 57.5%. Among locals 29.25% claimed no Welsh identity, higher than the county (23.4%) but lower than Wales (34.1%). Additionally, Bridgend county has a very low percentage of Welsh speakers (7.3% compared to the national

14.6%), and Porthcawl reflects this, with only 6% of the population classing themselves as fluent in Welsh (see table 4).

There is only one unitary authority school in Porthcawl: Porthcawl Comprehensive, an English medium 11-18 mixed school, which was rated 'good with outstanding features' by Estyn in 2007; and 'good' in 2013. Although the school's intake represents 'the full range of ability' (Estyn, 2007) 10% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, lower than the Welsh national average of 17.7%. 9% of pupils live in areas which fall within the 20% most deprived in Wales. Around 25% of pupils are from economically *disadvantaged* backgrounds with a further 25% from economically *advantaged* backgrounds. The remainder are neither disadvantaged nor advantaged (Estyn, 2007:1). 11% of pupils have a special educational need, lower than the Welsh national average of 19.2% (Estyn, 2013). English is the predominant language spoken at home by 99.9% of pupils with 0.1% speaking Welsh as their first language (Estyn, 2007:1).

Of course, the above numbers don't reflect the complicated or plural nature of identity (after all, that is the point of ethnographic analysis) but it does establish Porthcawl as an area which, generally speaking, shares the demographic features of Balsom's 'British Wales' (specifically an older, and more affluent population) and *ostensibly* displays a relatively low level of 'Welshness'. It is therefore an entirely appropriate setting to explore ambivalence and 'weak Welshness'.

**Table 3.** Social profile of Porthcawl compared with local, regional and national rates

	Porthcawl	Maesteg	Pyle	Cornelly	Bridgend Borough	Wales
Percentage of residents social grade AB (ONS, 2001)	25%	11.5%	11.85%	11.8%	18%	18%
Percentage of residents with degree	17%	6.8%	7.2%	9.3%	12%	14%
Percentage of residents with level 4 qualifications or above (2011)	31%	14.1%	14.7%	18.8%	23%	24.5%
Households with 3-4 dimensions of deprivation	5.6%	13%	8.6%	9.2%	7.8%	6.9%
Percentage of residents aged 65+	25.5%	17.7%	16.4%	16.75%	21.3%	21.9%
Percentage with 'bad' or 'very bad'	9%	12.1%	9.4%	9.4%	8.9%	7.6%



health						
Percentage of residents with limiting long term illness	27.4%	29.7%	25.6%	28.6%	25%	23%
Detached houses	36.8%	11.3%	14.4%	18.5%	23.3%	27.7%
Houses owned outright	45.6%	38.9%	28%	28.4%	35%	35.4%

(Source:<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>)

**Table 4.** ‘Welshness’ indicators of Porthcawl compared with local, regional and national rates

	Porthcawl	Maesteg	Pyle	Cornelly	Bridgend Borough	Wales
Percentage of ‘Welsh only’ identifiers	60.3%	79.5%	70%	67.8	67.3%	57.5%
‘Welsh & British’	9.6%	7.6%	9.7%	7.7%	8.5%	7.1%
‘No Welsh Identity’	29.2%	12%	19.4%	23.6%	23.4%	34.1%
‘English only’	8.3%	3%	5.4%	5.9%	6.3%	11.2%
‘British Only’	17.1%	7.4%	11.2%	14.9%	13.4%	16.9%
Percentage of residents Born in England	17.3%	4.9%	9.6%	11.2%	12.2%	20.8%
Fluent in Welsh (speaking, reading, writing)	6%	8.2%	6.5%	7.7%	7%	14%
No Welsh language skills	83%	81.2%	83.1%	82.1%	83%	74%

(Source:<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>)

## Chapter 4

### **Wales and the ‘integral’ British State: the theoretical foundations of a Gramscian analysis of state restructuring**

Although my focus is on Porthcawl and the idea of ‘British Wales’, it is imperative not to assume the importance of place *a priori* or, worse still, to divorce the study of a region or locality from the society of which it is a part. Instead, ethnographic analyses of local places should consider their study area within the wider context of the nation. For this to work properly, however, we need a solid grasp of the wider national context within which our towns are situated.

As I have shown in the previous chapters, one of the central narratives to emerge in recent years with regard to the national context represented by Wales is the change brought about by processes of devolution. According to the optimistic interpretation of devolution outlined in chapter 1, devolution marks a radical change through which (among others things) Wales is now *more Welsh*, and British Wales in particular is now no longer so ‘unWelsh’, but rather ‘as Welsh as everywhere else’, or at least gradually becoming ‘more Welsh’. Devolution, therefore, is held to have directly impacted upon Welsh identity and my area of analysis in particular, and it is evidently impossible to analyse Welsh identity within the British Wales region at the present time without engaging with these claims. Accordingly, this section of the thesis, [comprising this chapter (4) and the next chapter (5)] will focus on the national scale (‘the nation from above’) and provide a *critical* theoretical framework enabling me better to contextualise and interpret my investigation at the local level. As I claimed in chapter 2, my analysis of Porthcawl differs from other recent ethnographies in its engagement with theory and the national scale.

Goodwin, Jones and Jones (2006) point out that many studies of devolution- especially the aforementioned ‘celebratory’ interpretations- suffer from a lamentable lack of *theoretical grounding*. At the root of the problem is that many of the analyses of devolution in Wales are not underpinned by a critical or theoretical understanding of the *state*. Whilst there has recently been something of a rejuvenation of critical theories of the state as applied to Wales, analysing the nature of state restructuring and rescaling, particularly within the field of

economic geography (e.g. Goodwin et al, 2005; Jones et al, 2005a, 2005b; Rodriguez-Pose & Gill, 2005; Cooke & Clifton, 2005; Thomas, 2005; Morgan, 2006; 2007; Hudson, 2007; Curtice & Seyd, 2009), these critical faculties have not been adequately brought to bear upon the *political processes* of devolution. Many of the analyses of devolution in Wales are ‘technocratic’ (Althusser, 1963), which consider the ‘how’ and ‘what’ of devolution, rather than asking *why* and *what* for (Fernandez-Balboa & Muros, 2006:199). Consequently, ‘change’ is taken at face value and underlying issues of power are ignored. In particular, there is an underlying assumption within much Welsh political discourse that devolution represented a ruptural change to the state form, and a concomitant assumption that “the advance of devolution is an inevitable one way movement” (Nash, 2002), a ‘rolling mutiny’ as Nairn (1998) puts it. Yet as Johnes (2004:58) points out, the heating of Welshness precipitated by devolution seemed to have already cooled by the start of the millenium: “the advent of a Welsh Assembly seemed to have changed little, Catatonia were taking time out because of exhaustion and the national rugby team had started losing again”.

There is therefore a need for a rejuvenation of the *pessimistic* interpretation of devolution (Morgan and Mungham, 2000:210). Accordingly, this section puts forward an interpretation based on a Gramscian analysis of the British state and Wales’ historic integration into it. This (very brief) analysis of the state will facilitate a more nuanced understanding of identity and place, but also a more cautious understanding of the process of devolution, which in chapter 5 I will contextualise as a conjunctural episode within the development and evolution of the British state form.

I do not want to infer that my thesis represents the *first* ‘critical’ analysis of devolution, because, as aforementioned, recent years have seen a return to sophisticated and critical analyses of “the territorial reconfiguration of state capacities” (Jones et al 2005:338). However, whereas these analyses are primarily concerned with the ‘*interior*’ branches or apparatuses which have altered with devolution (see Poulantzas, 1969:248) my analysis, following Poulantzas’ terminology, is largely concerned with the ‘*exterior*’ nature of the state form. The following Gramscian analysis of state restructuring must therefore be considered as an attempt

at 'grand theory', offering an overarching conceptual framework, a theoretical lens through which devolution and subsequent events in Wales may be approached.

This chapter begins with a brief outline of the influential post-colonial view of the British state and its relationship to Wales and indeed to *Welshness*. I next introduce my theoretical 'toolkit' of Gramscian concepts before describing how the British state may be conceptualised as a historical bloc, and how Wales has been integrated into the bloc through a combination of material and ideological strategies. I then focus on the *ideological* dimension of hegemonic rule within the bloc, focusing on the construction of the *national popular will* and the role played by the Labour Party in constructing a flexible national narrative which harnessed subaltern classes and regions (in this case, Wales) to the bloc. Finally, I discuss the '*hegemonic triumvirate*' (Fernandez-Balboa & Muros, 2006) of hegemony, discourse and habitus, and how these interrelated concepts structure everyday lives and commonsensical assumptions about the nation. In particular, I focus on how the discursive construction of Welshness has inculcated particular assumptions about the role of class and place within the Welsh national habitus, which ultimately may impact on people in British Wales.

### *The post-colonial state in Wales*

Before I begin my Gramscian analysis of the state, however, it is worth introducing the paradigmatic model of the state in Wales. Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British national development* (1975) looms large in Welsh sociological and historical writing. Colonialism and post-colonialism represents a particular analysis of the state and a particular interpretation of national identity *vis a vis* the state. It may seem tiresome to return, yet again, to the internal colonial (IC) debate, more than thirty years since the publication of Hechter's work. Despite the well documented criticisms of Hechter's work (see, for example, Ragin, 1976; Lovering, 1978; Evans, 1991; Day, 1998) his model is significant nonetheless because it confronts the issue of *power* within Wales' relationship to the state (see Day, 1980), and since the intellectual 'victory' over the IC model, critical analyses of the state and Wales' relationship to it have largely receded from view. It is imperative that such provocative and critical theoretical analyses return, for a solid theoretical understanding of the state is surely a

requirement if we are to understand not just devolution itself, but the developments which have occurred in the nearly two decades since then.

Hechter characterises Wales as standing in a 'classically' colonial relationship with England, with the state *deliberately* extracting a surplus from Wales, which is then locked in a state of dependency. Hechter argues that this process was underpinned by a legitimating racist discourse which held that Celtic nations were inferior, and also by a 'cultural division of labour', whereby English people occupied the dominant employment and managerial positions within Wales, echoing 'classic' colonial situations throughout the commonwealth. As Day (1980: 239) notes, central to the IC thesis is a particular vision of the state influenced by classic Marxism, whereby "the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx, 1994:161). Hechter (1975:9) writes that "the superordinate group, or core, seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aimed at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system". This interpretation therefore views inequality as a *deliberate policy* of the state, which is viewed as acting in the self interest of a dominant group (or nation in this case, for Hechter conflates the nation with dominant classes).

Permeating the IC model is a particular understanding of *ideology*, which has influenced popular understandings of *national identity* within Wales. In 'The German Ideology', Marx states that: "in every epoch the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas, that is, the class that is the ruling material power of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual power" (Marx, 1994:129). Extrapolated to the IC model, 'Britishness' was the ideology of the dominant core, a top down imposition on Wales. Using the same logic, Welshness, (in particular Welsh language focused Welshness), was positioned in Hechter's analysis as a *counter-hegemonic* or 'oppositional' identity (R. Williams, 1980:40. see, for example, Thomas, 1971; Khleif, 1975), paralleling the 'class for itself' within Marxism (Fevre and Thompson, 1999: 7-11).

The most unhelpful residual effect of the IC paradigm is the impact it has had on popular perceptions of identity. Hechter's analysis of the British state as inherently exploitative

inexorably leads to the construction of binaries between Britishness and Welshness as Britishness within Wales becomes associated with false consciousness and is necessarily problematized as a 'foreign' antithesis of Welshness, associated with '*anti-Welsh Welshmen*' (Khleif, 1975:75) who sought self aggrandizement through jettisoning their own identity and adopting the identity of the core. In this sense there is also an implicit class dimension to identity within Wales, as the 'anglo-Welsh' are positioned as the ruling classes. According to Fevre and Thompson (1999:8), the colonial paradigm within Wales has ultimately led to a normative, hierarchical dimension to identity within Wales, whereby Britishness became viewed as *wrong*, and Welshness as *right*.

The residue of this Britishness/Welshness binary has naturally also had implications for our understanding of place and class, and in particular for the 'British Wales' region, which is, as noted previously, perceived as somehow 'unWelsh'. It has also contributed to the unhelpful portrayal of the 'more Welsh' regions of Wales. Thus one could be forgiven for thinking that the 'Britishness' only penetrated the coastal regions and the borders, the rest of Wales remaining 'outside'. The implication is that 'British Wales', the most populous region of Wales, is aberrant in its absorption into the dominant British culture, whilst the 'rest of Wales' remains ensconced in proper, authentic Welshness, 'different' from the rest of the UK.

The British/Welsh binary within the IC model ignores human agency and the complexity of power relationships and most importantly the element of *consent* and *choice* involved in participation in 'Britishness'. As Bohata (2004:6) points out, "British may well be a label imposed on the non-English by the English, *but it is also one chosen by those wishing to claim they belong to the island without identifying themselves as English*". In short, Hechter's analysis obfuscates the history of Wales' full participation in the British state and cannot explain the presence, for example, of ameliorative regional economic policies pursued by the British state in Wales.

My own perspective is that, from a Gramscian viewpoint, the (post) colonial paradigm should not necessarily be treated in Wales as an unfortunate moment whose residue needs to be

purged. It remains useful in the attention it draws to unequal power relations and how these penetrate into discussions of national identity and culture; its awareness of the ways which powerful discourses penetrate everyday life and how they can condition the self; and the way power is institutionalized in the academy and within culture (Salter, 2010:130-132).

Nonetheless, the intention of these two chapters is to volunteer an alternative conception of the state, and that is because there are inherent weaknesses with the IC model. Lears (1985:587) highlights the *strategic* problems of the post-colonial view of the state. By attributing a single mentality to large institutions such as the British state, by positing a black and white view of power, it provides an easy target for those who wish to deny hegemony and domination altogether. Thus if one adopts a simplistic view of the British state, one should not be surprised when the Bonapartist nature of the state- its autonomy- is taken at face value and held up as an example of the state's agnosticism, 'neutrality' or even benevolence.

### *The Gramscian analysis of the state*

There *have* been more nuanced approaches to the state form within Wales. Cooke (1980) and Day (1980) offer a sophisticated analysis of the role of the British state. Following Poulantzas (1973), Day argues that given the complexity of economic development and regional underdevelopment, "we must abandon any notion of a polar opposition (ruling class/working class; core/periphery) in which the state acts purely and simply as the agent of one interest against another" (1980: 246). Day's analysis shows that Hechter's conception of the British state as the 'managing committee of the whole bourgeoisie' ignores the complexity of power within the capitalist state. The intervention of the Keynesian state in regional policy, in terms of job creation schemes and so on, makes problematic the notion, integral to Hechter's theory, that the state is perpetually driven to 'exploit' problem regions. With regards to peripheral regions such as Wales, Day argues that the state simply cannot afford to leave such areas 'to rot', i.e. it *has* to pursue an ameliorative regional economic strategy, because a) capitalism needs such peripheral regions as markets, and b) if it leaves the periphery to stagnate, it will lead to a political challenge from dissatisfied peripheral groups, frequently in the form of nationalism in peripheral areas. To maintain consensus, therefore, and to limit the appeal of



counter-hegemonic forces, it is in the interest of the state to ‘prop up’ ailing regions. The state therefore *“seeks as far as possible to reproduce existing conditions of accumulation: basically to maintain capitalism in its contemporary form”* (Day, 1980: 246).

My Gramscian analysis of the state builds on this analysis of the state as a sophisticated, flexible entity, and integrates an analysis of the ‘ideological’ facet of hegemony. Before I proceed with my analysis of the British state and Wales’ place within it, however, it is first necessary to briefly outline some theoretical concepts which inform my analysis of the state and which recur throughout the rest of my thesis.

### *Hegemony*

Gramsci himself defines hegemony as:

*“...the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production”* (Gramsci, 1971:12).

The concept of hegemony departs from the narrow conception of ideology inherent in notions of false-consciousness (a central pillar of Hechterian thought on ‘Britishness’) in three key ways. Firstly, subaltern classes are not ‘duped’ into adopting a world view inimical to their interests, but are instead *actively attracted* to the dominant narrative within society.

Secondly- and this notion is crucial to my thesis- Gramsci expands the notion of hegemony away from a ‘top down ideology’, and develops a concept which deeply penetrates *all layers of society*. As Raymond Williams (1980:37) explains it, hegemony is a ‘*totality*’- it does not simply represent ‘ideas’ inculcated through the ‘obvious’ *hegemonic apparatus* of society (schools, church, etc). Instead, it permeates *all walks of life* and constitutes the implicit, underlying *common sense* of society (see Hall, 1986: 20; Thomas, 2009: 16; Bieler & Morton 2001b: 27) manifest in everyday life and routines, in the formerly ‘private’ realm of culture, civil society

and so on. By expanding the notion of hegemony in this way, as a totalising system of ‘common sense’, Gramsci necessarily trains our attention on the new *capillary forms* or arenas in *everyday life* in which hegemonic narratives are present and indeed *materially* manifest. Morton & Bieler (2010:168) point out that for Gramsci, “ A *principal emphasis can be placed on the material structure of ideology linked to publishing houses, newspapers, journals as well as libraries and schools, right up to architecture, street layouts and street names*” (see also Morton & Bieler, 2006: 24 on). Everyday life is not ‘neutral’ but *ideological*, and the nation may be *materially manifest* in, for example, architecture (Rose, 1994; Alonso, 1994) and public rituals (Althusser, 1971; Edensor, 2002; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008). This notion that hegemonic narratives appear in everyday life recurs throughout my thesis.

Third, hegemony is *contested* (Gramsci, 1971:182). The state is constantly struggling to balance and indeed overcome an ‘unstable equilibrium’ between dominant groups and subaltern groups. Hegemony therefore requires constant attention and maintenance (Gramsci, 1971: 181; Lears, 1985), and is not final and monolithic, but fluid and capable of evolving.

### *The Integral State*

The originality of Gramsci’s conception of hegemony, which is frequently overlooked yet which is central to my thesis, lies in its relationship to the *form of state*. The concept of hegemony was developed as part of Gramsci’s investigation into the advanced liberal democratic state and the ostensible absence of coercion by the state (see Thomas, 2009: 136-140, 222; also Cox, 1993: 53; Buci-Glucksmann, 1980, 280; Gledhill, 1996; Martin, 1997; Bieler & Morton, 2010: 164-165). Explaining why revolution took hold in Russia but not in the liberal democracies of Western Europe, Gramsci makes the distinction between the state in the ‘East’ and the modern state in the ‘West’:

“In the East, the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and *when the state trembled*, a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state

was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks” (Gramsci, 1971: 238).

In essence, this means that in the liberal democratic Western states, the state was sophisticated and that power was far more *complex*: the state was not brittle, and simply a repressive force, but rather comprised a complicated network (of ‘capillaries’) of power which permeated all walks of life.

To illustrate the sophistication of the modern (Western) state, Gramsci developed the notion of the *integral state*. Gramsci argues that the state and hegemony are *elastic*, capable of being stretched to accommodate all groups (Hesketh: 2010: 390), and successful consensual rule is achieved when states become concretely concerned with *all* elements of society, that is, when they depart from acting in the narrow interest of the ruling class. This is achieved through making *material concessions* to subaltern groups in order to get them ‘onside’ (Cox, 1993: 51).

Gramsci (1971:182) writes:

“It is true the State is seen as the organ of one particular group, destined to create favourable conditions for the latter’s maximum expansion. But the development and expansion of the particular group are conceived of, and presented, as being the motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the ‘national’ energies. *In other words the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups*” (my emphasis).

Hegemony is therefore as much about the state form and the *material concessions* it affords to subaltern groups as it is about *ideology*- which hegemony is often conflated with. Hegemony’s basis in the state form is central to understanding that hegemony has *two* facets: *ideological* and *material*. Gramsci, in his acknowledgement of the material dimension of hegemony, moves away entirely from the idea of the state as being a mere instrument of the ruling classes (Buci-Glucksmann, 1979:223). Consensus requires the state to be *flexible and ameliorative*. Buci-Glucksmann (1980: 274) argues that “*the rejection of an instrumental conception of the state...[which is central to the post-colonial view of the state]...is the fruit of Gramsci’s entire*

*political practise*". 'Hegemony' and 'the state' must therefore always be considered to be one and the same or part of what Thomas (2013) calls a 'dialectical chain'

#### *The role of 'ideology': national popular will*

Let us now return to the *ideological* dimension of hegemony. Hegemony moves beyond a pragmatic 'class alliance' based on material concessions in the sense that it is not merely class based interests or demands which are being articulated, with each corporate group maintaining their own distinct ideology, etc. Instead, hegemony requires the creation of a '*higher synthesis*' which leads to the 'collective will' or 'conception of the world' which transcends class interests (Worth 2009; see also Buci-Glucksmann, 1980: 90-91). This is Gramsci's 'third moment', when a certain ideology, or indeed a combination of ideologies, prevails and 'propagates itself throughout society', "bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity" (Gramsci 1971: 181-2) This ideological 'cement' is mobilised to obfuscate and stifle class antagonisms, and is called the *hegemonic principle*.

But what is the ideology capable of gaining popular acceptance and overcoming the inherent tensions between classes and class fractions? The ideology or hegemonic principle Gramsci pinpoints as being capable of subsuming and rearticulating subaltern ideological principles, capable of becoming a 'popular religion', is *nationalism (or the national-popular will)*. Gramsci explicitly states that:

"the particular form in which the hegemonic ethic-political element presents itself in the life of the state and the country is 'patriotism' and 'nationalism', which is 'popular religion', that is to say *it is the link by means of which the unity of leaders and led is effected*" (Gramsci, 1975: 1084, 1236-7, cited in Pozo, 2007: 59, my emphasis).

Gramsci illuminates nationalism as the supreme 'mechanism of class accommodation'; an ideology which relegates class divisions to an irrelevance and stresses the unity of all classes (Pozo, 2007: 57, 59). Gramsci states that the national-popular will becomes "feeling passion"

which becomes common sensical and “thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive)” amongst *all* social groups, subaltern and leading classes (1971:418). Nationalism and patriotism therefore constitutes the ‘collective will’ of the nation, and is an absolutely critical tool for the leading classes to secure stability of the state by anchoring the subaltern classes to the historic bloc (Gramsci, 1975:421)

### *The Post-War British State as Historic Bloc*

Gramsci’s concept of the *historic bloc* represents the synthesis of the above concepts. The historic bloc refers to a situation of *successful hegemony* (the ‘*hegemonic moment*’ Gramsci, 1971: 181-2)- a period whereby everything in society has clicked into place to achieve a harmony or ‘shared life’ (Gramsci, 1971: 418) between leaders and led. Hall (1986: 15) describes this moment when subaltern classes have been ‘won over’ by specific concessions and compromises and now form part of the social constellation, albeit in a subordinate role. The historic bloc represents hegemony *achieved* within a national political framework within historically and culturally specific national circumstances (Gramsci, 1971:182; Bieler & Morton, 2006: 16) and in this sense the specific appearance or nature of the hegemonic moment may differ from country to country. Moreover, the stable bloc is additionally contingent on external/international structural forces for stability (Gramsci, 1971: 182; also Cox, 1987). An *integral state* form (and concessions to subaltern groups) is a necessary facet of the historical bloc, but the bloc is not just a class alliance between dominant and subaltern classes, i.e. it is not *just* the ‘integral state’, which in itself arguably presents a rewording of Bonapartism (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980: 275-9). Instead, the bloc is underpinned by a successful hegemonic principle or common philosophy which acts as an adhesive, binding all elements of society together in a way which vanquishes “internal contradictions’ (Gramsci, 1971: 168).

The British state, in particular the post-war welfare state, is best conceptualized as a stable historic bloc. Indeed, as numerous theorists have argued (e.g. Cox, 1987; Gill & Law, 1989; Overbeek & Van der Pijl 1993; Gill 2003; Johnston et al, 2010; Wahl, 2011; Panitch & Gindin, 2012), the post war ‘Keynesian welfare national state’ (Jessop, 1999) (hereafter, KWNS) is perhaps the exemplar of the *integral state*. This state is characterized by interventionism, a

policy of full employment, a mixed economy and expansive welfare spending (Bieler & Morton, 2006:17)<sup>8</sup>. A central feature of a stable historic bloc is getting potentially antagonistic subaltern classes or groups 'on side'. Subaltern *parties* play a central mediating role in this process. Tugal (2009) points out that the abstract idea of 'consensus' and 'hegemony' obscures the amount of struggle and effort undertaken within political society by hegemonic groups. Without political society, "the state is an abstract entity, a body of armed men...accompanied by some people in robes" (Tugal, 2009:24). Parties play a central role in binding the local and regional to the national and making people *citizens*.

Gramsci (1971:155) rightly argues we must question whether the *function* of the leftist or 'people's party' is *objectively* reactionary or progressive:

"...does the party carry out its policing function in order to conserve an outward, extrinsic order which is a fetter on the vital forces of history; or does it carry it out in the sense of tending to raise the people to a new level of civilisation?"

Does the 'people's party' support the bloc or does it aid counter-hegemonic forces with the view to creating a new historical bloc? If the former, the '*policing function*' or 'integrative' role played by 'working class' or 'emancipatory' parties is central to securing the bloc in the interests of the dominant class: it mediates the integration of subaltern (potentially radical currents) into the bloc. The collaborative role played by the Labour party in buttressing the post-war British bloc has been discussed at length elsewhere, in particular in the 'Nairn-Anderson thesis' (Nairn, 1964a, 1964b; Miliband, 1961, 1969; Anderson, 1964; E.P. Thompson,

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<sup>8</sup> It should therefore be acknowledged that this 'national' historical bloc was a function of the wider 'international historical bloc' of 'embedded liberalism' dependent on the backing of the United States (Gill and Law, 1989: 478; Panitch and Gindin, 2012) i.e. the national historical bloc is frequently contingent upon *international* stability. As Streeck (2011) argues, the post war national welfare state was an unprecedented era of stability, but notes that this short span of history, relatively free from crises, is the *exception* within capitalism, not the norm. That is, it was an *anomalous period*, and one which will never return. Nonetheless, the era has stamped itself onto the consciousness of social democratic movements across the world, and in particular the British labour party, as paradigmatic. As Poulantzas (1969) argues in his critique of Milliband, "each particular form of capitalist state is thus characterized by a particular form of relations among its branches" and that "each particular form of capitalist state must be referred back, *in its unity*, to important modifications of the relations of production and to important stages of class struggle: competitive capitalism, imperialism, state capitalism" (1969:248). Hence the KWNS itself should be understood as a particular epoch within the history of capitalism, with the British form being one particular manifestation of state capitalism which unfolded throughout Europe following WW2.

1965; Panitch, 1979,1988; Ward, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2007), and I will not rehash a well worn argument, even if such critical analyses of the Labour Party are conspicuous by their absence within much Welsh political analysis.

The central point here is that the KWNS, constructed and mediated by the Labour party, represented an exemplary hegemonic project, able to bind subaltern classes together. Moreover, the hegemonic nature of the Labour Party within Wales specifically (see, McAllister, 1981; Morgan and Mungham, 2000:14; Wyn Jones & Trystan, 2000; Wyn Jones et al, 2003: 637; 2008: 68; Scully, 2013a, 2013b) was central to binding Wales to the bloc.

#### *Wales within the KWNS: material concessions which bind regions to the state*

The aforementioned material concessions to the subaltern classes within the KWNS bound it to the bloc. But within the historical bloc, particularly one like the UK which contained myriad regions and peripheral nations, counter-hegemonic and oppositional movements and cultures are frequently expressed *spatially*. Therefore hegemony has to be sufficiently flexible and malleable in order to overcome regional/peripheral threats and integrate these spaces into the bloc (see Hesketh & Morton, 2014), to *bind these spaces to the state* (Lefebvre, 2009). As Mitchell (2007) correctly notes, the KWNS should not be viewed as entirely uniform, and that within the KWNS and the regions there existed ‘different bases and trajectories’ with respect to identities. I now discuss Wales’ distinctive position within the KWNS and how Wales was integrated into the British state.

Wales’ integration into the British historical bloc was secured through both material and intellectual hegemonic strategies. Mooney and Williams (2006: 611) argue that although national welfare discourses predated the development of the KWNS itself, “the assumption of a fit between state, welfare and nation became enshrined...In this sense the *British* welfare state represented a strategy of *nationalization*, a nation building project”, which was supported by concrete material benefits provided to peripheral regions through effective regional economic

strategies. Wales was the beneficiary of numerous ameliorative regional policies under the KWNS, or as Pike et al (2010) put it, '*spatial keynesianism*' which also served to head off the nationalist threat at the periphery. That is, the regional policies of the welfare state (material hegemonic strategies) were in themselves *nationalizing (i.e., ideological) strategies* which helped draw the periphery into the centralized state. In this sense, material and ideological hegemonic strategies were in fact elided within the KWNS: 'material' hegemonic strategies which undoubtedly elevated living standards at the periphery of the bloc were both underpinned by and contributed to a sense of 'intellectual and moral unity' between subaltern and dominant classes and regions. Wales' popular *political* commitment to the Union and to Britishness in the post-war bloc was undoubtedly based on the material hegemonic strategies of the bloc: ameliorative regional policies and the effective nationalizing impact of institutions like the NHS (Mooney and Williams, 2006:610). Tugal (2009:24) neatly summarizes the relationship between the material facet of hegemony and how it *achieves consent*, "it is active support for a system of rule that actively changes people's lives".

#### *The discursive construction of the national popular will within the bloc*

Yet the KWNS was more than just material concessions. It was a truly populist project, and central to this was an effectively adhesive *national-popular will* which facilitated unity between classes. Having just discussed the integrative role of the *material* hegemonic strategies of the KWNS, I now examine the *ideological* strategies within the bloc, and it is necessary now to relate contemporary work on the discursive construction of the nation to its *function* within society.

It has become an axiom that the nation is not static and immemorial but actively constructed or 'imagined' or invented (Anderson, 1983). The national habitus, our common sense understanding of 'what it means to be national' is a *discursive construct*<sup>9</sup> (De Cillia et al, 1999).

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<sup>9</sup> I should of course explain what I mean when I refer to 'discourse'. Discourse analysis is popularly understood to entail quite abstract theorising and jargon concerning 'lexical units' and so on. My rather cosmetic approach is nowhere near that of Glyn Williams (1984; 2014) for example, who employs French Discourse Analysis and an in-depth deconstruction of texts as a way of analysing the power of language. Yet it is not necessary to become entwined in such detail to appreciate the benefits of the discursive approach: one does not have to be an expert



Within the discursive construction of the nation there are a whole host of arenas or capillary routes, a dizzying 'cultural matrix' (Edensor, 2002:17), where the national narrative is articulated and disseminated, from pop culture and music to 'high' levels of abstraction (Mouffe, 1979:187). The role of *national history*, to which I now turn my focus, is therefore but one field in the discursive construction of the nation. Nonetheless, it is an *important* pillar within this process (e.g. Robbins, 1990; Bhabha, 1990; Smith 1991; Hall 1997), a key 'constructive rhetorical strategy' (De Cillia et al, 1999: 154, 160) which entails creating and ratifying *national distinctiveness* and uniqueness and the creation of a 'timeless' unified people through '*collective memory*'.

Yet as Helbling (2007) notes, when we say that the national habitus is discursively constructed, we must be cognisant of the structures of *power* which produce our commonsensical views of the nation. He poses the question, "when we assert that common sense knowledge of everyday life is derived and maintained by social interactions, *how can we explain that a specific perception or opinion prevails?*" (2007: 11 my emphasis) He points out that ultimately, "nationalism is not simply about 'imagined communities'; *it is more fundamentally about a struggle for control over defining communities, and in particular, for control over the imagination about community*" (my emphasis).

It is, in my view, necessary to bring all this back to Gramsci and to consider the discursive construction of the nation as part of the intellectual struggle for control of the national popular

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on syntax or linguistics to notice the processes of demonization or marginalisation, to appreciate that words and rhetorical strategies are used for political ends. As Laclau and Mouffe claim, discourse should not refer specifically to 'a combination of speech and writing', but rather that speech and writing are themselves internal components and reflections of 'discursive totalities' (i.e., a particular view of the world) (1987: 4). Sutherland (2005: 188) illustrates that there is no tension between studying discourse as a wide ranging analysis of ideas and narratives infused with power on the one hand, and purely linguistic studies of conversational or discourse analysis, for example, on the other: within the study of the construction of national identity- the national popular will- as a 'grand discourse', there can be greater or lesser degrees of textual analysis/deconstruction. My understanding of 'discourse' is not a concept limited to texts or words but is instead a profoundly social construction of reality, and is not just about language, but ideas emanating from politicians, intellectuals, the media, disseminated through the state apparatuses, media, sport and so on (De Cillia et al, 1999:153), and therefore the analysis in this chapter is far more generalised, concerned with asserting the prevalence of power within the wider construction of Welshness (Sutherland, 2005:188).

will within the bloc, and this is how the emergence of the Welsh national narrative within the KWNS must be best conceptualized/understood.

At this juncture it is worth elaborating on the '*who*' of hegemony. Gramsci emphasizes the central role of *intellectuals* in constructing and disseminating and ultimately *organizing* the national-popular will. He conceptualises intellectuals as the 'functionaries' who *organize* hegemony (1971:12-12). Hegemonic control of the bloc is therefore to a large degree determined by control of the intellectual and ideological plane- 'the first floor'- (Hall, 1986:20), where the common sense of society is constructed, before it filters down and permeates the rest of society or 'second floor' (ibid) Each hegemonic group or class has a strata of intellectuals who provide moral and intellectual leadership and direction to the group. Gramsci distinguishes between *traditional* intellectuals, whose function is to prop up the status quo, and *organic* intellectuals, linked to the subaltern masses, who work towards the formation of new social formations (see Gramsci, 1971: 204-5).

#### *Labourist Intellectuals and the discursive construction of Britishness*

The end of the Second World War ushered in an unprecedented *unity between subaltern and ruling classes*. Unlike the rest of Europe, which was forced by the experiences of occupation and invasion to undergo a period of reflexive introspection and systematic interrogation of the common sense images of the nation, the UK emerged with its underlying national narrative actually *invigorated*.

The emergent social historians of the post-war Labour movement provided moral and intellectual leadership to the populist Labour movement. These intellectuals played a key role in *rearticulating* a new commonsensical narrative of Britishness which would come to underpin the KWNS. These 'left of centre' post-war social historians *discursively* linked redistributive economics to 'quintessentially British' notions of justice and fairness and latent British imperial assumptions (Weight, 1994; 2002, Berger, 2000, 2005, Fowler, 2003:98). British nationalism was therefore *rearticulated* by these intellectuals to appeal to and ultimately to integrate subaltern classes into the nascent bloc.

The national popular will within the historic bloc is therefore not uniform but flexible and pedagogic, capable of *incorporating* and accommodating a whole host of alternative corporate (and *regional*) identities within it. The flexible nature of hegemony itself is demonstrated in the discursive construction of the national popular will. Hegemony is continually made and remade (Williams, 1980:40), and is not a uniform ideology which is simply imposed upon subalterns from above. Instead, potentially radical subaltern discourses are harnessed to the state, reinterpreted, *diluted* and finally rearticulated into narratives and forms which do not confront the hegemonic common sense (Williams, 1980:39 see also Laclau, 1977: 161) This is what Hall (1980: 341) calls the formation of '*new interpellative structures*'.

Gramsci, using religion as a metaphor for the role of philosophy within the bloc, declared that Catholicism,

“precisely because of its efforts to retain a ‘surface unity’ and avoid splintering into national churches and social stratifications...is in reality a multiplicity of distinct and contradictory religions: there is one Catholicism for the peasants, one for the petit-bourgeois and town workers, one for women, and one for intellectuals” (1971:120)

There was therefore no ‘one size fits all’ Britishness within the KWNS, since this would have led to a fragmented national popular will and alienated subaltern classes. Britishness has historically not been a static, uniform ideology, imposed from the top, but rather a deliberately ‘fuzzy’ notion, flexible enough to incorporate a whole host of competing identities (McCrone, 1997; McCrone & Kiely, 2000; Johnes, 2011). This is central to my argument that the British state must be conceived as a historical bloc rather than as an inflexible colonial state. The stability of the bloc depended on this incorporation of subaltern experiences into the national narrative, a process which was mediated by the ‘people’s party’. Thus this ‘radical’ post-war ‘history from below’ remained *British* and therefore wholly ‘*integrative*’ in the Gramscian sense, serving to bind subaltern classes to the (capitalist) historic bloc and neutralize their radical potential, rather than to promulgate radical alternatives. By emphasizing the idea that “we’re all in this together” these post-war Labour intellectuals- ‘organic’ in the sense that they occupied and spoke from their position in the working class, but ultimately ‘traditional’ and

reactionary in their *function*- buttressed the KWNS rather than undermining it. Ultimately this is what Gramsci is referring to when he speaks of nationalism as an adhesive ideology. It functions because it submerges or rearticulates class antagonisms within the national 'we'.

### *Welsh historiography and the discursive construction of Welshness*

So what does all this have to do with Welshness? Within Wales it has been reflexively acknowledged that Welshness is something which is made and made over again from generation to generation (Williams, 1985:304; see also Curtis, 1986; R Merfyn Jones, 1992). Indeed Wales is relatively well served when it comes to reflexive overviews of Welsh historiography (e.g. Adamson, 1999; Evans, 1992, 2004; Johnes, 2010, 2011; Pryce, 2011; Gramich, 2011; Evans & Pryce, 2013), and also an awareness of the *politicized* nature of history. Martin Johnes (2010) alludes to the political struggle inherent in the construction of Welshness, claiming that Welsh history, intentionally or otherwise, has justified not just the existence of Wales, but the existence of a certain interpretation of Wales, and has been written with a view to safeguard, or justify "a particular standpoint in the historian's present" (2010:1257). In light of this relatively rich body of work, I do not attempt an exhaustive overview of Welsh historiography now. Instead, I briefly outline the development of Welsh historiography and its *function* within the wider context of the British *historic bloc*, before finally considering the practical implications of its main themes and how they relate to the commonsensical image of Welshness.

Prior to the KWNS, the first wave of modern Welsh historians articulated a history of Wales which emphasized Wales' national coherence and cultural distinctiveness within the bloc. Defined by scholars such as O.M Edwards (c. 1894), Rhoscomyl (c. 1905) and J.E. Lloyd (c. 1911), these early intellectuals actively constructed (or 'imagined') and popularized a national narrative of Wales and Welshness defined by a romantic image of a rural, classless Welsh society, centred on religious nonconformity and the Welsh language (Adamson, 1999: 48; Evans, 2004; Gramich; 2011: 2). In this sense, they were "consciously writing the history of the nation" and in doing so promoting and legitimating the discourses of their 'nationalist-unionist' contemporaries in Cymru Fydd (Evans, 2004: 230). Whilst Gruffudd (1999:151) argues that this

image of Wales ('the gwerin') was consciously positioned *against* Anglicization and 'the imposition of an urban-industrial Britishness on Wales', it is important to understand that this Welshness, like the liberal nationalist movement they supported, nonetheless unfolded *within* the commonsensical confines of *Pax Britannica* (see Aull Davies, 1983; Pritchard, 2012), and instead of challenging the early imperial bloc, instead worked to elevate Wales' position within it.

By the middle of the twentieth century, however, this tradition hit something of a brick wall. The rural image of Welshness articulated by Lloyd et al was simply not equipped to deal with the experiences of the Industrial Revolution and its profound impact on Welsh society. The pre-industrial paradigm, in failing to confront- or indeed selectively excluding- the contemporary realities of Welsh life, had effectively denied the inhabitants of industrial Wales a heritage (Evans, 2004: 245). The limited pre-industrial historical paradigm was then supplanted by a new generation of 'social historians', who forcefully articulated a new, alternative model of Wales and Welshness. This new history was of a macho Wales of boxing, rugby, working men's clubs, but above all, radical working class politics. Yet whilst Johnes (2010) and Evans (2004) locate the development of contemporary Welsh history writing as simply a *reaction* against the myopia of the earlier liberal nationalist Welsh history movement, this ignores the school's deeper roots within the Labour movement and the integrative *function* of the Labour movement within the nascent post-war historical bloc. The symbiotic relationship between these influential Welsh intellectuals and the Labour party is reflected in the 'heroic undertones' permeating much Labour history (Johnes, 2010: 1259) and the tendency for much Welsh Labour history to veer close to *hagiography* (Robbins, 2004: 777). Johnes attributes this sympathetic approach to the Labour movement to the significance of the social and family background of certain Labour historians to their subject. Whilst this is undoubtedly true, it rather obscures the structural reasons behind the dominance of the school.

The Welsh social history renaissance, and ultimately the *Welsh national habitus*, emerged from within the Labour movement, and must therefore be considered as a facet of the wider strategy of incorporation and absorption by this collaborative group. As Berger (2005) argues, although

‘Welshness’ became an organising principle in the explosion of Welsh social history, and early Welsh social historians challenged the Anglo-centric history of the new English left, they absolutely did not question the validity of the Union or the post-war social contract, but in fact *supported the bloc unequivocally*. As Hywel Williams (2012) notes, the ‘radical’ *history* of (South) Wales was written with a view to justifying a contemporary political settlement (KWNS). Just as the Welsh Labour movement was firmly ensconced within the wider British movement, Welsh ‘national’ history- the national story- flowed out of the wider Labourist construction of Britishness. So although it undoubtedly articulated a strong Welshness and retained strong roots to certain *industries*, it was nonetheless ultimately embedded within this wider intellectual project of harnessing subaltern classes into the post-war British state. The Welsh ‘people’s remembrancers’, provided the moral and intellectual leadership for the Labour movement within Wales.

The Labourist narration of Wales, although it focused on the radical South Wales proletariat- a protagonist at a significant distance from Westminster and ‘the establishment’- located this ‘radical’ Wales at the heart of the KWNS and of the wider British labour movement (see Wyn Jones, 2005). This was therefore an *alternative* national identity within the bloc, not an *oppositional* one. This was a Welshness but one in which membership of the wider British state was implicit. This Welshness was articulated by intellectuals who, despite their radical *rhetoric*, were dedicated to preserving the status quo (much like the countless ‘radical’ figures that have emerged from the Welsh labour movement in the twentieth century).

### *Articulation/disarticulation*

For Laclau and Mouffe, creating an effective national-popular will and a stable historic bloc requires the articulation of an ‘antagonist which confronts society’ (1985: 129-132). This strategy of *othering* is vital to creating a populist discourse, as the nation finds its cohesion by uniting against a demonised other. The Labourist narration of Wales drew a binary between the south Wales working class and the image of a rural, Welsh speaking non-conformist Wales it supplanted. The world of South Wales is positioned as cosmopolitan and progressive, positioned *against* a parochial and conservative Welsh language culture, which is *othered*. The

development of the Welsh narrative illustrates the dialectical relationship between articulation and *disarticulation*, identity and difference: the construction of a national popular discourse amenable to a particular political project- in this case, harnessing Wales, or at least the majority of Wales, to the bloc- necessarily involves marginalising and ‘rendering silent’ (Hall 1980b: 324) *potentially* counter-hegemonic discourses (Benhabib, 1996, cited in De Cillia et al, 1999: 154), which in Wales were those of the nascent Welsh nationalist movement. The Labourist construction of Welshness demonstrates Clifford’s (2001:477) argument that the articulation of the national popular entails “the lining up of friends and enemies, us and them, insiders and outsiders, on one side or another of a line” (See also Motta & Bailey, 2007:110). This strategy of othering ultimately served to fragment and fracture Wales, driving a wedge between distinctive socio-cultural groups within it, preventing a ‘collective memory’ developing and ultimately militating against the development of a potent Welsh nationalist movement.

### *Concluding discussion*

This chapter has put forward a Gramscian analysis of the British state and has detailed Wales’ integration into it, via both material and ideological hegemonic strategies. I have also outlined how Wales’ integration was largely mediated by the Labour party. Wales’ consensual integration into the historic bloc was demonstrated by the overwhelming rejection of devolution in 1979 by *all* groups within Wales (Mitchell, 2007). As I have argued, Wales was therefore very much an ‘*alternative*’ space within the KWNS, but very rarely, if ever, an *oppositional* one: Welshness existed as a ‘cultural’ identity within the KWNS, but did not generally have a distinctive political facet, or at least not one which translated into calls for distinctive political representation. The 1979 referendum on devolution was profoundly distressing for nationalists and devolutionists in Wales. G.A.Williams (1985:297) lamented that “Welsh politics had ceased to exist. Wales had finally disappeared into Britain”, yet this perspective perhaps misunderstood the nature of hegemony and the integral state form and the extent of Wales’ incorporation into it.

Emphasizing the consensual nature of Wales' integration into the post-war historic bloc does not mean I ignore power relations and domination. That is, by saying Britishness was actively accepted in Wales does not mean the state was therefore *benign*, and that Britishness as a national popular will should be celebrated. Hegemony does not mean the absence of domination or the absence of a self-aggrandizing ruling class, but rather speaks of a "quality of rule on the part of particular ruling classes" (Panitch & Gindin, 2005:108-9. See also Ives, 2004:43) The post-war historic bloc was ultimately a sophisticated way of managing and perpetuating capitalism, indeed a more effective method than employing coercion: a classic example of the hegemony of the 'state in the West'.

This Gramscian analysis of the state is vital for my analysis for two key reasons. Firstly, for issues of identity and place. The stability of Britishness as both a political and cultural identity within Wales illustrates the redundancy of positioning Welshness and Britishness as binary opposites. Drawing attention to the consensual integration of Wales to the British state (and, relatedly, the consensual acceptance of Britishness as an identity) is useful because it blows apart the *hierarchy of Welshness* whereby 'Britishness' is synonymous with 'weakened Welshness'. Moreover, it 'rehabilitates' 'British' *places*. In the context of my enquiry into the British Wales region, we can say that just as Coupland states that all of contemporary Wales is 'proper Wales', traditionally, *all of Wales has also been 'British Wales'*. It also undermines the mechanistic link posited between Britishness and middle classness, since the Welsh working classes have historically been stridently Unionist and imperialistic. It ultimately illustrates the *complexity* of places and contemporary identities within Wales.

Secondly, this analysis of the state hegemony as *flexible*, capable of incorporating subaltern elements, underpins the analysis of devolution which follows in the next chapter.

#### *Practical implications: hegemony to habitus*

Before I move on, it is worth discussing the connection between the foregoing analysis, which occurs at a 'high level of abstraction', and everyday life. Why is all this relevant for everyday Welshness in British Wales or Porthcawl? The (politicised) discursive construction of Welshness



is important because these narratives ultimately form the common sense parameters of our national habitus, the natural resources we draw on when we consider who or what is 'properly Welsh'. This intersection between macro and micro, hegemony and habitus- *the hegemonic triumvirate* (Fernandez-Balboa & Muros, 2006)- is a complex field which I only summarize here<sup>10</sup>. My own belief mirrors Tugal's (2009) assertion that we must consider the concept of the national *habitus* as being inextricably linked to the concept of *hegemony*. The link between hegemonic narratives and habitus- how these narratives are internalized and reproduced in everyday life- mirrors Gramsci's concern with the relationship between 'philosophy', constructed by intellectuals, and the 'common sense' of 'ordinary folk', within the bloc, how they interpellated dominant ideas. Gramsci's work on common sense in many ways foreshadows the concept of habitus. He states, for example, that the common sense of society 'produces norms of conduct' (1971:424), and 'ways of seeing things and acting' (1971:323). Discussing reflexivity, he states that in our everyday (unreflexive) conduct, "there is contained a specific conception of the world" (1971:323), and that people may "take part in a conception of the world, mechanically imposed by the external environment...in which everyone is automatically involved from the moment of his entry into the conscious world" (1971:323). The parallels with the notion of habitus- the internalization of external structures- are clear<sup>11</sup>.

As aforementioned, philosophical currents, first elaborated and constructed by intellectuals, then enter the 'second floor' and modify and transform the 'practical, everyday consciousness or popular thought of the masses- become common sensical and internalized and reproduced in everyday life as *habitus*. The concept of habitus helps us understand common sense *within the bloc* - how 'external' hegemonic narratives are related to, internalized and reproduced (interpellated) in everyday life. Bourdieu's concept in my view must therefore be considered to be an elaboration of Gramsci's theory of common sense. Whilst Gramsci is concerned largely with the macro level, Bourdieu's work helps us understand how people behave 'on the ground'. Thus the 'process' of the 'hegemonic triumvirate' is as follows: The intellectual struggle for

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<sup>10</sup> For an in depth discussion of the relationship between Bourdieu and Gramsci, see Burawoy, 2012

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that Gramsci argues this uncritical reproduction of external norms and ideologies is the *wrong* way to think. He instead advocates thinking critically and overcoming these limits through adopting the philosophy of praxis (1971:419)

hegemony within the bloc articulates certain ideas about the nation and disarticulates others. These politicized discourses- incorporating particular national markers and cultural symbols- then become deeply *sedimented* in everyday life and form the common sense boundaries and norms (habitus and habitus codes) that we learn and reproduce from a young age. Because these are so deeply sedimented within society, their politicized and contested nature is necessarily obfuscated, and “people come to believe that authority over their lives emanates from the self” (Bieler & Morton, 2010: 168). The national habitus, as pre-reflexive, means that ‘what it is to be properly national’ is *reified* (Lukacs, 1971) as normal and natural in individuals’ internalization and reproduction of national markers and referents.

So *how* do hegemonic narratives permeate everyday life? How do they ‘pass through the floors’ and become sedimented? This brings us back to the aforementioned notion of hegemony as a *totality* which saturates and permeates all walks of life. Hegemony is a huge ‘matrix’ (Edensor, 2002) of forms: the media, schools, popular culture (cultural and ideological state apparatuses) which also permeates ostensibly ‘private’ or non-ideological realms of everyday life through architecture and public space, national popular rituals and so on. Billig’s work on ‘banal nationalism’ and Edensor’s follow up work on the role of *material and popular culture* in inculcating the common sense understanding of who ‘we’ are is an indispensable ally to the totalising concept of hegemony, of how the ideological national habitus unreflexively embeds in everyday life. The epistemology of studying the unreflexive is expanded upon in chapters 6 and 10.

Wodak et al note that (1999) ‘national history’ bridges the gap between theoretical discourses on national identity and the rituals, practices and symbols of everyday life. History, through its physical manifestations in cenotaphs, public holidays, artefacts etc, not to mention popular history television shows and so on, connects the theoretical with the everyday in a mutually reinforcing circle. This is how hegemonic narratives embed in everyday life and become internalized and reproduced. They become our unquestioned *heritage* (Hall, 2002).

Undoubtedly the ‘selective tradition’ (Williams, 1980:39) and rhetorical strategies pursued by

the Labourist narrative, and indeed by the liberal-nationalist paradigm which preceded it, have structured the national habitus and have impacted on how people traditionally perceive 'normal' or 'natural' Welshness (i.e. the national habitus). The nature of the discursive construction of Welshness has elevated the experiences of certain *places* and *classes* and marginalized others, specifically, the Labourist narrative has linked 'Welshness' to 'the working class' (Light, 2009:32), and whilst elevating the iconography of the Labourist vision to the forefront of the national imaginary, has simultaneously *excluded* other experiences, groups and places and made them peripheral to the national narrative. As I demonstrated in my introduction, British Wales is largely absent from the national narrative, overlooked in the two cycles of Welsh historiography. In chapter 2 I analysed ethnographies conducted in the different regions of Wales, and demonstrated that there seemingly exists an instinctive awareness that some regions and people were innately 'more' or 'less' Welsh than others, and that Welshness is therefore essentially *hierarchical*. Moreover, I noted that within Anglo-Welsh areas, Welsh speakers were consistently 'othered'. These interpretations of Welshness 'on the ground' can now be better understood in light of the discursive construction of Welshness discussed in this chapter. Clearly, people 'internalize and reproduce the powerful discourses emanating from the macro level within everyday life.

In the discourse surrounding devolution, when commentators talked of moving away from 'outdated' ways of being Welsh, they were referring to the hierarchical national habitus outlined in this chapter. As I stated in chapter 1, a facet of the celebratory interpretation of devolution was the assumption that devolution heralded a *recalibration of the national habitus* away from the traditional, hierarchical Welshness, and towards a more inclusive Welshness. Of course, hegemony *is* contested, and the common sense of society *may* be transformed via struggle on the intellectual level, and by extension so can the national habitus. In the next chapter I discuss the nature and extent of this transformation in light of the process of state restructuring, which is itself placed within the wider context of the integral state.

## Chapter 5

### Devolution as a Passive Revolution

This chapter constitutes the second part of my analysis of Welshness ‘from above’, as I develop my analysis of the wider national society within which Porthcawl is situated. Its task is to establish the nature of post-devolution Wales, within which my analysis of Porthcawl must be located, dealing in particular with the question: ‘is Wales now more Welsh?’

Building on my conception of the state as inherently *flexible*, I characterize devolution as a process of *passive revolution*, drawing attention to the power relations inherent in devolution and the ‘top down’ nature of the process, which was managed by the Labour party in order to preserve its hegemony both in Wales and the UK as a whole. It is important that this chapter should be read in tandem with the preceding one, for hegemony, the state form and passive revolution are all interrelated. Passive revolution is not a ‘stand alone’ phenomenon, but rather a period within the hegemony of the historic bloc whereby changes to society are *managed* in a way which preserves the status quo. This helps place Welsh devolution within its wider historical context as part of a wider pattern of changes to the state form and the reproduction of capitalism within the UK.

Devolution was meant to have been accompanied by a *recalibration* of what it meant to be Welsh. Thus alongside the changes occurring at the political level in Wales, the national habitus was believed to have undergone, or at the least was to undergo, a transformation away from traditional narrow markers of Welshness towards more ‘inclusive’ or ‘plural’ ideas of Welshness. Yet the reconstitution of national identities, adjusting the national popular will, is not a ‘neutral’ issue but a field of struggle (see Karner, 2011:58), and the emergence of ‘new ways of being Welsh’ in post-devolution Wales must be viewed within the wider context of passive revolution. In this chapter I consider the changes to the national habitus, and how these may have impacted on everyday life in *British Wales* in light of the concept of passive revolution.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section discusses the changing nature of the British state form, from an integral state to a neo-liberal state, and the impact this had on society. The next section is perhaps the most significant in the chapter, and introduces the concept of passive revolution. It argues that rather than precipitating a radical and progressive restructuring of British society, the crisis of hegemony led to ‘molecular’, not radical reforms of society, ultimately *led* and managed by the Labour Party, who viewed devolution as a way of consolidating political power and de-fusing nationalist agitation on the periphery. The third section looks at the *instability* and processes of struggle within the period following passive revolutions. I locate the articulation of a ‘new Welshness’ within this process of *transformismo*. The final concluding section considers whether Wales is now ‘more Welsh’ or not; the changing nature of the national habitus; and what, given this analysis of Welshness ‘from above’, I can expect to encounter in my ethnographic analysis of British Wales.

### *Crisis and Change*

Given the ostensible stability of the post-war Keynesian consensus and Wales’ integration into it, the vote in favour of devolution in 1997- such a short period later- and the concomitant ‘Welshification’ of society, seems startling. What changed to make the Welsh public vote for devolution in 1997 when they had so resoundingly rejected it in 1979? If the British bloc was so stable, how did devolution occur?

Gramsci’s work is centrally concerned with processes of transformation within society. Just as hegemony is contested, the historic bloc as a condensation of hegemony is also a delicate balance of forces which is continually being made and remade in the attempt to secure stability (Thomas, 2006:68. See also Lears, 1985: 671; Buci Glucksmann, 1980: 58) If at any stage one of the components which facilitates consent within the bloc is disrupted, the stability or ‘equilibrium’ of the bloc may be threatened. Morton (2001: 211-212) argues that:

*“...historical blocs are never static, but always fluid. Hegemony constantly needs to be reasserted and is open to contestation. Social forces from outside the historical bloc, but also from the margins within, may develop rival projects, challenging the*

*hegemonic bloc and, in some instances, breaking it apart. In short, history is the result of constant struggle between social forces and is, therefore, constantly subject to change”.*

Gramsci paid particular attention to the impact of what he called ‘*organic crises*’ on the stability of the bloc. He observed how the hegemony of the bloc could be threatened when the state became embroiled in undertakings (such as a war or economic crisis, for example), whose ‘invidious effects’ (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980:98) would permeate the superstructures and apparatus of the state (Gramsci, 1971:210). Under such conditions of crises, a ‘*shift in the basis of the state*’ occurs, and the state reveals its ‘true colours’ by moving away from its ‘ethical’ *integral* form back to its econo-corporate form (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980:98). These conditions of crisis reveal the dominant class to be “a narrow clique which tends to perpetuate its selfish privileges by controlling or stifling opposition forces” (Gramsci 1971: 189). Thomas (2009:145) argues that the organic crisis of hegemony is “the moment where the bourgeoisie’s claims to universality, to advance the common good, were revealed to be in the service of particularist interests, namely, the accumulation of capital in the hands of the ruling class”.

This ‘unmasking’ of the state may lead to a *crisis of authority*, whereby the popular legitimacy of the state is punctured, the unity between subaltern classes and dominant classes is ruined: the ruling classes *lose their consensus* (Gramsci, 1971:275). Gramsci states that under conditions of crisis “the great masses become *detached from their traditional ideologies*, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously” (1971:276). Society therefore moves from a united, ‘harmonious’ settlement, to one marked by corporate antagonisms and unrest. The dominant group, having lost the consent of the masses, instead falls back on coercion. These conditions of crisis *may* lead to ‘hegemonic shifts’ in consciousness. Within the historic bloc, subaltern groups may capitalize on the momentarily weakened defences of the state and transform the ideological terrain and themselves become hegemonic. Gramsci described this paradigm shift:

*“...what was previously secondary and subordinate...is now taken to be primary-becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and theoretical complex. The old collective will dissolve into its contradictory elements since the subordinate ones develop socially”* (1971: 195).

Reflecting once more the similarities between these two theorists, Bourdieu (1977) similarly argues that crises *‘bring the undiscussed into discussion’* and trigger a questioning of commonsensical identities throughout society.

### *The death of the KWNS*

Reasons for the swing from 1979 to 1997 are often blended together: administrative devolution under the Tories inadvertently ratifying Wales’ distinctiveness; the spectre of a regional EU; the NO campaign’s association with conservatism and the YES campaign’s association with Labour and not with Plaid Cymru/’secession’; Labour’s united front on devolution (see Morgan, 1999). In addition, the notion of an ‘increased Welsh identity’ (and a receding Britishness) is held up as both the root cause and a consequence of devolution. In this maelstrom, bureaucratic decisions, elite policy and ‘popular feeling’ are frequently elided, yet rarely placed within a wider theoretical framework.

The ‘orthodox’ interpretation of devolution holds that the shift in attitudes between 1979 and 1997 which culminated in Devolution stemmed from the *change in the form of state* and the ‘crisis of Britishness’ (Ward, 2007) which this generated. I now outline the changes to the form of state and the impact this had, before offering an alternative interpretation of events.

To explain this shift at the most basic level, an international economic crisis in the 1970s catalysed the shift from the epoch of *Pax Americana* to a new epoch of globalisation and neoliberalism (see Cox, 1987, 1993; Panitch, 1994; Bieler et al, 2006). The new demands of transnational capital essentially altered the role and *internal composition* of the state (Cox, 1981:147). The state was now *internationalized* and *coerced into the service of capital* (Jessop, 1982, 1990) So whilst post-Keynesian governments retained an important role in social life,

their resources and apparatuses, and ultimately the *role* of the state, become increasingly focused on efficiently organising transnational capital within the nation. This new focus manifested itself through the elevation of transnational economic agencies and business within *policy formation*, and the concomitant relegation of labour and departments of industry within governments (Panitch, 1994:70; Morton, 2007: 125), as well as the ‘hollowing out’ of certain state apparatuses as its capacities as responsibilities passed to transnational companies (Jessop, 2002).

Under the Thatcher administration the British state form underwent ‘drastic surgery’ (Lovering, 1983) as the state apparatus was reassembled along lines far different from those of the post war era. The apparatuses of the state now began to focus on serving the market, opening up education, health and transport to competition, for example. The restructuring of the state had a profound impact on the peripheral regions of the UK like Wales, which under the KWNS social contract received public sector employment (further ‘topped up’ by the benefits system) to ‘maintain some kind of decent minima’ (Erturk et al, 2011:22, 29). The Thatcher government, however, began the abandonment of these ameliorative regional policies, as development began to cluster around the south east, largely abandoning the peripheral regions. Thus the aforementioned ‘propping up’ of Wales began to grind to a halt as the UK economy refocused itself around the city of London and the South East (Erturk et al, 2011).

#### *Thatcherism as crisis of hegemony; Thatcher as the ‘midwife of devolution’*

The transformation of the British state from the KWNS to an econo-corporate stage under Thatcherism has been interpreted as a *crisis of hegemony* (Nairn 1981, Laws 2009), under which Wales became ‘partially detached’ from the state. Under Thatcherism, the *integral* KWNS was supplanted by a nakedly ‘econo-corporate’ state, now acting entirely in the interests of capital. This was a move away from the post-war social contract, which had hitherto been (largely) respected and adhered to by all parties. This move away from the ameliorative KWNS towards a neo-liberal settlement had a drastic impact on the legitimacy of the centralist state, which, as I demonstrated in the preceding section, was previously bound up with the idea of social



democracy and 'fairness'. Rawkins (1983: 220-1) illustrates the problems for hegemony caused by the alteration of the state form: "the internationalization of capital has not suppressed the state. Rather, it has increased its difficulties in performing its role as manager and guarantor of full employment, social peace and political consensus".

The change in the state from an ameliorative, integrative force to a neo-liberal form undoubtedly had ramifications for Wales and *Welsh identity*. Mitchell (2007:3) states that Thatcher must be understood as the 'midwife' of devolution:

"...when we refer to Mrs Thatcher's role in devolution we are generally referring to a very negative role: opinion in Wales and Scotland was mobilised in favour of devolution and against Mrs Thatcher and all she stood for. The perception, whether fair or otherwise, that she harboured deep anti-Welsh and anti-Scottish sentiments was real and it was potent".

Davies (2006) similarly locates the dramatic swing from rejection of devolution in 1979 to support in 1997 in these conditions of 'crisis', arguing that the ostensible demise in British identity can be "attributed to eighteen years of conservative government in the UK, and particularly the impact of Thatcherism" (2006: 116). For Davies, the erosion of the welfare state apparatus and the destabilization of the British industrial infrastructure (which to a large extent represented the post-war vision of Britishness) fundamentally changed what it meant to be British i.e. the change in state *form* altered the *nature* of national identity: Britishness as a *political identity* could no longer be associated with the 'fairness' of the 'ethical' welfare state, and this change in the political connotations of Britishness impacted dramatically on the peripheral nations of the UK. Thus the alteration of the state form led to a re-definition of what it meant to be Scottish and Welsh. McCrone (2002:178 cited in Davies, 2006: 117) argues that:

"Being collectivist, social democratic, liberal, was conveniently juxtaposed from 1979 until the 1990s against a Thatcherite government which was seen to be none of these things, and –almost by default- somehow spoke for 'the English' because the Conservatives got elected on the back of English votes".

In this interpretation, as a reaction to the 'neglect' of Thatcherism, Wales became partially detached from the bloc, and something approaching a cultural awakening or paradigm shift took root as Wales moved inexorably towards favouring devolved political representation. Undoubtedly under Thatcherism "huge masses... passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which, taken together...add up to a revolution" (Gramsci, 1971:210). Welshness, previously a cultural identity within the bloc, now gained a necessary political dimension as devolution became an obvious antidote to the excesses of Thatcherism.

In the above view, devolution is seemingly the inevitable outcome of crisis, a fundamental rupture with the past, ushering in a new epoch, an inexorable 'forward march of Welshness', supplanting a moribund Britishness. Moreover, this change is viewed as being *popular*. It is on the impact of the crisis and the *nature of change* that my argument hinges.

The rest of this chapter now focuses on the nature of state restructuring in Wales, and in doing so aims to illuminate the response of the state to hegemonic crises.

#### *Devolution as a Passive Revolution.*

Organic crises such as Thatcherism do not *automatically* usher in a period of transformation or social change. Gramsci's work is centrally concerned to break with the rigid Marxist determinism which postulated that each 'act' of society automatically and inexorably leads to the next. He assumes no 'necessary teleological evolution' between different moments within the struggle for hegemony (Hall, 1986:13-14). Crucially, Gramsci writes that whilst the crisis creates danger for the state in the short run, "the state apparatus is far more resistant than it is possible to believe" (Gramsci, 1926: 121-2, cited in Martin, 1997:46) and that

"the traditional ruling class, which has numerous trained cadres...reabsorbs the control which was slipping from its grasp. Perhaps it may make sacrifices, and expose itself to an uncertain future by demagogic promises; but it retains power,

reinforces it for the time being, and uses it to crush its adversary and disperse its leading cadres” (1971:210-211)

During periods of crisis, the state reacts to the challenges it faces with a view to clawing back control, righting the ship. As Buci Glucksmann (1980:72) notes, the true nature of the state- its flexibility and sophistication- is revealed by its *reaction to crises*. It should also be noted at this juncture that conceptualising Thatcherism as an organic crisis is not unproblematic. After all, Thatcherism was as much a *cultural* project as an economic one, a ‘radical revolution’ which was simultaneously regressive and progressive (Hall, 1987:133). The radical break Thatcherism made with the post-war consensus, whilst alienating large sections of the working class, did not detach *all* classes. In fact, Thatcherism contained shrewd hegemonic policies and did not abandon the idea of *consent*. As Barnett (1982) notes, Thatcherism rearticulated Britishness, away from the ideas of ‘fairness’ which underpinned the KWNS towards a militaristic ‘Churchillism’, which gained purchase amongst many, (this was evident during the Falklands war, for example). In addition to this reformulated British nationalism, economic initiatives such as the ‘right to buy’ scheme represented a shrewd concession to the ‘aspirational’ new working class, and undoubtedly succeeded in keeping a significant number of working class people, ‘on side’ (Huitson, 2013; Johnes, 2013). Within Wales, the coastal plane of British Wales in particular represented an area of the new working class which moved towards conservatism (see Adamson, 1991), and therefore it may be that different regions of Wales became more detached from the bloc than others. Although Laws (2009) claims Thatcherism’s cultural shift was never *truly hegemonic* or ‘national-popular’, the sheer popularity of Thatcherism is worth remembering and often gets overlooked when considering the ‘decline of Britishness’ and the scale of the ‘detachment’ of the subaltern classes within the bloc.

Devolution cannot be separated from the Labour party, which as I have already demonstrated has enjoyed political and cultural hegemony within Wales for the best part of a century. The debate over Welsh devolution and the ‘national question’ within the Labour Party is well worn (see: Morgan, 1999; Tanner et al, 2000; Wyn Jones, 2001:38; Edwards, 2011). The internal tension over devolution within the party was of course reflected in the 1979 referendum in

which rebel Labour MPs were influential in the NO campaign. Why then, did the Labour party put devolution back on the agenda? There are, as Wyn Jones (2012:14) notes, myriad reasons for the change in Labour party attitudes between 1979 and 1997 (and indeed before 1979), but the key is that Labour's view of devolution has always been *strategic*, not ideological. The return of devolution as a core pillar of Labour policy is best understood in the context of the changing state form and the new challenges this threw up for Labour.

Despite the rejection of devolution in 1979, cracks had begun to appear within the bloc in the sixties, *under Labour*, way before Thatcherism (Nairn, 1998). The ameliorative regional policies of the KWNS were not going smoothly. Rawkins (1983: 218) argues that "at least since the defeat of the Labour government of 1964-70, regional policy has amounted to little more than an ad hoc programme for subsidising multinational companies". These failing economic policies coincided with a resurgent Plaid Cymru, which came of age in the sixties, and won its first parliamentary seat in Carmarthenshire in 1966. This was followed by large by-election gains in Rhondda and Caerphilly. At the same time, Welsh language activism and indeed militancy was growing in the Welsh speaking heartlands. The pressure group *Cymdeithas yr Iaith* were formed in 1962 and began campaigns of non violent protest. In response, the government passed the Welsh language act in 1967. Edwards (2011) brands this period as '*Labour's crisis*' as the party became dislodged from North West Wales where it had previously been hegemonic. At the same time, significant numbers of Welsh people were flocking to the Tories in unprecedented numbers (G.A.Williams, 1981). These nationalist successes scared Labour into adopting devolution as a policy in the sixties, and although devolution was not part of the party's manifesto in 1974, it nonetheless belatedly and indeed hurriedly adopted it as a policy, culminating in the 1979 referendum (Hopkin, 2009, Morgan and Mungham, 2000:32). The preferred strategy, however, was always to "bash the nationalists and sweeten the unitary system" by stepping up ameliorative regional policies by dispersing more public sector jobs and by introducing measures of administrative devolution (Morgan and Mungham, 2000:33).

The rejection of devolution in 1979 blunted Labour's enthusiasm for devolution as a response to nationalism, and reasserted the long standing preference for centralism and an effective

regional economic policy. Yet whilst Labour could afford to oscillate in its attitude towards devolution in 1979, their time in the electoral wilderness in the 80s and early nineties precipitated a change in attitudes. The unpopular centralizing policies of the Thatcher administration, coupled with the continual growth of nationalist parties- both Plaid Cymru and the SNP were organizing and repositioning themselves as social-democratic parties- illustrated the need to modernise and adopt devolution. The question of devolution and the democratic deficit *had* to be addressed if Labour wanted any chance of regaining power in the UK and to consolidate their hegemony in Wales and Scotland (Mooney and Williams, 2006). Devolution was therefore conceived of as part of a general package of democratic reform linked to Labour's wider modernising electoral strategy (Nairn, 1998).

Devolution therefore fits the bill of what Gramsci terms a ***passive revolution***, which is both a concept and a *process*. Faced by crises, dominant classes *rally*, and actively seek to deny other classes the opportunity to assume the initiative, to capitalise on the breached defences. Passive Revolution is a 'revolution... without a revolution' (Gramsci, 1971:59), or '*revolution/restoration*' (1971:109), whereby radical, (often incoherent) mass movements and transformations are *taken over* by 'traditional organic forces...parties of long standing' (1971:111-112). The traditional reactionary forces introduce concrete changes and transformations, but rather than these being radical, subaltern demands are "satisfied by *small doses, legally, in a reformist manner- in such a way that it was possible to preserve the political and economic position of the old feudal classes,*" (Gramsci, 1971: 119, my emphasis). It is therefore a '*technique of statecraft*' (Morton, 2010: 318), the introduction of *moderate or molecular reforms* in order to neutralise radical demands from below and to maintaining the status quo in the face of crises (Sassoon, 1980: 134. See Morton, 2007a; 2007b; 2010; 2011; 2012a; 2012 b; Thomas, 2006; 2009; Callinicos, 2010).

This language of the need to *control* the process of state restructuring and to neutralise potentially counter-hegemonic currents was not disguised within the discourse of devolution. Indeed, those in charge of constitutional restructuring explicitly stated that "the development of the policy of devolution has always had its roots in the desire to preserve the Union"

(Falconer, 2006, cited in Mitchell, 2007:11. See also Nairn, 1977; Keating, 2009; Unger, 2010). Although not utilizing the framework of passive revolution, Nairn (1998) argues that power devolved [by the state] is power *retained*, and claims that devolution represents an attempt by the British state to reform itself '*virtually*', whilst leaving intact the core of the British state (i.e. parliament, the monarchy, etc). As he puts it, "everything else must be, in a curious sense, over-reformed round about the untouchable core". He claims devolution as a revolution from above is a way "of standing still while appearing to be running extremely hard". Labour's strategic view of devolution as a way of safeguarding the UK and capitalism is summarised by Curtice (2001:80), who states that "by advocating and finally granting devolution, Labour hoped to demonstrate that the aspirations of people in Scotland and Wales could be met within the structures of the United Kingdom, thereby killing demands for Scottish and Welsh independence stone dead" (2001, 80. See also Morgan and Mungham, 2000: 32-36).

### *The Labour Party as modern Piedmont*

A core feature of the process of passive revolution is the absence of popular participation and initiative in the development of history (Gramsci, 1971: 105). The term *passive* refers to the lack of a *popular* element within the transformation of society (Thomas, 2006:73). Instead of radical, far reaching change stemming from popular participation, radical currents circulating at the bottom of society get *absorbed* into an already established conservative political project "undertaken by elites, garbed in the rhetoric of previous revolutionary movements, but without the extensive involvement of subaltern classes" (Thomas, 2006:72). Passive revolutions are therefore 'top down' affairs, whereby dominant groups or the state become the *motor of change* rather than popular pressure from below (Gramsci, 1971: 105-109. See also Jessop, 1990:213; Thomas, 2006 72-3; Hesketh, 2010: 289).

Central to the concept of passive revolution are the 'personnel' (Gramsci, 1971:111). Buci-Glucksmann (1979) therefore urges us to pay attention to the *political organization* and management of state transformations: What *form* is the transition taking? *Who* is leading it? Within passive revolutions, particular groups or parties may enter the fray and provide the

'mass basis' for a new policy on *behalf* of the state (Gramsci, notebook 7, cited in Buci-Glucksmann, 1980:98; 1979:216-219). Within the Italian revolution, Gramsci pinpointed the role of the state of Piedmont, which functioned as the leading group within the process of state restructuring (Gramsci, 1971: 104)<sup>12</sup>.

Whilst pressure for devolution and reform came from *below* as large swathes of subaltern classes became detached from the bloc and expressed their discontent in Wales and Scotland by voting for nationalist parties, the precise *form* this transformation and restricting took originated *within* the Labour party. Change, in other words, was led *from above* by the Labour party on *behalf of the state*. Whilst parties or groups enter passive revolutions and dominate transformations, Gramsci argues that they are not 'leaders' (since this presupposes the existence of a mass movement which agreed to be 'led'). No-one was led by Labour, and *nor did they wish to lead*: "they did not wish to concord their interests and aspirations with the interests and aspirations of other groups" (Gramsci, 1971:104). Mitchell (2009: 159) illustrates that the most crucial debates surrounding devolution and its content were those taking place *inside* the Labour Party rather than between other actors (see also Mungham and Morgan, 2000: 13; Johnes, 2012: 413; Hopkin, 2009). Labour's proposals for devolution- the *form* it would take, i.e., the powers of the proposed Assembly, were not subject to public debate (Wyn Jones and Scully, 2003:4). Indeed "it was clear that one of the primary concerns of the Welsh Labour Party was precisely to avoid such discussion" (ibid).

Labour's 'janus faced' attitude towards devolution (Morgan, 2007) revealed their role as Piedmont in the Welsh passive revolution: on the one hand responsive to the process as a whole, (and in fact leading), introducing *molecular* changes, but on the other unwilling to share power or countenance an outcome in which it was not hegemonic. In other words, *leading*, but not *leaders*, ensuring their agenda came first. As Gramsci puts it, leading parties "progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes"

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<sup>12</sup> So to avoid conceptual confusion and eliding 'the state', and 'party', passive revolutions may be led *by* parties, yet *serving the state* (meaning, the status quo). Indeed parties may seem on occasion to move *against* the state in their transformation, yet as with all passive revolutions, the proof is in the pudding: if the state apparatus and capitalist mode of production remains intact, nothing has changed (Riley and Desai, 2007. See also Jessop, 1990).

(1971: 109). This *statisation* of change (Jessop, 1990:213) essentially alters the *character* of the transformation from a radical one to a moderate and reformist one. Osmond (2011:10) notes how Ron Davies' 'maximalist' proposals for devolution<sup>13</sup> were rejected by Labour's policy commission in favour of far more moderate powers, revealing once more the desire to prevent radical change. The now infamous parachuting in of Alun Michael over 'local boy' Rhodri Morgan personified the government's initial treatment of the Assembly as the 'Welsh office plus', based on a (reasonable) assumption that Labour hegemony was taken for granted and that the Assembly would simply represent an outpost through which centralist policy could be transmitted. Few predicted that Labour would be anything but hegemonic in the nascent National Assembly, with one Labour peer remarking before the election that "if we are not going to control the Assembly, then it's better we do not have it" (cited in Morgan and Mungham, 2000: 172; Morgan, 1999). As Fowler and Jones (2005:6) put it, "the very structure of government in the National Assembly was designed by the Welsh Labour Party in anticipation of a Welsh Labour victory". For example, the PR voting system introduced in the Assembly was skewed towards a majoritarian first past the post system which was designed to ensure Labour majorities in the devolved system (McAllister and Kay, 2010). So although it would be misleading to characterise small nationalist parliamentary gains as representing *mass* popular advocacy of devolution or a popular nationalist resurgence, whatever popular sentiments and pressures for change there were, were absorbed and rearticulated by Labour in a way amenable to perpetuating their hegemony and the capitalist system.

#### *Thinned Hegemony and Unstable Equilibrium: post 1997 power struggles and transformismo*

Yet the process of passive revolution is not a 'clean cut' neutralisation of subaltern forces and a straightforward consolidation of power. Under conditions of passive revolution, where hegemony is necessarily '*thinned*' for a period, the *residue of crisis* is ever present, despite the best efforts of the intervening 'Piedmont': "the conditions of passive revolution therefore differ from the real exercise of hegemony over the whole of society which alone permits a certain

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<sup>13</sup> These proposals included: an Assembly with 100 AMs; proportional representation; primary legislation and tax raising powers.



organic equilibrium” (Gramsci 1971: 396). The situation of ‘unstable equilibrium’ is therefore often a *power struggle* (Hall, 1986: 13) unlike the relatively settled equilibrium of the bloc, and passive revolution must be therefore understood as an *ongoing process* in which ideological battles and so on are constantly being fought; in which one side may gain the upper hand and then the other (Morton, 2011: 111-129).

The *instability* inherent in passive revolutions was highlighted in the first Assembly Elections. These proved a ‘quiet earthquake’ as Labour recorded arguably its worst ever electoral showing in Wales and was unable to form a majority government (Morgan and Mungham, 2000: 182-183; Curtice, 2001:14; Wyn Jones and Scully, 2003) as Plaid Cymru recorded significant gains. The ‘imposition’ of Alun Michael by Westminster was a miscalculation, and Labour paid for it at the polls. Ostensibly not fully appreciative of the prominence of ‘Welsh matters’ in 1997, Labour were outmanoeuvred by Plaid Cymru, who successfully used their slogan ‘The Party of Wales’ to imply that Labour was the party of London and ‘lacked Welshness’ (Morgan and Mungham, 2000: 180). In addition, Labour’s visible shift to the right under Tony Blair allowed Plaid Cymru to outmanoeuvre Labour from the left (Morgan and Mungham, 2000: 184; Curtice, 2001:89). As Evans and George (1999) explain, people voted Plaid in 1999 not because of their nationalism, but because of their *socialism*- Plaid now appeared as a social-democratic party in the style of ‘old labour’.

This was all certainly not part of the plan Labour had in mind for devolution, i.e., of rapidly returning to the status quo in all essential features (Wyn Jones, 2001: 53). The scare of the first Assembly elections revealed the instability of the post-devolution milieu and acted as a catalyst for Labour, who, after recovering from their ‘shell shock’ (Morgan and Mungham, 2000: 198) then began what Gramsci labels the political strategy of *transformismo*, which is an integral part of passive revolution (Gramsci, 1971: 58) as the hegemonic force attempts to secure its dominance within the febrile conditions of passive revolution. Transformismo is in many ways the *second stage* of passive revolution (Gramsci, 1971:109), “the gradual but continuous absorption...of the active elements produced by allied groups- *and even of those which came*

*from antagonistic groups and seemed irreconcilably hostile”* (1971:58) with a view to ‘*annihilating*’ and ‘*decapitating*’ the emergent counter-hegemonic threat (Gramsci, 1971:58).

The next part of this chapter focuses on providing an overview of post-devolution Wales and Welsh political society in light of the ‘ongoing’ process of passive revolution or ‘hegemony maintenance’ (Sutherland, 2005:195). As I stated in my introduction, the changing nature of the Welsh national *habitus*- *what it means to be Welsh*- must be located within this milieu of transformismo and its attendant political, material and intellectual struggles (Morton, 2011:129).

### *Clear Red Water*

Within Wales, devolution itself was *marketed* as an ‘economic dividend’ (Morgan, 2006), i.e., a material concession to Wales, a way of making the Welsh ‘masters in their own house’ (Thomas, 2005). During the ‘Yes’ campaign, for example, Ron Davies explicitly stated that devolutionary measures were necessary to “offer a measure of protection against the unwelcome attention of any future centralising government” (Andrews, 1999: 20). Rather than adopt neo-liberal norms and make the Assembly a ‘transmission belt’ for capital, the Welsh Assembly instead adopted redistributive and ‘state-centric’ policies, *largely absorbing ‘Keynesian counter-cyclical resources from the UK government’* (Cooke, 2005: 437). The ‘filling in of the state’ at the Welsh scale- using the apparatuses of the devolved government to aid ‘universalism’- reflected the deep seated tradition of welfarism and the role of the state in Wales (Jones et al, 2005: 425). These material strategies of transformismo were crucial in the attempt to secure Labour’s wobbling hegemony in the early post-devolution milieu and should be understood as a reaction to Plaid’s aforementioned re-positioning as a traditional social-democratic party. In response to this threat, Welsh Labour re-established itself as a social democratic party under new leader Rhodri Morgan, exemplified by Morgan’s ‘clear red water’ speech in 2002 where he positioned Welsh Labour as an ‘old Labour’ outpost (Moon, 2012), disconnected from ‘neo-liberal England’ and the embrace of privatization by New Labour in Westminster.

However, the strength of any institutional form within a territory affects its ability to ‘pin down’ or ‘embed’ global processes of economic development, i.e. to actually have an impact on economic development (Lovering, 1999; Cooke, 2005: 444, See also Rodriguez-Pose & Bwire, 2005). Morgan (2006) illustrates that there is a chronic disjunction between the powers of the assembly and its tasks and what it *says it does* (also Morrissey, 2003). The weakness of the devolution settlement in Wales renders the notion of devolution as an ‘economic dividend’ or as a barrier to neoliberal policies (this is how devolution was partly marketed) rather ludicrous.

Post-devolution Wales must therefore be seen as still retaining its *function* (Hesketh, 2010: 385) within the global economy as a regional pool of cheap, unskilled reserve Labour ( Walker, 1978; Day, 1980; Terleow 2012), as the Assembly as a ‘node’ is largely concerned with securing foreign direct investment or fly by night capital<sup>14</sup>.

But despite the glaring disjuncture between rhetoric and reality, the ‘clear red water’ narrative helped perpetuate the notion that Labour was ‘standing up for Wales’, reflecting Wales’ ‘innately social democratic character’ (Moon, 2012: 5), and ultimately perpetuating the old narrative that Labourism and Welshness are one and the same. This discourse of ‘Welsh distinctiveness’ had the combined benefits of stressing Welsh Labour’s ‘socialism’ *and* their inherent *Welshness*: ‘clear red water’ is also fundamentally a *national* narrative. As Moon notes, ‘Welshness’ permeated pretty much every corner of Welsh labour socio-economic policy. This was therefore an articulation of a *type* of Welshness linked to ‘social democracy’ (Moon, 2012: 10); a version of Welshness which Labour were actively constructing in their own ‘old Labour’ image (2012: 9). This rhetoric created a clear binary between the ‘socialistic’ Welsh Labour party and ‘non-socialist’ English Labour. Moreover, it also relates to a hierarchical notion of Welshness insofar as it links ‘socialism’ (as defined by Welsh labour) with ‘true’ Welshness: “Clear red water also resonates with depictions of those opposed to linked policies as ‘non-Welsh’, or not ‘*real* Welsh’ (Moon, 2012:11).

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<sup>14</sup> One of the pillars of the Assembly Government’s plans to secure FDI is advertising the fact that salary costs of Welsh workers are 40% cheaper than the UK average (justask.wales.com)

Whilst the creation of a different level of organization within the Labour party ostensibly presented problems of organization and unity, in reality, the policy divergences between the core and the regional parties were moderate enough to be easily manageable (Rees, 2005, Smith et al, 2009, Hopkin, 2009). Far from causing tension within the Labour party between core and peripheral elites, the experience of devolution necessitated a smooth evolution from a highly centralized body to a sophisticated, multi-level party (Laffin et al, 2007). Indeed, as Trench (2004:5) observes, devolution undoubtedly strengthened the Labour party as a whole within the UK, again allowing them to be all things to all people. Problematic regions and policies were now no longer the UK government's problem. Troublesome constitutional debates, although they remained, were moved *out of Westminster* (Trench, 2004:6).

### *'Welshing up'*

What Labour drew from the shock of 1999 was that they 'lacked Welshness' (Taylor, 2003: 171). In response, Labour began a concerted effort to present a more Welsh image and to head off Plaid's challenge as 'The Party of Wales' (Wyn Jones: 2001: 46-47). The party subsequently rebranded itself as 'Welsh Labour: The True Party of Wales', an obvious affront to Plaid. Much of this rebranding of Welsh Labour as a distinctly Welsh force centred on the new Welsh Labour leader, Rhodri Morgan (Wyn Jones and Scully, 2004: 192) as Labour continually sought to occupy Plaid's ground. In addition, Labour also devolved much of its internal machinery to Cardiff (Taylor, 2003: 172; see also Geeky and Levy, 1989; Laffin et al 2007). The 'issue' of the Welsh language was also neutralized, as the WAG absorbed the issue from language pressure groups and adopted the Welsh language wholesale as part of their 'Welshification' (Phillips, 2005: 107-11), exemplified by the aforementioned 'lath Pawb' 'action plan' for a bilingual Wales (WAG: 2003)<sup>15</sup>. Through the strategic embrace of the Welsh language and this general process of 'Welshing up' (Scully, 2010), Labour effectively occupied Plaid Cymru's electoral ground. The chairman of the 1997 'Yes' campaign makes this strategy and his perceptions of its success very clear:

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<sup>15</sup> This has been continued into the present day in the form of the 'A living language: a language for living' (WAG, 2012).

“With the emergence of a more pro-European, pro-reform Labour party, the scope for a nationalistic intellectual resurgence seems unlikely. The neutralising of the language issue between the political parties has also removed a further recruitment weapon. Intellectually, the Devolution victory has given the Wales Labour Party the opportunity to ensure a radical politics in Wales that does not fall prey to nationalist illusion” (Andrews, 2000: 205)

*‘Welsh but not too Welsh’- ‘Civic Welshness’ and Disarticulation*

Post-devolution, much was made of the need to move away from ‘ethnic’ markers such as language and culture, towards a progressive, *civic* identity based on shared political values and institutions similar to that of Scotland’s (Osmond, 2004; Fowler and Jones, 2005; Mann, 2006) (regardless of the fact that ‘civic’ identities are in reality underpinned by ‘ethnic’ notions of nationhood- Calhoun, 1997). This new Welshness would recognise the plurality of identities extant within Wales and allow for issues like hybridity and ambivalence (Williams, 2005). This was central to the notion of the creation of ‘new ways of being Welsh’.

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that articulation and disarticulation are dialectical, and the advocacy of one narrative inevitably involves the marginalisation of another. Simon Brooks (2006, 2009) speaking from a ‘non-statist’ Welsh nationalist perspective, critically engages with the discursive construction of this new Welshness. He argues that the construction of the ‘new Welshness’ or ‘*civic*’ Welshness in fact represents a rearticulation of a Welshness which is amenable to Unionism, i.e., which bolsters Labour hegemony- a narrative consistent with the stifling aims of the passive revolution. Whilst appropriating Plaid Cymru’s main policies and their ‘unique selling point’ of being the ‘party of Wales’, Labour systematically disarticulated any narratives which could not be grafted to their own platform. These processes chime with Raymond Williams’ statement that the dominant hegemonic culture will attempt to incorporate ‘harmless’ subaltern narratives- evident in the co-optation of Welshness- but when this is not possible, threatening discourses will be “extirpated with extraordinary vigour” (1985:43). In the previous chapter I demonstrated that historically, the Labourist tendency in Wales ‘othered’ the

linguistic view of Welshness as parochial, reactionary and backwards, completely at odds with the progressiveness and cosmopolitanism of Anglophone Labour Wales. Yet in post-devolution Wales, Labour, now a 'soft-nationalist' party, could no longer be as open about their Unionism as in previous decades. They could no longer openly attack the Welsh language. Instead, the strategy of disarticulation evolved in a subtle way, as the ostensibly benign mantra of 'inclusivity', designed to gather all types of identity under a 'wide tent' of accepting 'civic' Welshness which respected all types and ways of being Welsh, was used in an ideologically loaded way to disarticulate a rival conception of Welshness. Under the rubric of inclusivity, Unionists could position 'language concerns' as inherently 'ethnic' (i.e., 'non-civic'). The perpetuation of a civic/ethnic binary, in which 'civic' (i.e. Anglophone) conceptions of Welshness were inherently 'inclusive', meant that it became acceptable to portray language activists and Welsh language institutions as '*ethnic*' and therefore 'exclusionary'. Subsequently it was acceptable and legitimate to deny political space to these 'ethnic' and 'exclusionary' elements (Brooks, 2009: 10- 11). Consequently within post-devolution Wales, as Phillips (2005:110) and Wyn Jones and Scully (2003:32-4) argue, being Welsh is good, but one has to be careful of not being '*too Welsh*'.

Moreover, the narrative evolved into an explicitly racial idiom: since something is inherently 'ethnic' rather than 'civic' (and non-national) it can, by symbiosis, become racist (Brooks, 2006: 142). This new strategy explicitly branded Welsh nationalism (i.e. Plaid Cymru) as 'racist'. Brooks notes how the disarticulation of 'ethnic' nationalist discourses began to filter into wider public consciousness, to 'pass through the floors' from 'philosophy' to 'common sense'. The tabloid press, in particular Labour's newspaper ally (Fowler and Jones, 2005:8) *The Welsh Mirror*<sup>16</sup>, pursued this line regarding 'racist nationalists' in a concerted campaign of vilification which entailed selective readings or 'mistranslations' (Brooks, 2006:150) and trawling through the Welsh language press for 'gems' which could be used in the smear campaign. Once again, these accusations of racism represented an attempt to exile Welsh nationalists from the 'sphere of the acceptable' (2006:143).

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<sup>16</sup> For more on the relationship between Welsh Labour and *The Welsh Mirror*, see McGuinness, 2012

These political attacks on Welsh nationalism soon spilt over into attacks on the Welsh language *itself*, blurring the boundaries between ‘the language’, the people who speak it, and ‘extremism’. Brooks notes how “Welsh was labelled a ‘secret code’ and Welsh language articles were published ‘under the cover of the Welsh language’. The Eisteddfod became the ‘festival of fear and hatred’” (2006:152). Welsh speaking communities were portrayed in two main ways, “while poor rural Welsh speakers were seen as ‘rednecks’, ‘racist’ against outsiders; wealthy urban Welsh speakers, perhaps working for the BBC or S4C, were trading on their ‘racial’ background to gain unfair advantage” (2006: 153).

Labour, or at least the Labourist articulation of Welshness, by virtue of being squarely located in the ‘civic’ camp, remains dominant. Brooks argues that ‘exclusive’ ‘linguistic’ Welshness is contrasted with the implicitly laudable ‘collectivist, universalist’ working class. The notion of inclusivity, which incorporated broad ideas of multiculturalism, conceives both the *British state* and the nascent civic (Anglophone) Welsh identity as ‘neutral’, value free guardians of plurality and diversity. Brooks argues that the emergent civic conceptions of Welsh identity have ultimately been ‘cover’ for the continued hegemony of the English language, “albeit with a veneer of thin bilingualism”, and that moreover, the ethnic/civic binary has also allowed the ethnocentric assumptions inherent in the ‘civic’ ‘ethnically blind’, (and ultimately, *Unionist*) identity to escape scrutiny. Ultimately, then, the articulation of this ‘new Welshness’ was designed to reconfigure the symbolic markers of Welshness in a way which othered the Welsh speaking minority and which buttressed the common sense Labourist image of Welshness (2006: 4).

In response to the development of this ‘civic’ Welshness, with its implicit othering of ‘ethnic’ nationalist rivals, an ‘ethnic’ iteration of Welshness- rooted in the Welsh language- emerged in the form of the pressure group Cymuned, who were unhappy with the quiescence of Plaid Cymru and Cymdeithas yr Iaith in the face of the ‘civic’ consensus (Fowler and Jones, 2005).

### *Conclusion: Equilibrium restored?*

I have already made clear that an analysis of the macro level is crucial for understanding the forces which traverse my area of study. In particular, I needed to analyze devolution and the idea that Wales is now 'more Welsh', and that consequently, British Wales is becoming less culturally distinct than previously thought.

This chapter has offered a 'pessimistic' interpretation of devolution as a passive revolution. This obviously stands in stark contrast to celebratory or 'optimistic' accounts of devolution which interpret it as a radical break with the past, representing a 'fault line' between old and new Wales. The restructuring of the state form under Thatcherism 'peeled away' (Thomas, 2009:225) the 'togetherness' of the British political system, and led to the *partial* detachment of Wales (and other subaltern classes and regions) from the historical bloc. Yet these rumblings of popular discontent were co-opted by the Labour party, which managed the precise form of state restructuring. So rather than devolution initiating profound change, what occurred was a 'restoration/revolution'- moderate, 'molecular' *reforms* with the aim of securing Labour hegemony and the Union.

In light of this interpretation devolution as a passive revolution, precisely what type of society is Porthcawl, and indeed British Wales, a part of? Is post-devolution Wales 'more Welsh', or not? The strategy of transformismo described above seems to have restored a kind of equilibria in post-devolution Wales. The tactics of *incorporation* and co-optation within the strategy of transformismo effectively neutralized Plaid Cymru, who have struggled greatly to define how they are any different from the social democratic, 'soft-nationalist' Welsh Labour party in post-devolution Wales (Sandry, 2011; Trench, 2004:9). In 2003, Wales 'came home to Labour' (Wyn Jones and Scully, 2003), illustrating the ostensible success of Labour's 'Welshification' process and the 'decapitation' of Labour's main rivals. In the 2007 elections, Labour again failed to win a clear majority, but they then arguably embarked on the final stage of transformismo and "the absorption of the enemies' elites" (Gramsci, 1971:59) in the form of the *One Wales* coalition. The Plaid-Labour coalition more dramatically blurred the ideological differences between the



hegemonic Labour party and its rival, further marginalizing Plaid and making their “explicit nationalism...irrelevant” (Glyn Williams, 2005: 231).

The powers of the Welsh Assembly remain weak. Westminster retains control over significant areas of legislation which impact on everyday life. The devolved settlement is ultimately a confusing halfway house (Trench, 2004, Thomas, 2005). Instead of creating a new vibrant democracy, devolution has therefore in fact ‘*produced a bastard*’ form of state (Gramsci, 1971:90), which has consequently impacted unevenly on Welsh society. The Welsh public has not engaged in any real way with the new devolved institution, demonstrated in persistently low turnouts in Assembly elections (Curtice, 2001; Wyn Jones, Scully and Trystan, 2004). In many ways there has been a remarkable *continuity* between pre and post-devolution Wales: support for independence has decreased; Welshness has not significantly increased; levels of ‘Britishness’ remain stable; the proportion of people using the Welsh language has declined (Bradbury & Andrews, 2010). In addition, the WAG has no control over macro-economic policy. There is no distinct Welsh media, for example. So to return to the claim that *Wales is more Welsh*, I believe my critical analysis can say that this assumption is premature at the very least. To use Billig’s terminology, the explosion of visual and aural Welshness surrounding 1997 must therefore be conceptualized as a temporary ‘*heating*’ of Welshness.

Conversely, it would not appropriate to assume that Welsh society has not changed at all since devolution. As in any passive revolution, changes, although ‘molecular’ and conservative, are nonetheless concrete and likely to impact on everyday life. This is consistent with the nature of passive revolution, whereby change is simultaneously *partially fulfilled yet also displaced* (Callinicos, 2010). Thus a ‘thin veneer’ of Welshness, to use Brooks’ term, is nonetheless still a thin veneer. As part of changes which attempted to satisfy demands from below ‘legally, in a reformist manner’, as Gramsci puts it, Welshness has been given ‘institutional expression’ by devolution, and a distinct Welsh civil society has begun to take root. The establishment of these new ‘hegemonic apparatuses’ ostensibly provides a new, secure basis for Welshness (Aull Davies, 2010:191). In the field of education in particular Welshness has been actively promoted. In English language schools this has taken the form of the *cwrricwlwm cymreig* (Phillips, 2005),

whilst 'The Welsh Medium Education Strategy' (WAG, 2010) has enshrined the Welsh government's commitment to Welsh medium education. Bilingual education has grown within formerly Anglophone areas (e.g. Hodges 2009, 2012), suggesting incremental increases in Welshness, not to mention the *spatial* aspect to this 'thin veneer', as molecular changes gradually penetrate formerly ambivalent areas. Moreover, it would be remiss not to acknowledge that whilst 'Cool Cymru' ebbed, Welshness nonetheless undergoes significant periods of heating amidst this 'cooler' post-devolution era. At the time of writing, for example, Welsh football is (somewhat) on the rise, and Welsh rugby has enjoyed significant success and widespread support (see Mackay, 2010). New popular Welsh media have emerged, most notably *Gavin and Stacey*, and shows like *Doctor Who*, *Casualty* and *Torchwood* are filmed in Cardiff Bay.

As to the concomitant issue of the recalibration of the Welsh national habitus away from its 'narrow' and indeed *hierarchical* ideas of Welshness, in this chapter I located the development of 'new forms of Welshness' within the context of *transformismo*. The post-devolution milieu therefore represents a new arena, within which intellectual struggles are fought for control of the national-popular will. Clearly, there has been no straightforward emergence of new 'ways of being Welsh'. Instead there were, and are, competing forms of Welshness swirling round within this milieu, and the dominant forms permeate public consciousness. As aforementioned, reform of the common sense of society begins with an intellectual confrontation- "what matters is the criticism to which such an ideological complex [i.e the common sense of society] is subjected...this criticism makes makes possible a process of differentiation and change." (Gramsci, 1971: 195) In Wales, the dominant Labourist construction of Welshness has been confronted by a new wave of *revisionism* in both historiography (Light, 2000, 2009; Croll, 2000; Lieven, 2002; England, 2002) and in sociology (Williams, 2005; Aull Davies, 2005) which have drawn attention to the narrowness of the Labourist interpretation of Welshness and the need for new cultural forms and new interpretations of Welshness. Yet it is unclear whether these confrontations at the intellectual level have reverberated into wider consciousness about what it means to be Welsh; or opened up grey areas within Welshness which fall between the 'two

truths' of Wales, in particular whether or not new forms have emerged which speak to peripheral regions like British Wales.

We have arrived, it would seem, at what Gramsci terms an *interregnum*. In the period following a passive revolution, there may emerge an 'unstable equilibrium' (*interregnum*) where neither progressive nor reactionary forces dominate but 'bleed each other mutually' (Gramsci, 1971: 219). Representing perhaps a more contemporary interpretation of this situation, Barlow (2005:209) claims that the resultant situation that has emerged in post-devolution is a period of '*in-betweenness*'.

My ethnographic analysis locates Porthcawl within this period of unstable equilibrium, whereby the 'forward march of Welshness' has been temporarily halted. My examination of Welsh identity in British Wales within this wider context of *stasis*, and examines how these currents of revolution and restoration play out on the ground: How do these *molecular* changes manifest themselves and impact on everyday life in British Wales? How do people in this region interpellate contemporary Welshness? Do they feel Welsh? What does Welshness mean? Have new forms of Welshness emerged or is the national habitus unchanged? What is the role of place within the interregnum? In turn, my empirical evidence will deepen my understanding of post-devolution Wales and the post-passive revolution milieu.

## Chapter 6

### Methodology: Researching everyday Welshness

This chapter focuses on the methodology I utilised to achieve a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of Welsh identity in Porthcawl and the issues I faced during the course of my investigation. Before I proceed, however, it is worth briefly restating my aims and objectives in light of the preceding chapters. The aim of the thesis is to assess Welsh identity in Porthcawl and by doing so explore the condition of the British Wales region. My investigation asks whether locals feel Welsh and what Welshness means to them; it investigates *what* the markers and referents of Welshness are; *how* they place themselves in the nation, and how and when the nation crops up in everyday life in Porthcawl. In assessing Welshness I consider the role of *place*- does where you live impact on how Welsh you feel, and if so, why? Relatedly, in light of the correlation between middle class-ness and weak Welshness in top down analyses of British Wales (illustrated in chapters one and two) my thesis investigates whether or not social class impacts on Welsh identity. *Epistemological underpinnings*

As chapter 4 and 5 have shown, this investigation of Welshness at the local scale is set against the backdrop of a contested post-devolution settlement within Wales, which I have conceptualised as an *interregnum*. My investigation of Porthcawl is therefore also focused on saying something about developments at the national scale by asking ‘how Welsh is everyday life in Porthcawl?’, and analyzing what these empirical observations can tell us about post-devolution Wales.

This is a propitious point at which to explicate the epistemology which informs my analysis of Porthcawl. My approach is grounded in the *critical* ethnographic tradition. Critical ethnography is not necessarily distinguished from ‘conventional’ ethnography by the *methods* it uses, but rather by the epistemology which informs it (see Thomas, 1993). Ethnographic analysis should always be informed and disciplined by *theory* (Burawoy, 1998; Wacquant, 2002; Wilson and Chaddha, 2009), which allows ethnographers to contextualize their study and to correctly interpret their findings ‘on the ground’, rather than simply ‘report’ on everyday life. The neo-Gramscian theoretical framework which governs my analysis intuitively shares critical

ethnography's *epistemological underpinnings* insofar as it is concerned with exposing the presence of power within everyday life and social structures- it is a challenge to 'authorized knowledge' (Jubas, 2010: 227). Throughout my fieldwork I was always conscious to '*think problems through in a Gramscian way*' (Hall, 1987) a maxim which could well sum up critical ethnographic approaches. Critical ethnography does not accept taken for granted assumptions about society, since this leads to reification and the obfuscation of the fact that many influential narratives are contested and the outcome of struggle. Instead, critical ethnography seeks to uncover power relations inherent in everyday life and confront supposedly 'value free' facts about society (Thomas, 1993: 21), realising that theory is always *for* someone, and *for* some purpose (Cox, 1981:132).

### *Moving beyond talk*

At the end of chapter 2 I discussed the benefits of studying the unreflexive ways in which the nation inheres in everyday life, and how by studying the 'ethno-symbolic geography' of towns, we might achieve a fuller appreciation of why some places are more national than others. Accordingly, my analysis attempted to move beyond 'talk' (i.e., interviews) and to reveal the unreflexive elements of the national habitus, and what this might tell us about Porthcawl and its place within the nation.

The idea of 'studying the unreflexive'- exemplified by Billig's influential work on 'banal nationalism'- has not led to specific prescriptions for a systematic *method* of studying the unreflexive ways in which the nation inheres in everyday life, other than the maxim that we must 'pay attention' as researchers (Jones & Merriman, 2009). Indeed, since the habitus is "beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence...cannot even be made explicit" (Bourdieu, 1977:94), it is by its very nature hard to study. A popular method of understanding the ways the nation is unconsciously 'flagged' in everyday life is by employing textual analysis of the national media and the discursive, ritualistic construction of national habitus codes and the 'we-I' balance (e.g. Elias, 1991; Maguire and Poulton, 1999; Brookes, 1999; Tuck, 2003; Poulton, 2004). Another obvious method is the use of *photography* as a way of visually documenting the

ethno-symbolic geography of the nation and how it inheres in *local places* (e.g. Brubaker et al, 2006; Jenkins, 2010) or to 'reveal habitus' (Sweetman, 2009). Both these methods *help* to draw attention to the material manifestations of ideology and in the latter method, helps convey a 'feel' of the *place*. In my own study, I decided to utilise visual methods (photography) as an attempt to convey the 'feel' of Porthcawl. I discuss my use of photography later in the chapter.

Yet more important than the methods used however, are the epistemological assumptions which underpin this desire to explore and understand the unspoken and unreflexive elements of the national habitus. Studying the nondiscursive or unreflexive is a cornerstone of the extended case method (Burawoy, 1998:15). Halford and Knowles (2005), reflecting on the development of visual sociology state that "working visually is not just about methodology...it is more broadly about how we 'do' sociology". The visual method attempts to illuminate areas of everyday life which are hard to articulate and document, it represents a desire to uncover the *unreflexive elements of the habitus*, our second nature or commonsensical understandings (Sweetman, 2009): it attempts to study *sedimentation* and the *ideological nature of everyday life*. Thus the burgeoning field of visual sociology is not so much *how* we are looking, but rather about *what is being looked at* (Sweetman, 2009: 5). Visual sociology, then, is not an end in itself- and it is important not to reify methods, for the visual element of my work is small and amateurish- but in fact marks an attempt to document the performative and dynamic nature of everyday life, to illuminate the intangible manifestations of the nation that we engage with which are often missed by conventional ethnography.

Such an approach seems to me to be a necessary adjunct of the critical ethnographic approach, and of Becker's (1996) assertion that as well as 'thickness', ethnographers should aim for *breadth*, i.e. to find out about *all* aspects and arenas of everyday life. Bearing this in mind, it is vitally important that participant observation and the utilisation of visual methods to analyze the unreflexive elements of the habitus and the 'ethnosymbolic geography' of a locality is not *reduced* to 'flag counting', and simply *listing* the material condensation symbols of the nation within public space- flags, statues and so on.

## Research Design

I now discuss the methods I deployed in my fieldwork to capture the ‘feel’ of Porthcawl. Interviews and focus group interviews are a staple methodological tool amongst ethnographers, and indeed feature heavily within Welsh ethnography and have yielded rich data and deepened our understanding of Welsh identity. This method allows us to engage with people and let them actively *demonstrate* their interpretation of the world to us (Murphy et al, 1998, 112; Jubas, 2010:235)- they uncover an ‘insider’s perspective’ on things (Murphy et al, 1998:115; also De Cillia et al, 1999: 152-3). Despite their centrality to much contemporary ethnography, however, interviews as a method have recently been subject to a far ranging critique (e.g. Murphy et al, 1998; Dingwall, 1997; Atkinson and Coffey, 2002; Hammersley and Gomm, 2008). The critique of interviews is a complex debate (and of course interviewing is a broad field and not all interviews are similar) but at its most basic is rooted in Goffman’s (1959) assertion that all social interactions are opportunities for *impression management*, in which parties strive to present themselves as competent (see Murphy et al, 1998: 120 for a full exposition). The willingness to say what is expected has led to the criticism that interviews cannot represent an accurate description of the respondent’s reality outside the (artificially constructed) interview situation itself (Murphy et al, 1998: 120-121).

Integrating the method of *participant observation* into our ethnography can help facilitate a richer picture of everyday life than interviewing alone (Murphy et al, 1998: 105). Denzin (1970: 216) argues: “the observer is in a position to move behind the public selves of his respondents and penetrate the *back regions of interaction*- regions rarely open to the interviewer in the survey because of his fleeting relationship with the respondent”. Crucially, the observer is better able to impute *motives* from observations of behaviours, and to contextualize and analyze behaviour which may be viewed as irrelevant or missed entirely by interviewers, including the aforementioned unreflexive and nondiscursive parts of everyday life. This is of course a crucial component in the study of how identity is inculcated and one which is central to this thesis. Therefore, to truly understand how the nation embeds in the local, researchers have to spend time in everyday life attempting to understand the contexts in which the

national narrative arises and is engaged with. As Fox & Miller-Idriss puts it, we must be alert to the 'quotidian fluctuations in nationhood' which we can easily miss if we limit our methods to focusing on *talk* (2008: 556).

Although interviewing as a method has inherent weaknesses, participant observation does not always allow us to understand precisely what people think about a particular subject, because unless interviewed or prompted they will rarely *explicitly* talk about *exactly* what it is you are looking for: we are left with inferences. So to understand some issues, we *have* to ask people about them- only by doing so may we enter the other person's perspective (Patton, 1980, cited in Murphy et al, 1998: 116). Cognizant of the above discussion, I employed a *mixed methodology* which combined formal interviews with lengthy participant observation. Combining these two methods allowed me to *ask* both 'what is the nation?' and also to *observe* 'when is the nation?' (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008).

My fieldwork was conducted over a period of approximately three years and was roughly split into two phases. The first phase, which began in earnest late in 2010 (I conducted relatively in depth pilot fieldwork in late 2009 and the beginning of 2010) involved conducting interviews and focus group interviews in Porthcawl. For a year I regularly travelled back and forth from Bangor to Porthcawl to arrange and conduct interviews (I had a job in Bangor which required me to remain there 10 days out of every 21). These early constraints on my time in Porthcawl illuminated Becker's (1996) observation that the philosophical and epistemological positions we take towards research are ultimately hostage to the realities of social life, and we have to accommodate research in light of constraints.

In total I completed 45 *formal* 'interviews'- meaning organized, recorded meetings- lasting between ten and ninety minutes in length (with the shorter interviews perhaps stretching the concept of interview). I also conducted 3 focus groups, one with the local town council, comprised of 12 people; one with Porthcawl Town Athletic Football Club (PTAFC) 2<sup>nd</sup> XI comprised of 14 people, and one with PTAFC 3<sup>rd</sup> XI, comprised of 10 individuals. I also conducted group discussions and interactive lessons in Porthcawl Comprehensive School (as well as interviews with individual teachers). These group discussions lasted for 50 minutes each



with 7 classes in total. The age range of pupils participating was broad: 3 of the classes were sixth formers aged between 16-18; 1 a top set GCSE year class of 14-15 year olds; and the remainder were mixed ability, years 7-9, aged between 11-14. In total, 90 children took part. On top of these formal, recorded interviews, over the course of my fieldwork I engaged in hundreds of informal, unrecorded chats and discussions of various lengths which were immensely revealing.

Although I had anticipated remaining in Bangor for the duration of my studies, getting my fieldwork in Porthcawl 'over and done with' in a short while, each time I returned to Bangor a nagging feeling began to grow that in my week or two week forays into Porthcawl I was merely scratching the surface of the town; I was not really analyzing the complexity of 'everyday life' or the unreflexive ways in which the nation embedded in Porthcawl, but instead achieving a rather cosmetic overview of Porthcawl. For the second phase of fieldwork, which lasted over two years, I therefore moved back to Porthcawl to *re-localise* myself<sup>17</sup> - *embracing participation* (Burawoy, 1998:16) and *intervention* in town life over detachment.

This chronology of my fieldwork was useful, since the first phase of formal interviews served to draw out the key issues within Porthcawl, which then informed and structured the second phase and told me 'what to look for', although this process was ultimately *recursive* and I of course interviewed formally and informally throughout my 'second phase', inserting or analyzing issues which had been raised in my participant observation if needed or re-adjusting the focus of my gaze on Porthcawl after analyzing my transcriptions.

### *My position within Porthcawl/self-ethnography*

Before I begin describing my fieldwork, it is worth outlining my own status and position within Porthcawl, since this had a great influence on my methodology and fieldwork. Alvessen (2003) introduces the concept of '*self-ethnography*' (or '*insider-ethnography*'), where a researcher analyses a setting to which they have natural access and intimate knowledge of and are an

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<sup>17</sup> This move was also, it has to be said, also motivated by my own financial concerns. In this case, I was able to turn necessity into a virtue.

*active participant*, rather than an 'outsider' (2003:174 see also Hockey & Allen Collinson, 2005; 2008). My study of Porthcawl should be conceptualized as a self ethnography, since I am very much a local or 'native'. I grew up in Porthcawl and have lived in the town my whole life; I studied at Porthcawl Comprehensive; I played for Porthcawl Town AFC from the age of 6 until 18; coached football in primary schools during school holidays, and worked in many of the numerous pubs and bars within Porthcawl.

Why does this matter? Ethnography at its most basic studies at first hand what people do or say in particular contexts- it endeavours to understand and explain people's perspectives through a detailed study of their everyday lives, and the ethnographer writes about the world from the standpoint of everyday life (Thomas, 1993; Becker, 1996; Denzin 1997; Burawoy, 1998). It is therefore based on getting close to groups of 'others', and our relationship to our respondents and area of study is affected by our degree of 'closeness' (Alvesson, 2003). Gaining *access* to groups depends on knowing *who* has the power or influence to facilitate access (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007:50) Being 'local' is relevant for research because, unlike conventional ethnographers who begin as 'outsiders' and have to learn the ways and issues of a community and work hard to gain access (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007: 42-50) I began with an intimate knowledge of Porthcawl- the issues, the local characters, the in jokes, the in places, and so on. Self-ethnographers, as *insiders*, are therefore (potentially at least) better placed to reveal the 'true story' of the situation (Alvesson: 2003:177-8): they are more likely to be welcomed by respondents and better able to elicit 'deep' information because they are more likely to be treated as equals by the respondents, they are less likely to face the same barriers as 'professional strangers' (2003: 174)

Self-ethnography also has implications for *method*, however, in particular with regards to *reflexivity*. The potential for respondents to tell you what they think you want to hear is far greater in situations where you are an insider. Insider-ethnographers thus need to be reflexive, constantly interrogating our own research techniques- analyzing our own performance as interviewer was as important as analyzing the responses themselves (Thomas, 1993: 39).

As well as the obvious issues of 'being known' by my participants and the potential for this to influence their responses, there was the danger that I possessed 'blindspots' about elements of Porthcawl life which I had simply missed, and which an outsider might have noticed. Whilst conventional ethnography involves the researcher 'breaking in' to a community, my self-ethnography therefore involved continually 'breaking out' from my taken for granted understanding of Porthcawl whilst remaining inside (Alvesson 2003: 176), and continually assessing whether I may potentially be overlooking things which an outsider would perhaps find striking or unusual. Additionally, there was the more obvious and emotive concern of upsetting or alienating friends and colleagues by 'bugging them' for information, or indeed of being perceived as 'watching' or monitoring people. Self ethnography was a delicate balancing act, and the impact of 'being local' and these associated considerations permeated my fieldwork.

### *Choosing Respondents & Sample Size*

My sample size of 45 formal interviews, and *who* I interviewed, was governed by epistemological and practical considerations related to my position in the town. Ethnography itself contains myriad approaches to studying everyday life, and my first forays into fieldwork were grounded in a (ultimately misguided) *positivist* approach to ethnography (see Burawoy, 1998:5) where I sought to *limit* my involvement or engagement in Porthcawl, approaching the town as a relatively detached observer, rather than as an insider. Despite being a local, having been out of Porthcawl for so long, remaining an outsider was an achievable aim: I was rarely recognized during my early fieldwork, and if I was, people usually mistook me for my younger brother. My pilot fieldwork involved attending and recording town meetings (one of which is mentioned in the preface) and attempting to conduct small scale postal surveys- surveys exemplifying the positivist approach to ethnography (Burawoy, 1998:5) with a view to achieving a demographic overview of Porthcawl and garnering interviewees. This (costly) exercise involved handing out 7 page surveys with stamped and addressed envelopes outside polling stations during the May 2010 general elections. After handing out over 90 surveys, I received 40 back. This exercise was extremely useful in demonstrating the unanticipated frustrations of

fieldwork (such as running out of surveys; being cornered by pensioners; receiving surveys neatly posted but left completely blank, and so on).

Whilst these surveys were useful in *outlining* issues of identity, I soon became frustrated at not knowing anything about the thoughts of respondents beyond the boxes they had ticked. Moreover, this 'formal' attempt to yield interviewees, despite my friendly manner, seemed to unnerve people: the accoutrements of this approach- the backpack, clipboard, dictaphone, lent an air of officiousness to proceedings. My attempt at being 'scientific', suspending myself from my area of study, was counter-productive. This was an indispensable early lesson in *impression management* (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007:71-80) and how conscious I had to be of my privileged status as a (relative) insider and how the nature of my *approach* would influence whether or not I would gain access into the truly private realm, and ultimately the quality of the interview itself. Most importantly, the pilot fieldwork demonstrated the need for a different approach to ethnography, which led to me reappraising my ideas on sampling and how I gathered respondents. I realised that I needed to make the most of my privileged status as an insider, rather than try to obscure it, to embrace engagement over detachment (Burawoy, 1998:5) choosing to 'thematize my participation in the world I was studying', keeping myself grounded by rooting myself in theory (ibid).

I had also planned to solicit respondents by door knocking, aiming to approach every other house in one street in every ward in Porthcawl. Yet I felt this approach again was too positivistic. Concerns about the first (overly formal) impression I would make, coupled with the sheer inefficiency and labour intensive nature of this approach given the geographic scale of Porthcawl (particularly given my time constraints in this initial period); the real risks of garnering no respondents (see Davies, 2008), meant that I abandoned this approach.

I instead opted for a purposive sample, 'organically' garnering contacts and respondents. I began by contacting town '*gatekeepers*', who, being engaged in civic life, were most likely to possess relevant 'insider' information regarding the town and for advice on further sources

(Thomas, 1993: 37. For more on gatekeepers see also Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 50; Reeves, 2010; Jenkins, 2010:32). I first approached the town council and the chamber of trade, partly because they are the largest or at least most prominent civic organizations in the town. Despite my gradual embrace of a more 'informal' approach, I soon found out that being local did not translate into intimate knowledge of these civic organizations or indeed easy access to the people involved, despite 'ease of access' being a strongpoint of self-ethnography. Of course, Porthcawl is a big enough town that I had never come into contact with many of the 'worlds' within it- the Porthcawl of my youth being exclusively about football, pubs, surfing and school- and indeed this raises issues of *scale* for the concept of self-ethnography itself.

After sufficiently proving my local-ness to the incumbent mayor, my fieldwork began in earnest. My first interview was at the top of the food chain, so to speak, with a focus group discussion at the beginning of a council meeting. This initial contact with the town council was essential for me to gain access to the rest of the civic bodies and individuals. The focus group allowed me to 'schmooze' the councillors (I brought cakes to the interview) and crucially to establish my *local-ness*: in this first interview I was questioned and probed- which of the Evanses I was, where I lived, who my mother was, and so on. Confirming my local-ness and the local-ness of my family allayed any fears about me being a 'bloody journalist' and put the councillors at ease with my project. Indeed, the warm reception I received at this meeting, compared to the relatively indifferent reception I had received from these same people just weeks before at the town meeting, demonstrated the value of being an insider. This positive first impression meant I was *vouched for or screened* by these gatekeepers, and after being established as a benign curiosity it became relatively easy to obtain interviews, and my list of contacts began to snowball. After interviewing the town councillors and certain members of the chamber of trade, I attended PACT<sup>18</sup> meetings and interviewed the local PCSO, who in turn provided me with more civic contacts across the town wards, with people who ran bingo clubs, local business owners, local historians and other local organizers. These gatekeepers helped me throughout my fieldwork whenever I wanted information about particular sectors of the town- who to contact and so on.

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<sup>18</sup> Police and Communities Together

After interviewing the majority of these ‘gatekeepers’, whose participation stemmed from their involvement in civic organizations, I faced the potential problem of a rapidly dwindling pool of *formal* institutions from which to recruit respondents. A reliance on civic organizations also meant potentially skewing my data towards older residents and a paucity of ‘ordinary’ Porthcawlians. I overcame these problems in a number of ways. First, I decided to use social media as a platform from which to obtain the views of ‘ordinary’ residents. I did this by posting a public request for respondents on the popular ‘Porthcawl First’ Facebook page- set up by the eponymous civic regeneration group, and a very popular forum for locals wishing to air their grievances or raise other issues pertaining to the town. This approach, again aided by me being vouched for by the group’s online administrators (who were town councillors), garnered more respondents. Next, I simply began walking around Porthcawl, dropping into business premises at the quietest times of day and requesting and scheduling interviews (or informal chats) with owners and workers, or occasionally, as in a local hairdressers, with the 3 hairdressers and three clients (i.e. the whole salon) simultaneously. As well as obtaining interviews (and indeed I often conducted interviews then and there) even when workers or shopkeepers were too busy (it was rare for a shop to be *entirely* deserted), they would still frequently express an opinion or give me a useful vignette or have a conversation with me when I told them my topic. This approach yielded generally positive results, although in retrospect it may have been somewhat at odds with my desire to appear as ‘normal’ (i.e., local) as possible.

Parallel to my utilization of social media and turning up unannounced in shops and offices, I turned to my old football club, Porthcawl Town Athletic, with a view to garnering more sources. Still being on friendly terms with the managers, although helpfully not being familiar (during this initial phase) with the new crop of younger players, I organized two impromptu focus groups, conducted with the players from the second and third teams respectively (between 10 and 15 players each time) which took place sat on the football pitch immediately following training sessions (which I had attended).

Whilst alert to the burning question of ‘*how many respondents?*’ (Baker & Edwards, 2012), an emphasis on *amount* did not tally with my own epistemological desire for depth and quality

rather than quantity, and my desire to expose the ‘banal’ and unreflexive within everyday life. The hundreds of informal conversations I had with people, coupled with the total immersion in Porthcawl town life, meant that hitting any particular ‘golden number’ for interviews seemed superfluous, although I nonetheless consciously achieved an amount to similar studies such as Evans (2007). Moreover, my insider status presented me with an interesting problem. When local people, family friends and so on found out that I was ‘home’ and ‘needed people to talk to’; and as members of other civic bodies heard about this nice young (local) ‘boy’ who wanted to ‘speak to people about Porthcawl’, I was practically swamped with offers from people who actively wanted to be interviewed. I therefore made a decision to *stop at 45*, having to politely *turn down* these would be interviewees.

On top of this, I had already accrued over sixty hours of recorded data, filled countless notebooks with interview notes, and thousands upon thousands of words of the selectively transcribed data. The data yielded from these formal interviews was therefore more than enough in terms of transcription workload<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, the amount of notes and data generated meant that whilst writing up my fieldwork I wrestled with the dilemma of how best to economically represent my data (see Humphreys & Watson, 2009), and the data I present in the following chapters represents only a small selection of what was said and observed during my research (Alvesson, 2003: 173). There are large themes and streams, in particular work on masculinities, race, and opinions on politics and devolution, which have been unused since, although fascinating, they were only tangentially related to my research themes, and therefore had to be excised.

### *Interview strategies, techniques and question construction*

Good ethnography requires *flexibility* (Thomas, 1993: 41), and so during the interviews themselves, instead of having a rigid framework of questions I simply developed a prompt sheet with my central *themes* on it- nation, language, class, i.e. my main research issues- and prompts or ‘ways in’ to these subjects which I could use if the respondent was reticent in any

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<sup>19</sup> I recorded my interviews with the Olympus digital voice recorders VN-5500PC and VN-5500. I transcribed my data with the transcription software ELAN, a European linguistic tool designed for conversational analysis.

way (see appendix 2 and Palmer, 2001: 306 for a similar method). This method allowed the conversations to flow organically whilst ensuring the conversation periodically returned to orbit around these issues (as I quickly learnt, with no such reminders it is easy to get lost in discussion and digressions). I did my best to ensure that these issues and bases were covered through gentle guiding, but *when* or *how* they were broached *normally* varied from individual to individual and the specific circumstances of each interview. During the interviews themselves, heeding the advice of Denzin (1997) I adopted an informal and conversational semi-structured approach (1997:123) which was essentially a *topical conversation*. By creating a relaxed, informal atmosphere and developing a relationship between myself and my respondent I was able to put them at ease and elicit frank and truthful responses (ibid). Whilst a crude gauge of the measure of comfort and familiarity achieved by my approach, the prevalence of swearing, laughing and joking always seemed to signify that I had successfully entered the 'private realm' where my respondents could relax and express themselves. In addition, the informality of my approach allowed for the possibility that respondents would digress and raise issues and themes which I had not anticipated which I could then discuss and weave into future interviews- such developments would have been impossible under a more formal structure (Denzin 1997).

#### *Question sequencing and interview techniques*

I now briefly outline the questioning strategies employed in my interviewing and focus group discussions. Whilst my approach was informal I did follow a *general* pattern of topic sequencing (see appendix 2 for example of interview technique). I learnt to 'warm up' respondents with biographical questions about themselves and their family and professional background (typically beginning with 'how long have you lived in Porthcawl?' (see appendix 2), which opened up discussions about family, before moving onto questions about Porthcawl itself, before eventually moving to questions of national identity. This was preferable to 'going in cold' since it allowed respondents to get used to the interview by engaging in subjects they were interested in (but which were peripheral to my research) before engaging them with my main cluster of themes. This biographical questioning and empathetic opening discussion about



family, professional background etc, served to build vital *rapport* with the subject<sup>20</sup>. Rapport was also cultivated by talking about Porthcawl (typically ‘have you noticed Porthcawl change over the years? Or ‘what is your favourite thing about living in Porthcawl?’) which allowed me and the subject to compare shared experiences. Displaying my own awareness of local issues undoubtedly helped to establish myself as an ‘insider’ and put the respondent at ease.

The nation is latent in many other topics such as sport, the use of collective pronouns such as *we/us*, pop culture, the weather etc (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008). Engaging with *civic* issues in my questioning frequently allowed me to segue into discussions about the nation and national cultural reference points and indeed the Welshness of the *individual*. For example by asking about the *town’s* commitment to promoting Welsh culture, the visibility of the Welsh language within Porthcawl, (for example, ‘have you heard the Welsh language spoken much in Porthcawl?’) and whether this had changed over the years, or else asking about proposed national ceremonies and performances taking place within the town and so on. These topics, whilst indirect, allowed me to observe how subjects framed the nation, to allow them to demonstrate how they felt about these issues without directly *implicating themselves*: the ‘town’ or ‘here’ could act as a surrogate for their own views.

When I did engage *directly* with individuals’ *personal* national identity, in the initial stages of my research I began my questioning about the nation by asking respondents to pick a category from the Moreno scale written on a card. This seemed a logical strategy given I was investigating ‘British Wales’- it would allow the respondents to place themselves on the spectrum of Welshness from weakest to strongest. However, I abandoned this strategy after the first few interviews because as well as being out of sync with the informality of the interview, I felt it simply encouraged people to pick a category which was not ‘extreme’. In addition, I felt that by providing a ‘ready made’ answer sheet, respondents were not really

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<sup>20</sup> Whilst developing and implementing these strategies I was in fact reminded of my time working as a telemarketer, when I was always advised to ‘develop rapport’ with customers by talking about unrelated subjects before talking about the product I was selling. Although I had cringed at the time, the parallels seemed pertinent.

encouraged to reflect whilst forming their answers. Finally, I felt the Moreno scale to be too constraining insofar as it implicitly positions Welshness and Britishness as mutually exclusive identities, when one feels 'more Welsh' you are therefore 'less British' and so on. For the rest of the interviews I therefore opted to use the standard question: '*how would you describe your national identity?*' which was open ended enough to encompass hybridity and multiple identities yet also a relatively straightforward question similar such as one might find on surveys.

#### *Prompting and provoking, direct and indirect*

Based on the situation and the respondent, I could frame the discussion and elicit responses about national identity in a variety of ways. My interviews mixed the aforementioned indirect questions about biography and the town with 'stark' questions. These prompting strategies were particularly helpful when, for whatever reason, discussions had been 'flat' or else national categories had not organically cropped up in the preceding discussion of family history and Porthcawl. I based these 'bold' questions on referents which emerged in my analysis of the existing ethnographic literature: the Welsh language, sport, and devolution all emerged as ways of demonstrating Welshness. Bluntly introducing these topics offered respondents a way of orienting themselves towards or away from Welshness. Typical questions would be 'do you think the language is an important part of Welsh identity?', 'what do you think about the Welsh Assembly?' 'Do you follow Welsh sport?' These 'direct questions' were generally preceded by the above indirect line of questioning about the Welshness of Porthcawl as a place, and often simply served to explicate an opinion which had been *implicit* throughout the discussion, so for example if a respondent had snorted or looked dismissive when asked about the visibility of the Welsh language in Porthcawl, I would follow this up with a direct question.

In some cases I would also look to *provoke* discussion by proffering a bald stereotype or statement, for example I would ask 'some people have said that Porthcawl is posh, what do you think about that statement?' or 'some people say that you have to speak Welsh to be Welsh, what do you think about that?'. By *problematizing* taken for granted nationhood, I was able to elicit 'clear' and reflective responses from respondents (Mann, 2006: 2.2). As Hammersley and

Atkinson (2007: 119-121) argue, the point is less to do with the question itself than the responses it provokes and the type of bias the responses reveal. They advise to lead questions “in a direction opposite to that in which one expects the answer to lie” (2007:120), since this limits the possibility of simply confirming expectations, and indeed may provoke people into airing deep seated thoughts (for more on this tactic see Kemp and Ellen, 1984: 234, cited in Palmer, 2001:307).

As aforementioned, throughout my fieldwork I was careful to constantly monitor my own progress and analyze how my questions were being received and react to any shortcomings I identified. One initial problem echoed Mann’s (2006) assertion that the perceived ‘*nation-ness of the interviewer*’ will influence the nature of the interview. This was a problem again related to my position as an insider/outsider. Significantly, some of my respondents often appeared initially uneasy about the topic of Welshness, ostensibly because they were aware of Porthcawl’s reputation as a ‘less Welsh town’ which was exacerbated by me studying at Bangor (‘up there’) and because I initially stated that my thesis was about ‘Welsh identity’. The implicit assumption was that I was ‘more Welsh’ than they, that I was ‘judging them’ about any perceived ‘lack of Welshness’. An intuitive awareness of a hierarchical Welshness coloured the interview dynamic, and in the early stages of my research I was tentatively asked on numerous occasions whether I was a Welsh speaker as locals tried to place me. This discomfort was of course grist to the mill as far as research into place and Welshness was concerned, yet within interviews it often appeared that, because respondents assumed I was ‘more Welsh’ (simply by virtue of the work I was engaged in), respondents were at pains to stress their own Welshness to me in a possibly artificially pronounced fashion. Indeed, the methodological issue of checking the discrepancies between ‘onstage rhetoric and backstage action’ (Thomas, 1993:38) was sharpened when it came to the Welsh language. For example, a town councillor, who I had witnessed in rapturous applause after an anti-Welsh language tirade at the public meeting I attended in my pilot fieldwork, expressed a very positive attitude towards the language in my interview.

I remedied this by simply framing my thesis as being ‘about Porthcawl’ when requesting an interview, selectively omitting the ‘ethnic’ element of my investigation. As Palmer notes, concealing the exact nature of the research may be useful insofar as it prevents people ‘preparing’ the ‘right’ sort of answers before the interview begins (2001: 307). This certainly helped put people at ease and begun to solicit more frank and reflexive answers when people felt their own Welshness was not ‘being judged.’

### *Discussing Class*

Studying class in everyday life also presents problems for the ethnographer (e.g. Travers, 1999; Payne & Grew, 2005; Savage, 2005; Skeggs, 2008). Savage et al’s (2010) Bordieusian analysis of class ‘dis-identification’ provides an insightful look at the role of method when investigating the salience of class in everyday life. In particular, they demonstrate that when asked a question about class, the majority of respondents would ‘*disidentify*’ with any class identity and instead attempt to present themselves as ‘ordinary’, whilst simultaneously exhibiting classed behaviours and classifying themselves and others using the cultural markers of class. Engaging with the common claim that class identity is declining, they argue that this claim frequently hinges on the *rigidity of the methods employed* by researchers (2010: 124). The reliance on quantitative methods or surveys, but also on rigid *questioning strategies* within interviews, tend to elicit black and white answers which obscure the nuance and ultimately the persistence of class. Whilst respondents may disclaim a class identity in surveys or straightforward questions, and whilst class identity may not always be explicit in an interview, their awareness of class behaviours, norms and other indicators of class may be identified through more flexible research strategies. In short, complex issues such as how cultural consumption and behaviours are imbued with understandings of social class require subtle and nuanced research methods. Savage et al’s study, for example, rarely mentioned the actual word ‘class’ in interviews (2010: 125), yet this did not inhibit an engagement with class identity, since the researchers were alert to the possibility that people express their class position and attitudes in *implicit* ways, through their modes of consumption and awareness of the process of *distinction* (122-129), as well as through their tendency to ascribe class identity to *others*, if not themselves (130).

I learnt early on in my fieldwork that asking people ‘would you say you are middle class?’ simply elicited evasive responses and assertions of ‘normality’ or ‘ordinariness’. As with the nation, asking impersonal questions about Porthcawl as a *place* elicited reflections on class and the process of distinction. In particular, the issues of Porthcawl’s perceived social decline, the role of tourism and Porthcawl’s relationship with the surrounding areas revealed *latent* class attitudes and an awareness of the cultural markers of class. Moreover, allowing my respondents to elaborate on their biography often entailed them narrating a tale of social mobility which contained significant awareness of class position and distinction.

During the course of all my interviews I was always alert to the *non verbalized* information inherent to any social interaction which governs both class and nation. Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008: 555) state “the nation is not only expressed discursively, it is also embodied in non-discursive forms- the shrugs, grimaces, chuckles, winces and snorts that accompany (and sometimes replace) ordinary people’s more articulate representations of nationhood”.

Over the course of my fieldwork I had to take steps to ensure I acted ethically- ethnography after all shares the ethical code of the rest of society<sup>21</sup>- and this was intensified by my sensitivity towards locals and my self-interested, practical need to not alienate people from my research- I would not garner respondents if I gained a bad reputation as underhand, for example. As far as consent went, taking the ‘bureaucratic step’ of a consent form before interviews was not practicable since it was out of sync with the informality of the relaxed interview setting I wanted to create. I felt producing a consent form would in fact create suspicion and put people on edge. As Silverman (2003 cited in Zavisca, 2007: 133) notes in her discussion on ethics, formalising consent to a piece of paper actually destroys what it is intended to protect since it breaches interpersonal etiquette by questioning the existence of underlying trust between the researcher and respondent, something intensified in my case as a local. Accordingly, before every interview I obtained *verbal consent* before each interview, asking if it was ok to be recorded, stating that their contributions would be anonymized and

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<sup>21</sup> Throughout, I adhered to the ethical codes laid out in the Bangor University research ethics policy ( <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/compliance-unit/ResEthics.php.en>) as well as those of the BSA (<http://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/about/equality/statement-of-ethical-practice.aspx>)

pseudonyms used. When I told my respondents I would use pseudonyms to guarantee anonymity, the majority shrugged this off and stated they did not care either way. Some teasingly stated that no-one would read it anyway! Local politicians were the only group who ever expressed an explicit desire to be made anonymous. The interviews themselves are proof of their consent<sup>22</sup>.

### *Research in School*

Children are central to any understanding of national identity, since the strength and meaning of ethnic attachments partly reflect early socialization. The understanding of the nation and what it means to be national will often be inculcated within childhood (Jenkins, 2010:33) and schools are also ideal sites to test the role of *place*, the influence of the *local socio-cultural milieu*, on children's view of the world (Thomas & Williams, 1978). In addition, as mentioned in the previous chapter, education is a key part of the 'hegemonic apparatus' that has become 'Welshified' through the implementation of 'nation building strategies' such as 'Cwrricwlwm Cymreig' (Phillips, 1996, 2000, 2003, 2005; Segrott, 2006), and many of the national 'performances' of Welshness, for example the Eisteddfod and St David's day celebrations also occur within education (Exell, 2006). Schools therefore allow us to study *both* 'talking the nation' *and* the unreflexive, banal inculcation of the national habitus through symbols and

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<sup>22</sup>The issue of anonymity in ethnographic research is a thorny subject, something exacerbated in self-ethnography (see Heley, 2012). To 'go too far' to camouflage respondents leaves us with disembodied voices and locations, stripped of the social, spatial and historical context which is so vital to ethnography (Heley, 2012: 11). Yet if we are to properly contextualize the respondent (e.g. by stating their age, jobs, civic responsibility) or indeed the location and so on, it will often be (relatively) easy for a determined *local* eye at least to pick out the respondent, in particular the prominent gatekeepers. To take one example from my research, I debated using a pseudonym for Porthcawl Comprehensive, yet since there is only one secondary school in Porthcawl, this would have been a pointless exercise and would have robbed my description of its all important context. As Heley notes, the use of pseudonyms often fools no one, least of all locals. Their use perhaps lies only in making the researcher feel better about themselves (Heley, 2012:11) since to completely *guarantee* anonymity is impossible. In retrospect, I perhaps may have told the respondents that I could not *guarantee* absolute anonymity but would merely *strive* for it through the use of pseudonyms.

performance within a specific 'micro-geography' (Scourfield, 2006: 93; see also Jones & Desforges, 2000). Studying local schools would therefore allow me to analyze the implementation of these nation building strategies and their impact on students. As well as this, schools provide a broad cross section of the town in terms of class composition, and a convenient way of contacting young people for interview. The school provided a corrective to the natural bias in my research towards middle class, middle aged people formed by focusing on civic organizations.

I initially planned to conduct research in the two private schools in Porthcawl, St John's and St Clare's convent, as well as in Porthcawl Comprehensive School. Such a comparative study would have facilitated a comparison of social class attitudes to national identity. However, my formal requests to gain access to the private schools were rejected out of hand, forcing me to solely focus on the comprehensive. Gaining access to the school was straightforward, since I myself am an alumni and remain on good terms with many of the staff. Teachers at the school knew I regularly worked with local children and that I had recently undergone DBS vetting. Consent to interview the schoolchildren was granted by the school, although given that I thought some students might have been intimidated by the thought of public discussion and by being recorded, before proceeding I always offered them the opportunity to opt out of the discussion. Before each class the students were clearly informed of my research, the rules and regulations of the focus groups, and that they would be recorded but that their contributions would be anonymized with the use of pseudonyms<sup>23</sup>. Once more, the interviews themselves are proof of consent.

However, in addition to interviewing classes in the English department, I was also 'offered' (very large) classes of younger students in other departments, often at very short notice, 'on the spot' whilst I was in the school preparing to interview other classes. This in fact presented me with cost/benefit problems: I had initially planned on focusing on sixth formers because of the small class sizes and the assumption they would yield more reflective data. Nonetheless, I was compelled to take the opportunity regardless of the methodological difficulties presented

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<sup>23</sup> Unlike gatekeepers, it is far easier to anonymise the responses of students given the sheer number of students at the school

by the new classes. This spontaneous 'on the spot' offering of material is a typical hazard of self-ethnography and presents problems of preparedness and resources. In this situation for example, the extra classes taken on at short notice meant for example that I did not have enough stickers (for name badges) for the new classes, not enough handouts and so on, leading to improvisation (see appendix 3)

In all the classes, on the advice of the teachers, I began with a very brief ten question survey in order to 'warm up' the students to the topic before commencing the discussion. These brief surveys in fact yielded interesting results in themselves (see appendix 4) In the younger age groups, because of the large size of the classes a teacher or teaching assistant had to legally be present in the room, although they were not involved in the discussions in any way. Sixth form classes took the form of a 'traditional' focus group, and because of the small sizes and the age of the pupils, the teachers were not present.

For the year 7-9 classes I adopted a more interactive, engaging approach (inspired by Scourfield et al, 2006), as the large class sizes (averaging 30 students), coupled with the students excitement and age, made a 'traditional' focus group discussion impossible. In these classes I began with the survey to 'warm up'. I then split the classes into groups and made them complete a 'pub quiz' on Wales whereby numerous Welsh celebrities and public figures were flashed on the OHP, or handed out to the groups, and the students had to name them (see appendix 5). These games lasted around a third of the lesson. After these were completed, the children remained in groups and I set them group work whereby they had to answer questions such as 'What are the top 5 things you associate with Wales?' Tasks such as this allowed me to ascertain how the students perceived and discussed Welshness and identity. After these were completed, I held an interactive discussion (albeit one in which the students who wanted to contribute had to put their hands up to avoid chaos) whereby each group would present their answers to me, and from which I would ask the class their opinions on the topic, such as the Eisteddfod, the Welsh rugby team, the Welsh language and so on. Although some of the discussion was overtly focused on the 'national' dimension, I also asked questions about Porthcawl, their 'place' and how they understood it, for example in relation to other local areas.



As well as again revealing the influence of place on national identity construction, these 'non-national' questions again were frequently revealing in how responses were often framed in national and social terms.

The school fieldwork presented a particular set of problems. In the younger classes it was often very difficult controlling (and recording) such large, loud groups of children, excited by the break from regular lessons. Because of this, teachers and teaching assistants occasionally intervened with the class to calm them down, which in turn presented a new problem of the children possibly associating me with the teachers and viewing me as an authority figure, although I overcame this by insisting I be referred to by my first name rather than as 'Mr Evans' as suggested by the teachers, and adopted a more informal attitude with the students than would a teacher. I was always aware, however, that the presence of teaching staff in the classrooms, whilst very beneficial in terms of discipline and coherence, may possibly have prevented certain students from opening up in a way they might have done were they not there.

Amongst some of the unsupervised sixth form focus groups, I encountered the opposite problem of sullen disengagement, as the group of teenagers were very reluctant to engage in debating 'political stuff', mainly due to the typical social pressures faced by students of not wanting to be seen to be 'too keen' or 'sad'. During one sixth form interview, my question plan was rapidly exhausted and rendered redundant within five minutes, such was the lack of input. I had to then improvise and engage the students by beginning a general discussion on popular culture, television habits, bands and so on, (beginning with questions as general as 'what kind of things do you watch on telly?', or 'what sort of music do you listen to?') from which I finally began to elicit nationally framed responses. Indeed this unexpected move towards popular culture and celebrity proved immensely revealing and was an extremely important development in illuminating the classed and gendered nature of children's cultural consumption patterns, aspirations and their perception of the nation.

#### *Participant observation and visual ethnography*

My participant observation was governed by my gradual rejection of a positivist 'detachment' and embracing my role as an insider. My participant observation proceeded along two paths. The first entailed what Jenkins (2011) calls 'hanging round with a purpose'. During the weeks I was that I was back in Porthcawl to conduct interviews, and in the early stages after I had moved back home, I began attending as many civic engagements and local performances where I thought national categories or class would be latent: local Eisteddfodau, local history meetings, public meetings and so on. Despite being local, however, I was very much an outsider at these events. Whilst Alvessen (2003:174) states that participant observation in self-ethnography is actually normally *observing participation*, the size and scale of Porthcawl meant that my status as insider/outsider depended on context and location. First and foremost, there was no getting round that I was by far the youngest person in the room at the majority of these town meetings. As my friends never tired of telling me, my attendance at these meetings was undoubtedly perceived as 'weird', something undoubtedly not helped by my notepad, camera and Dictaphone. My conspicuousness was gradually lessened as I jettisoned my 'researchers' paraphernalia (instead choosing to write down interesting information and vignettes immediately after the meetings). Self-ethnography therefore has practical implications for recording and documenting: the issue of *when and when not to write* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, cited in Ward, 2013:76) is far more pronounced for an insider/local. As I came to understand that detachment was not the best way of getting under the skin of Porthcawl, I realized it was not wise to be seen to be taking pictures of everything, recording things, or even constantly scribbling away in a notebook- such behavior undermined my organic position in the community.

This early detached observation was successful in many ways, yet I knew that I was limiting myself to particular 'worlds' within Porthcawl, since only a small minority of the town attended these (infrequent) civic meetings and events. I knew that I needed a more subtle and long term picture of a wider cross section of the town, of the 'back regions' of people's habituses.

My process of re-localisation was structured. Immersing myself in Porthcawl was achieved through working as a bartender at two of the most popular restaurant-bars in Porthcawl. I

worked at the first, popular with younger locals, for twelve months before it closed down in January 2013. Following this, I immediately began work at another popular seafront hotel, where I am still working at the time of writing (over a year). I worked at least 16 hours per week, every week for over two years. I also signed for Porthcawl Town Football Club (PTAFC) and began coaching them occasionally as well as playing every Saturday, becoming close friends with many of the players I had interviewed a year previously. I also coached in local primary schools during half terms and summer holidays; I began volunteering in a Bridgend based homelessness charity, gaining an insight into an underbelly of poverty and deprivation within Porthcawl.

In terms of re-localizing myself, 'hanging round with a purpose', as an 'outsider' might do, was no substitute for working, living and socialising within the community. This integration allowed me to see the unreflexive and unspoken elements of the habitus. Bar/hotel work in particular was an indispensable site for studying everyday nationhood and social class and indeed how these categories interacted. Food and drink, the clothes we wear, the music we listen to and so on are of course forms of cultural consumption and a significant method of displaying and performing class and status; and these processes are prominent within bars and restaurants as leisure arenas (or fields). Bar work offered in depth interaction with a broad cross section of the town, staff and customers, locals and tourists. Working in the bar I was available to observe (and indeed engage in) the *popular performances* of both Welshness and Britishness in the form of the Six Nations rugby championship; the Olympics; Royal Wedding celebrations and so on and how they were received. I was at the epicentre of the localized *heating* of the nation. Playing football for Porthcawl also allowed me to observe the performative nature of class and masculinity.

Cultivating an active and varied social life within the town was crucial if I wanted to get to know the ins and outs of the place. Having moved back to Porthcawl I called up my old friends and began socializing with them, in addition to establishing a new circle of friends through my work. This involved generally getting out of the house, making an effort to hang out in some of the local cafes, going to the local pubs, bars and restaurants and going to watch televised football

matches in particular. When I was not formally undertaking interviews I did not have clearly defined subjects or sites to observe, yet I made an effort to hang out in both the 'posh' and 'rough' ends of Porthcawl in an attempt to achieve a balanced viewpoint.

Unlike other ethnographies with clearly defined subjects and systematic plans for 'the field', mine was very much a slow burning process. Alvessen dubs this approach '*emergent spontaneous*', in which the insider 'waits for something to pop up' (2003:181). In concrete terms, this meant that my participant observation was an unglamorous process- it was essentially living everyday life whilst remaining alert to the issues of nation and class issues 24 hours a day. Because of the sheer amount of time within these social settings, I soon abandoned my fieldwork diary- it was simply not necessary to write up interactions or vignettes because they were infrequent, and thus the ones which did occur stood out so much they would not be forgotten. I did, however, occasionally scribble notes on a waiter's notepad, but if something profound had occurred I would normally simply write it down when I returned from work. I felt that scribbling notes and so forth simply represented an unnecessary fetishization of method, a superfluous way of proving how 'in the field' I was. Instead of constant, idiosyncratic vignettes, this deep embeddedness provided me with a consistent, in depth and *broad* picture of *general* behaviours and practices within everyday life (Alvessen, 2003: 182), a "long series of often infinitesimal experiences" (Bourdieu, 2000:23) which helped me understand the often unreflexive elements of the national habitus. Over the course of my observation of everyday life I began to intimately understand what people talked about, what their jobs and what their aspirations were, how they socialized, what they watched on TV, what they did on weekends, what clothes they liked and so on. I observed how often the 'national deixis' arose and in what contexts and the everyday construction of the nation and its frequent intersection with social class and the process of distinction.

### *Photography*

Concerned with documenting the banality and materiality of everyday nationality, I instinctively began taking photos of images which interested me- the ubiquity of the Welsh flag during the Six Nations (contrasted with its relative absence for the rest of the year); the use of the Welsh

language within the hospitality industry and its role in marketing; the presence of Welsh symbols as 'tat' within tourist shops within Porthcawl; the use of flags in supermarkets (the commodification of certain elements of Welshness) and of the celebrations and popular performances which took place in Porthcawl. My use of photography must be considered as distinctly *amateur* (Pauwels, 2000 in Pink, 2003:179), and much of it was done on a camera phone as trips to the supermarket turned into impromptu fieldwork. Although Pink (2003: 190), argues that the use of photography within ethnography should constitute more than 'visual note taking', this was precisely how I utilized photography within my fieldwork. Like Bourdieu, my use of photography, rather than being a profound human interaction (Pink, 2003:190) was often simply a substitute for a notepad (Schultheis et al, 2009, Sweetman, 2009) as I focused on condensation symbols of the nation and material objects. Photography, too, raised ethical issues of privacy and was governed by my position as insider. Whilst taking pictures of flags and other 'condensation symbols' was relatively unproblematic, I realized that cameras in pubs and bars are conspicuous by virtue of their relative obsolescence in today's world of camera phones (I gradually transitioned to using my phone in order to be more inconspicuous) and taking photos of groups of strangers is liable to cause upset or conflict. When I did include people in my photos I always obtained consent and explained myself and the purpose of my research prior to taking the picture, and ensured I did not catch people off guard so as to not upset them. As with the rest of my thesis, people who appeared in my photographs (e.g. plate 10) were uniformly friendly and agreed for me to use their image<sup>24</sup>.

### *Weaknesses and limitations*

Within my formal *interview sample* there is perhaps a slight bias towards middle class, middle aged professional people. This is a corollary of the fact that most of the people involved in civic institutions were middle class professionals, and that Porthcawl has a limited amount of

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<sup>24</sup> Exchanges typical of self-ethnography involved me approaching groups of rugby supporters in the local pub and saying, for example, 'hi, I'm doing a PhD on national identity in Porthcawl, is it ok if I take your photograph for my research? I may publish it in my thesis, is that ok?' My courteousness would invariably be responded to by a 'crack on, butt' or something similar.

institutions, other than sports clubs, which could have yielded a pool of younger respondents or more working class respondents. Similarly, I failed to gain access to the Royal Porthcawl Golf Club and the town's two private schools, meaning I missed out on interviewing perhaps the most affluent strata of Porthcawl, just as I perhaps missed the most deprived strata. The eastern ward of Porthcawl, for example, (the 'rough' part of Porthcawl) has far fewer local institutions for the researcher to embed in. It has to be said, however, that Porthcawl is *not* a multi-ethnic or particularly diverse place, so the slight bias towards the middle class and middle aged is in this sense reflective of the town's demographics. As aforementioned, however, recorded data- gleaned during the early parts of my fieldwork- was only one side of my research, and over the course of my re-localisation: the extensive observant participation in the bar and in the football team I was largely immersed in a much younger 'world' within Porthcawl and significantly a world which was very diverse in terms of class. So although my sample size is relatively small, I feel that I had achieved a *largely* representative cross section of the population. Certainly, my sample is not *misleading* (Goldthorpe et al, 1968): my immersion in these young and diverse worlds during my re-localisation helps correct the natural bias towards older middle class locals which was the inevitable result of my initial snowball sampling of local gatekeepers

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has outlined my research study, the epistemological underpinnings which informed it, and how these theoretical positions actually translated into practice during my study of Porthcawl. The narrative of my fieldwork demonstrates the complexities faced in studying class and nation within everyday life and how I attempted to solve the issue of studying the unreflexive and unspoken ways in which the nation inheres in localities. I have demonstrated my interview techniques and how I observed everyday life and how effective these methods proved to be. Throughout I have also discussed my own role in the fieldwork and my position as a *local* and how this influenced my methods and fieldwork.

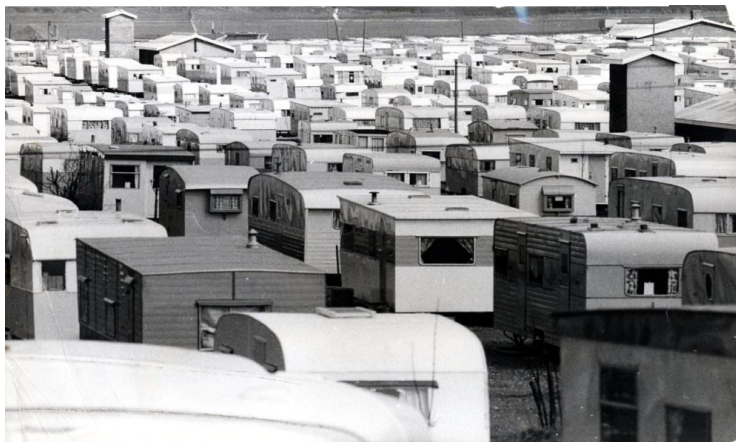
The following chapters outline the findings garnered from the above method



1a



1b



1c





1d



1e



1f

**Plate 1.** Porthcawl's evolution as a resort. From ad hoc trips in the twenties (a), tourism began to centre in the dunes to the East of the town, as hardy tourists began to camp there (b), until eventually the dunes were flattened and the Trecco Bay caravan park was built (c). (Source: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/fun-stuff/20-magnificently-nostalgic-pictures-show-7047595>).





2a



2b



2c



2d



2e

**Plate 2.** The ethnosymbolic geography of a Porthcawl primary school. In studying the microgeography of everyday life, we can observe how children are raised in classrooms saturated with national iconography. Schools reflected the concrete penetration of the molecular changes of devolution into everyday life in 'Anglicised' towns. The primary school was plastered with the Welsh language (a, b, c) and children were encouraged to participate in the construction of these national symbols (a). In an interesting connection of local and national, for St David's day, students had to produce their designs for Porthcawl's regeneration (d).

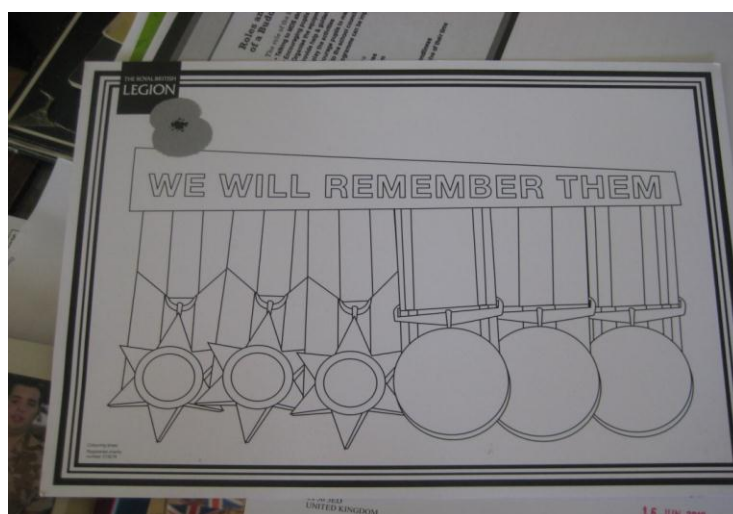




3a



3b

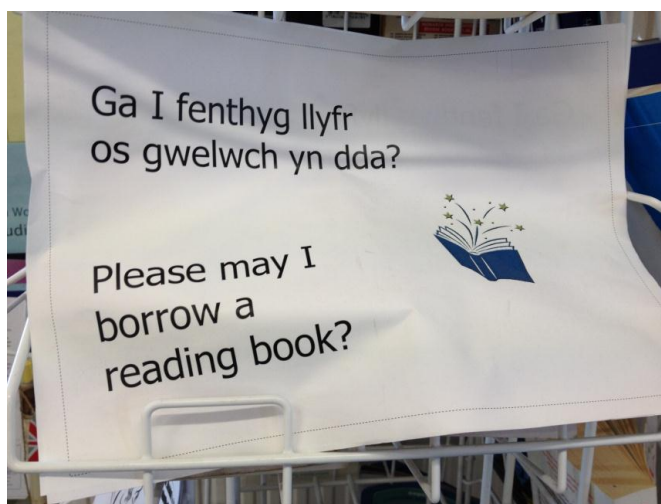


3c

**Plate 3.** British symbols in schools. Although Thompson (2007) argues that devolution represents a zero sum game whereby *everyday life* is getting more Welsh and less British, my research demonstrates that Britishness remains latent within everyday life in contemporary Wales. Whilst Welshness was perhaps more prominent in terms of ‘condensation symbols’, Britishness remained present in material forms and was occasionally heated, just as Welshness was. In the local primary school, the Royal British legion promotes the national ‘we’ from a young age (a, c) and children have fun with the Royal Wedding (b).



4a



4b



4c



4d



4e

**Plate 4.** The ethnosymbolic geography of Porthcawl Comprehensive. Like the primary schools, the secondary school space was saturated with national iconography (dragons, sheep, daffodils, rugby balls) and with Welsh language signage. Top down initiatives (*cwricwlwm cymreig*) are thus largely contingent upon *local* interpretation and enforcement. Like the primary school, the students themselves participated in designing these ‘condensation symbols’.





5a



5b

**Plate 5.** Porthcawl Comprehensive School's annual Eisteddfod.



6a



6b



6c



6d



**Plate 6.** Trading on the Welsh flag in Porthcawl. The ‘Welsh shop’ (c) (incidentally, run by an English family) is a stalwart of Porthcawl’s changing high street, selling a cornucopia of everything Wales related. This plate shows that local and multinational firms chose to trade on the flag. The local co-operative store (e) like all the other big supermarkets in Bridgend was covered in Welsh iconography and bilingual signs. It was these ‘vernacular’ uses of the flag which turned local spaces into national spaces, rather than ‘official’ statist flaggings.

6e





7a

**Plate 7.** Individual flaggings of Welshness in Porthcawl. The above image captures the phenomenon of individuals nationalising their own private space in a way which contributes to the ‘feel’ of the town. In Porthcawl, flags flying from houses were rare, in comparison, say, to individual flagways in America (see Airriess et al, 2012). However, perhaps precisely because of their scarcity, these individual flaggings seemed, in my view, to move from banal to conspicuous, and were far more striking than the ubiquitous trading on the flag.





8a



8b



8c

**Plate 8.** Porthcawl on tour. In Porthcawl, locals followed the modern sporting phenomenon of connecting the local place to the nation by writing the name of the town (and occasionally even the name of the fans holding the flag) on the national flag. This ritual connected the fans and Porthcawl as a place to the wider nation, and Porthcawl's 'peripherality' was instantaneously erased by this gesture. Welsh football, like rugby, provided an example of the 'wandering we', as the national 'us' or frame of reference changed from 'us British' to 'us Welsh' as Cardiff or Swansea faced English opposition. Interestingly, image a shows a homemade homage to Porthcawl's hybridity. On tour supporting the England cricket team, these locals have stitched what they perceive to be the main cultural influences upon Porthcawl into a single flag: England, Wales, Italy, the UK. Image b shows locals with their 'St David's cross' flag, a recent 'invented tradition' which has become somewhat synonymous with more nationalist images at Cardiff City in particular. Yet as one fan informed me, many people favoured the cross flag simply because it was easier to write on than the Welsh flag. Image c shows Porthcawl on a Welsh flag which also contains the Swansea city crest and the Football Association of Wales crest. (The Welsh dragon is also incinerating a Cardiff City bluebird). Porthcawl's location midway between Cardiff and Swansea meant that the town was divided between these two teams, a confluence of East and West.



9a



9b



9c



9d



9e



9f





9g

**Plate 9.** Heating Welshness in Porthcawl. These images demonstrate the increased visibility of Welsh iconography within Porthcawl for both St David's day and the Six Nations rugby championship. During this time, Porthcawl was awash with red and green. The 'heating' was done by local and multinational firms (a) Image g raises issues of Welsh (or at least, Anglo-Welsh) culture which were latent throughout my thesis. What does 'doing something Welsh' entail? Singing? What are the markers of Anglo-Welsh culture? Here, the options are reduced to wearing red or baking Welsh cakes whilst watching rugby. Significantly, the Welsh language does not appear.



**Plate 10.** Locals getting into the spirit of things. When Welshness was heated in Porthcawl, locals became the embodiment of the nation, wearing Welsh rugby jerseys and other trinkets such as leeks and daffodils.





11a



11b



11c



11d



11e

**Plate 11.** Heating Britishness. This plate shows the heating of Britishness during the Royal Wedding celebrations. Something emanating from the national scale is reinterpreted and performed locally by individuals and businesses. Image e captures the carnivalesque nature of this ostensibly 'high' ceremony on the ground, as locals flocked to the pubs en masse to take advantage of their drinks deals.



12a



12b

**Plate 12.** British State ceremonies in Porthcawl. The penetration and participation in these powerful and politicized national rituals served helped reinforce a British ‘we’. In 11a, the crowd sung ‘God Save the Queen’ after the minute’s silence. Notice the youth holding guns in picture b. As Althusser (1971) notes, the ideological nature of these state rituals is obfuscated by their familiarity and our unreflexive participation in them. As I took these photos I reflected that similar ceremonies would be going on throughout Wales, in YFG and Welsh Wales, and wondered whether there would be any difference at all in *how* they were observed locally.





13a



13b

**Plate 13.** Porthcawl Town Council's Diamond Jubilee medal, 3,000 of which were handed out to every school pupil in Porthcawl at a cost of six thousand pounds (Wales Online, 2011).



14a



14b



14c



14d

**Plate 14.** The prevalence of Welsh and British flags being flown side by side. Interestingly, British flags were never flown during ‘Welsh’ ceremonies of St David’s day or the Six Nations, yet Welsh flags were flown alongside British flags for the ‘British’ state ceremonies of the Royal Wedding and the Diamond Jubilee (although not for remembrance services). Once more, the ubiquity of Welsh flags at ostensibly non-Welsh or non-national celebrations was an interesting phenomenon. This could be interpreted as a) reflecting the general ‘nestedness’ of Welsh and British identities within Porthcawl and British Wales, or b) perhaps reflecting an *increased Welshness*, insofar as people perhaps felt compelled to fly Welsh flags at every opportunity within contemporary Wales. On a more banal level this could of course be to do with local businesses advertising the flags side by side and offering deals on both (d).



## **Chapter 7**

### **Everyday Welshness, place and the Welsh Language**

Recalling Bryant's (2006) assumption that people in 'British Wales' would either identify as 'British' or 'keep their distance from Welshness', in Porthcawl something quite different was apparent. The majority of locals felt very Welsh, yet there was also a widespread assumption that Welshness was hierarchical. This influenced locals' sense of place and their Welsh identity. So far from 'keeping their distance' from Welshness, locals sought, through various methods, to achieve their own 'different' type of Welshness, a kind of 'third way'. This entailed a complex process of negotiation, during which they would both move towards and away from these dominant ideas of 'proper Welshness, circumnavigating class, language and place along the way. The following chapters excavate the nature of Welshness in Porthcawl and outline this process of negotiation. This chapter shows how locals 'did' Welshness, how they located Wales within the national hierarchy, and their relationship with the Welsh language. Chapter 8 focuses on the role of class in constructions of Welshness; chapter 9 focuses on younger locals' negotiation of Welshness; chapter 10 moves away from 'talk' and focuses on the unreflexive elements of the national habitus.

This chapter is broken into two sections. The first outlines the locals' strong claims of Welshness; their nuanced awareness of place and Porthcawl's position within the 'national hierarchy', while the second half outlines the central yet complicated role played by the Welsh language in locals' negotiation of their Welsh identity and place within the nation. In negotiating or claiming a distinct Welsh identity, locals had to confront and indeed measure their Welshness against a relatively intangible linguistic type of Welshness, associated with a 'hardcore Welsh' rural other.

### *Straightforward Welshness*

There was a definite 'sense of Welshness' within Porthcawl. The majority of locals felt very Welsh. To begin with, it is necessary to emphasize the strong Welshness of the town, lest this central finding becomes obscured as I focus on the complexity of Welshness in Porthcawl over the coming chapters. Indeed I have to confess the 'emphatic Welshness' of locals often took me by surprise. When Wales played rugby, Porthcawl turned red; when I flashed the Welsh flag up on the OHP in the classroom, students begun chanting 'Wales! Wales!' In one sense, then, following Coupland et al (2006) all of Wales is indeed the real Wales, and coming from a 'peripheral' region does not preclude a sense of Welshness. Indeed, Porthcawl, a typical 'British Wales' town, in many ways fits the bill of a 'traditional' Welsh town, possessing successful rugby and boxing clubs, a male voice choir, Welsh speaking chapels and so on. This central finding serves to reinforce the 'Welshness' of this 'unWelsh' 'British' area, something which as I have discussed is frequently obfuscated within quantitative analysis.

Many locals articulated a very strong sense of Welsh identity, claiming that their Welshness was extremely important to them, echoing Calhoun's argument that national identity, for some, may be a fundamental identity which exerts a strong emotional pull on the individual (Calhoun, 1997. See also Greenfield and Chirot, 1994, 126, cited in Fenton, 2007:324) and is tied to an individual's personal identity and self esteem.

The ways in which locals placed themselves in the nation, that is, how they 'claimed' or 'did' Welshness again attested to the 'naturalness' of being Welsh .

DE: How would you describe your national identity?

Margaret: Welsh, definitely! Very Welsh, yeah (pause) and all my family are Welsh!

DE: I mean, on the census you have to pick a national identity...if you had to pick a national identity...one of the boxes what would you pick?

Karl: Well... I'd pick Welsh!

DE: Do you class yourself as Welsh?

Derek: Oh, absolutely! 100%

DE: So on the census what would you put?

Elinor: Welsh! Yes! Oh yes!

As shown above, many respondents seemed to find it baffling that I would ask a question with such an obvious, taken for granted answer. Their Welshness was something which was self evident. This pattern echoes Mann's (2006: 2.2) argument that national identity is often taken for granted by respondents, something which they 'unproblematised through discourse'. Thompson (2007: 129) similarly argues that most people are only fleetingly conscious of national identity most of the time-it is not a field which warrants serious reflection but is rather something that simply 'is', even in less 'national' places. People in Porthcawl, a 'peripheral' local place, were hardly wracked with insecurity about their Welshness- clearly it wasn't something that locals gave much thought to in day to day life. In other words, the national habitus is, in the main, pre-reflexive or second nature (see Sweetman, 2009). This in itself is significant- people in peripheral places are still socialized from childhood to understand themselves as definitely Welsh.

DE: Is Porthcawl a particularly Welsh place?

April: There's not many people speaking Welsh here now. At one time when we came here there were a lot of people speaking Welsh, I mean....what do you consider as being Welsh?!

DE: Well, what do you class as Welsh?

April: Born in Wales, right. Born in Wales, I don't know anything else [laughs]...if you're born in India as far as I'm concerned you're always Indian whether you've got a British passport or whatever! Born in Poland you're Polish aren't you, wherever you live!

In the above excerpt the lady is taken off guard by my question. Throughout my interviews I attempted to unpick the category of Welshness, in short to 're-problematize' this taken for granted topic and to encourage the respondent to reflect (Condor, 2000: 182 cited in Mann, 2006: 2.2). Unravelling such an 'obvious' thing as being Welsh here prompts an almost exasperated reaction. The above excerpt also illustrates how, just like in 'unproblematic' regions, the majority of Porthcawlians asserted their Welshness through what McCrone (1998:629 cited in Mann, 2006: 5.1) calls the 'raw materials of national identity'. That is, as mentioned in Chapter 2, people mobilize claims of nationhood based on the "formulaic' or 'orthodox' criteria of birthplace, residence, parental links, and so on (see also Fenton, 2007:329).

DE: What does Welshness mean to you? I know it's a hard thing to put your finger on, but...

Joan: What does being Welsh mean to me?

DE: Yeah, if you had to describe it...

Joan: Well I don't know. I think we're nice people! As I say, we're very homely people. What you see you get, I don't know...nothing in particular I don't think, it's just I was born in Wales, Welsh I am, even though my mother and father were Eng...although my mother was Welsh, my mother was born in Wales...my mother's mother had twelve children...and 6 of them were born in the Forest of Dean and 6 of them were born in Merthyr Tydfil, and my mother was the eldest born in Wales, so she was Welsh, right, and her children were all brought up Welsh, we were all brought up in Porthcawl, only one of them was born in Bridgend and that was in Bridgend hospital haha, so....

In the face of Welshness being problematized through my questioning, respondents mobilized their own markers- birthplace in this case- as a way of 'proving' Welshness- a 'trump card' that no-one could argue with. Clearly, the more markers one can mobilize, the better: being born in Wales is good, but having parents who were also born in Wales is even better- more 'proof', if needed, of a deeply anchored Welshness.

Thompson (2007) suggests that although the possession of these 'raw materials' gives individuals the 'right' to claim Welshness, (as demonstrated above) this in itself does not 'cause' national identity. Instead, national identity requires more active 'work': as discussed in Chapter 2, identity needs to be actively 'done' (see, e.g., Jenkins, 1996, 2010). Thompson contends that nationality is constituted and crystallized through the moments in an individuals' life where they are given cause to think about 'who they are' (2007: 130)- at some stage they will have been categorized or had to have categorized themselves by their nationality. That is, how one relates to national identity is influenced by personal and biographical experiences (Fenton, 2007:330; see Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008: 541; Brubaker et al, 2006:207-9). In Porthcawl, too, there was often more to claiming a Welsh identity than pointing to birthplace and residence alone. Locals often 'proved' their Welshness by pointing to instances in their life when they had had to be 'actively' Welsh or used national categories.

DE: How would you describe your national identity?

Karen: Welsh! And I've always put it on every form, just to be annoying, like those passport forms, Welsh!

Byron: I...consider myself Welsh, although I don't speak Welsh, I'm Welsh! On the census forms I put Welsh, Welsh! I'm not English, not Irish, not Scottish, I'm Welsh- nothing against the other Celts- but I'm Welsh and proud of it!

'Doing ethnicity' is thus intermittent- there are specific moments when people become Welsh, when Welsh becomes the relevant mode of self-understanding (Brubaker et al, 2006: 208). This is given a particular emphasis in Wales perhaps because of the controversy generated in the past over bureaucratic omissions of Welsh as a national category on census forms (see BBC, 2002). Thus something as mundane as writing one's identity on a census form became a symbol of a minor rebellion and a way of demonstrating nation-ness, as in Emmett's 'Blaenau boys' (1978). It is an 'active' way of saying that 'I have done my little bit for the country', or indeed may be conceived as part of the process which Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008) calls actively 'choosing the nation'. In a similar vein, and again echoing Thompson's account, moving outside the locality (i.e. going abroad, to University, etc) was a recurring theme in locals' negotiation of nationhood, representing occasions where Welshness had become salient to individuals, where they had had to mobilize national claims and align themselves in national terms (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008: 540).

Haydn: Welsh, oh yeah, yeah! And I mean, if I'm away somewhere....my identity's Welsh!

In a discussion with the local football team, an older player, a former soldier of English parentage, compared his own pronounced Welsh identity with the relative indifference of the younger players:

Paul: I've spent a lot of time away and I missed it [Wales], these lads haven't been away so much

Whilst the national habitus is largely pre-reflexive, there are occasions over the lifecourse where one will become aware of oneself and nationality. Where there is a 'lack of fit between habitus and field' (Sweetman, 2009:9), an individual may feel like 'a fish out of water' (ibid). I was told on countless occasions over my fieldwork that when on holiday, 'others' incorrectly assumed that locals were 'English'. In these instances where they were incorrectly labeled, their Welshness- and what it meant to be Welsh- came to the fore and was rendered conscious. These momentary jolts out of unconsciousness served to strengthen their sense of nationhood.

Locals were instinctively aware of the markers or 'codes' of the Welsh national habitus (see Hodges, 2012). Our awareness of 'our society' and 'our national character' are distilled in these national habitus codes, which may take the form of behaviours or iconography (Poulton and Maguire, 2012: 11)

DE: If you had to describe what being Welsh meant, what sort of things would you...

Karl: Well I'm born in the country (laughs)...I mean I can't sing! Haha, I've got a terrible singing voice, because a lot of people perceive that a lot of Welsh people can sing can't they? Which is a load of bollocks! Ok yeah, how do you put yourself as Welsh? You just know yourself as Welsh don't you, like an Englishman knows himself as English, Frenchman as Frenchman, y'know what I mean?

As Maguire and Tuck (2005) note, stereotypes (such as the Welsh and singing) are essentially shorthand for the national habitus, “a way into the larger discourse of national identity, habitus codes and identity politics” (2005:127) Singing was frequently mentioned when discussing Welshness, as were other iconography: sheep, dragons, daffodils, mining, ‘the valleys’ and so on. These habitus codes provided a widely understood reference point for the national habitus or the ‘imagined charisma’ of the nation. Rugby in particular emerged as a strong marker of Welshness for locals. In the above excerpt, the man recognizes the national habitus codes but also the disjuncture between these images and his lived reality. He also struggles to articulate any real content to his Welshness. It is this disjuncture between lived reality and the idealized national habitus which I engage with throughout the rest of the thesis.

### *Place and hierarchical ideas of Welshness*

Although locals demonstrated a ‘taken for granted’ sense of Welshness and a pre-reflexive understanding of the Welsh national habitus, once I dug deeper and ‘problematized Welshness’ through my interviews, it became clear that the ‘type’ or ‘strain’ of Welshness articulated by locals was nonetheless different, and negotiating a Welsh identity was complicated for many locals. Central to this negotiation of Welshness was a sense of place.

Porthcawlians were aware of the distinctiveness of Porthcawl as a place, and their understanding of Welshness, and indeed their perceptions of their own Welshness, hinged on an instinctive understanding of this local difference. Many locals in Porthcawl, as in Evans’ (2007) study, had internalized the idea that Welshness was hierarchical, and that Porthcawl as a place was obviously ‘not very Welsh’ or at least ‘not properly Welsh’. The discursively constructed hierarchy of Welshness is thus internalized and reproduced in everyday life. Porthcawl was perceived as ‘less Welsh’ because of its distance from the two idealized images of Welshness outlined in chapter 4: a rural, linguistic idea of Welshness on one hand, and an industrial, working class Welshness on the other.



Joan: No, we're not sort of, because we don't speak Welsh....I dunno....we're not like the Valleys, you know, or like the West, the further West you go the more Welsh you hear spoken.

The above excerpt captures the role of the two 'classic' images of Welshness and how Porthcawl was continually compared to both of them. Because Porthcawl was not like the two dominant images of Welshness, articulating a local version of Welsh identity outside of the 'two truths' became complicated. Locals had to therefore reconcile their instinctive Welshness with the understanding that they were not 'properly Welsh'.

As in Mann's (2011) account of the nation-ness of local place, the distinctiveness of Porthcawl as a place referred to both the embodied qualities of locals themselves and the characteristics of Porthcawl as a 'thing' in itself.

Zoe: I don't think Porthcawl is, apart from the name, I don't think it's very Welshy, I think that if you took Porthcawl and plonked it somewhere in England I don't think people would even notice! So no, I don't think it's very Welsh and the accent is different.

There was clearly a dialectical relationship between the nation-ness of local place and the nation-ness of the embodied characteristics of local individuals. In Porthcawl, locals were aware that their town, and by extension themselves as individuals, had certain distinct characteristics or traits which made their 'type' of Welshness 'different', in this case, Porthcawl's 'neutral' accent, which was a recurring theme throughout my fieldwork.

### *Thin Welshness*

Porthcawl's 'type' of Welshness was often interpreted as a specific, 'diluted' Welshness which was, nonetheless, still Welsh. As in Evans' study of NE Wales, locals had to 'work hard' to claim Welshness in spite of where they came from and their own distance from 'proper Welshness'.

DE: Do you think Porthcawl's a particularly Welsh place?

Eleri: Erm, not really I don't think. Ok people are patriotic, in that yes, 'we're Welsh, full stop', like I don't think anyone would say they were British, but I don't think anyone would be like...I 'duno, I think in Tonyrefail if you like went in and said something about them being British or English they would be up in arms whereas in Porthcawl we'd be like 'no we're not'... but I don't think anyone would lose sleep over it.

Kyle: I don't think it's less Welsh, it's just less people are proud of being Welsh.

In the above extracts the 'thin-ness' or 'weakness' of this 'Porthcawl Welshness' is illuminated. Porthcawl emerges as definitely Welsh, yet the issue is the intensity of this nationhood. Porthcawl's 'weak Welshness' is compared explicitly to a 'stronger' 'Valleys Welshness'- the role of this 'other' is the focus of chapters 8 and 9.

In a discussion I conducted with a group of sixth formers, one student, responding to my question about Porthcawl as a local place, responded that: "it's sort of more...English here...as a town". Lacking the tenets of Welshness in this case rendered Porthcawl 'English', revealing the stark choices available to locals beyond the 'traditional' forms of Welshness. In the resulting discussion, however, his classmates worked to re-locate Porthcawl, and by extension themselves, within the Welsh nation and illuminated the nature of this peripheral nationhood:

DE: Ok, going back to what Chris said earlier, that maybe Porthcawl's more of an 'English' town than other places, erm, would you say there's a difference between Porthcawl and England? Is it an 'English' town or is it just 'less Welsh' than other places?

Hayley: yeah just less Welsh...I think if someone came here from England they'd still find it quite Welsh

DE: Ok, what do you think they'd notice about the town which was Welsh?

Bryony: The Welsh shop in town (laughter)

DE: ok, anything else?

Hayley: Well I think that if people from England came here they would hear our accent more than we do, so they would pick it up and know that we were Welsh whereas we can't hear it.

There are many things going on in this excerpt. Once more, the embodied qualities (accent) of locals are conflated with the nation-ness of the locality. Significantly, 'Englishness' was used as a shorthand way of saying Porthcawl was 'less Welsh', demonstrating the problems of claiming a 'non-traditional' Welshness. Although Porthcawl is recognised as being Welsh (in this case compared to England), there is clearly an issue with articulating a 'thin' or distinct type of Welshness which falls outside the classed or linguistic forms of Welshness. Outside these two images, there is nowhere else to go- it is either 'proper Welshness' or 'Englishness'. Lastly, a girl points to the presence of banal visual signifiers of Welshness within the locality (a tourist shop) as 'evidence' of Porthcawl's 'latent Welshness'. I engage with the ethnosymbolic geography of Porthcawl in chapter 10.

Similarly an elderly lady, reflecting on Porthcawl's identity, claimed:

Joan: no, it never has been strong Welsh....but if you go away they can tell you where you're from!

DE: in terms of our accents?

Joan: yes, 'oh you're from South Wales'

Porthcawl emerges as a liminal space: neither 'properly Welsh', but definitely 'not English'. The above excerpts perhaps tell us something about the 'thin-ness' of identity and the importance of context. When set against 'Englishness', Porthcawl's 'thin' Welshness became less relevant, as internal gradations of Welshness dissolved when set against an external other. This is based on 'doing the vis a vis' and whether internal or external others are receiving an identity claim. Here the assumption is that English people will assume that 'even Porthcawlians' are Welsh, which makes claiming Welshness more straightforward.

#### *Porthcawl as a Welsh place*

The negotiation of place and Porthcawl's 'rank' within the national hierarchy was interesting, and revealed a sophisticated appreciation of subtle gradations of nation-ness within the Welsh national hierarchy. Of course, not all residents accepted the idea of local distinctiveness or 'weak Welshness'. A minority of respondents defensively argued that Porthcawl was 'as Welsh as anywhere else':

DE: Do you think Porthcawl is a particularly 'Welsh' town?

Bobby: Well yeah, it's got to be, it's got to be! I wouldn't say...well, how do you define the Welshness of any one place? Obviously there's not a huge percentage of Welsh speakers here, but I don't know...I mean, how Welsh does Cardiff feel? Except there's a massive amount of Welsh speakers there, but no one in Cardiff would actually believe it if you gave them the figures on how many Welsh speakers

actually live in the city, but the fact it's the capital city, the fact...I think that Porthcawl has a massive appeal to Welsh people, and I think it's somewhere they identify with, because as we spoke about earlier, people from the Valleys, Swansea, Cardiff, Newport, they all have an affinity with Porthcawl and they see it as something good that's Welsh, as I'm sure people in Spain would speak about various tourist resorts there because they live up in the hills.

In the above exchange, Welshness is initially linked to the presence of the Welsh language within the town, but Porthcawl's Welshness is ultimately 'proven' by virtue of its history as a seaside resort and its role within South Wales as a popular leisure site. Adamson's (1991) analysis of the dissolution of industrial South Wales argued that the 'new class fractions' which would migrate to the coastal regions from the Valleys, would retain the residual culture of their place of origin. For some older residents in Porthcawl who remembered the miner's fortnight, and for some residents with close familial connections to the Valleys, such 'residual' cultural attachment was influential in their perception of place and their own Welshness. Porthcawl, even if it possessed 'cosmetic' differences with the Valleys, (e.g., was 'nicer', 'cleaner air' etc) was very much part of the fabric of this (implicitly working class) 'world of South Wales' (or Welsh Wales).

The British Wales region, as discussed previously, is not geographically coterminous and is in many ways a 'thin' region (Terlouw, 2012:713) with few defining features. Within Porthcawl, however, there was an awareness of a larger ambivalent region beyond Porthcawl as a town and an idea that Porthcawl had things in common with these similar, liminal places:

Hugh: it's the coastal path, you know, you've got Penarth, and Mumbles, in the coastal belt, it's what we are. You go thirty miles inland, you start going into the Valley areas, and they historically would be more Welsh in their culture, I think. Maybe because what David said...we've had a big influx of people who've come to work in industries, so there's a lot of English moved into the area.

Douglas: I don't think it's anymore anglicized than anywhere in this area. A lot of people came over here from the South East of England to work in Fords or for the steel company and liked what they saw and decided to stay. But Mary's quite right, a lot of people have come to the area from the Valleys and there are a lot of people learning Welsh as we speak, the courses are quite well inhabited in Porthcawl, so it's no more anglicized than most other places in this area.

Here we see an awareness that Porthcawl was like the rest of 'British Wales'- the Vale of Glamorgan and other coastal towns. Interestingly in the above excerpts, the prevalence of *in-migration* helps define these places. An awareness of similarities with other 'ambivalent' local regions made Porthcawl's difference sit more comfortably with locals: Porthcawl was not an anomalous enclave, but rather part of a wider zone of 'Anglicized' regions- it was not *alone*. This whole coastal belt was considered distinct by virtue of its 'unWelshness'- once more, not 'Englishness', but rather this hard to articulate, 'thin' 'type' of Welshness.

Whilst the respondents in the above excerpt drew ontological security from 'not being alone', a 'very Welsh' respondent exhibited a similar awareness of Porthcawl's parallels with other 'unWelsh' regions, but with different results.

DE: Do you think Porthcawl is a particularly Welsh place? I know that's vague...

Michael: No, I think it's the least Welsh place I can think of! I'd put it alongside anglicized areas of Cardiff like Cyncoed and Roath, places like that!

Because of his own negative conception of Anglicization, Porthcawl was damned by its similarities to these 'famously' Anglicised (and 'posh') areas.

*'We're more Welsh than Cardiff'*

For some, Porthcawl was actually 'more Welsh' than other places, Cardiff in particular. Not being quite at the end of the spectrum was undoubtedly comforting for those who made this distinction.

Patricia: But about the Welsh thing, I would say that Porthcawl is not 'Welsh Welsh'...

Gwyn: no, not by any means...

Patricia: not by any means

DE: How would you describe it then? A British- Welsh town?

Gwyn: I wouldn't even... 'British- Welsh' [looks at me incredulously]

Patricia: What's British Welsh?

DE: Well, you tell me...

Gwyn: I wouldn't use that term, no, anglo-Welsh, possibly...

Patricia: once you leave Porthcawl and start to go Port Talbot, Neath, Swansea, once you get to Swansea....that is Welsh [emphasises it]

Gwyn: totally!

Patricia: Swansea is Welsh...Porthcawl is not Welsh

Gwyn: and then you go the other way to Cardiff see

In the above excerpt we can see how micro-level othering and the symbolic construction of boundaries at the local scale interacts with national categories, and how this impacted on locals' perception of their place and Welshness. To the West, 'more Welsh' places, but to the East, 'less Welsh' places. Through the construction of boundaries between 'less Welsh' places, locals were able to place themselves within the nation.

### *Indifference towards Welshness*

Whilst the majority of locals expressed a Welsh identity of some degree and 'worked around' Porthcawl's 'unWelshness', a notable minority of respondents and individuals observed during my fieldwork displayed an indifference to Welshness, both as a result of themselves lacking what they understood to be the central markers of Welshness and Porthcawl not being a very Welsh place.

DE: Ok moving on to something Nathan just said, about you feeling more British, why would you say that?

Nathan: I mean, I'm not very Welsh, I don't speak Welsh...if...we're a part of Britain, so if someone asked I'd say I'm British, but I was born in Wales. It's not a big deal for me really.

Here the student clearly felt he simply 'lacked Welshness' in terms of his personal embodied qualities and his inability to speak the Welsh language. Given the narrowness of the anglo-Welsh cultural repertoire (something I deal with in chapter 9), he simply had nothing which to his mind would place him as Welsh. This indifference was echoed by a local woman I spoke to, whose black heritage interestingly impacted on her sense of Welshness.



DE: If you had to pick your national identity what would it be?

Melanie: I'm British

Pete [husband]: Yeah I'm British

DE: Welsh too or just British?

Melanie: No, British- British Isles. The thing with census forms is that I always put myself down as black British because there's no 'Black Welsh' on there anyway! So, 'erm, you know...haha

DE: Why do you think you feel more British?

Melanie: I never...I suppose...growing up the way I have...I went to grammar school in Barry and I was the only black girl in the school for the first two years I was there, so I've always felt kind of different you know, and there weren't that many black people where I lived in Barry either, erm, so I've always felt slightly on the outside and I've never truly felt Welsh, and I never ever wanted to dress up on St David's day as a Welsh lady as anything...It just didn't feel right, I dunno why, but even as a little kid I didn't feel like I should dress up as a Welsh lady, I didn't ever have that kind of identity. It wasn't anything anyone ever said because I was mixed race- I've got two white grandmothers, it was just never...it never felt right, I've never really felt Welsh I guess, cos Barry's similar to Porthcawl in that you have, it's quite cosmopolitan in that you have a lot of people that came to work in the docks and so on, so it's not got a very strong Welsh identity

Even if you go just 8 miles down the road to Port Talbot the accent is completely different, it's much stronger, but there's not really a very strong....Welsh culture

thing here is there? Well I don't know, maybe I've just missed it but I don't really see anything happening. When I was in Cardiff in the hotel I worked in there they used to have every Thursday, I don't know what they were called, we used to call them the 'Cwm Rackas', but I'm not sure what they were actually called- I don't know where that name came from or what they were about- but they were all Welsh speaking and there's a big increase in the Welsh language in Cardiff and it was starting back then, 30 odd years ago. I don't really see that happening in Porthcawl.

In the above excerpt, the lady feels on the 'outside of everyone', completely disengaged from Wales and Welsh culture. The presence of such 'indifference' mirrors the work of Fenton (2007) in that, although national identity was fundamental for some people, others displayed significant indifference, and occasionally hostility towards Welshness. This ambivalence toward Welshness is touched on again in chapter 8 & 9 as I look at the prevalence of 'embarrassment' about Welshness and the classed nature of nationhood. These findings represent a stark contrast with the (generally) strong Welshness recorded in previous ethnographic studies (e.g Roberts, 1999; Aull Davies et al, 2006). Importantly, and indeed echoing the TWM on the central role of locality in the inculcation of nation-ness, the 'unWelshness' of local place and local culture influenced the respondents' sense of nationhood. Her unWelshness is based on both her racial heritage and growing up in an 'unWelsh' place- Barry- where 'Welshness' simply did not encroach on her socialization. She says she simply did not encounter any Welsh culture in this environment. This produced a 'sitting on the fence' sort of identity amongst some of the locals in Porthcawl, again echoing Evans' study of NE Wales. These locals had simply internalized and come to terms with their peripherality- clearly not everyone will 'fight' to place themselves in the nation.

*The Welsh Language and its impact on Identity construction and perceptions of place*

The Welsh language emerged as a central pillar within the process of negotiating a Welsh identity in Porthcawl. The following section illuminates how the language impacted on locals' understanding of place and individual Welshness.

The presence of the Welsh language helped delineate Welsh and non-Welsh places and spaces, and was central to the 'hierarchy of Welshness' which locals measured their own Welshness against. The absence of the language in Porthcawl naturally rendered it 'less Welsh', and just as Porthcawl was 'less Welsh', Welsh speaking areas were automatically 'more Welsh'.

DE: Do you think the Welsh language plays an important part in Welshness?

Karl: Not in this area I wouldn't say. Down West and North Wales, yes

Hannah: It depends where you are as well though, like in Llanelli everyone speaks Welsh, and you would feel, 'oh, I'm not very Welsh', if you were up there and you couldn't speak it you'd be like 'oh'!

The above excerpts encapsulate the assumption that there were different types of Welshness within Wales. It was assumed that Welshness 'down West' or 'up North' was obviously different to Welshness in Porthcawl- the standards were different. Conversely, however (although this was less frequent than the 'admission' of weakened Welshness) some locals pointed to Porthcawl's 'Welshness' by arguing that there was a Welsh speaking element of Porthcawl, e.g. Welsh learners, nurseries and so on.

Despite not being able to speak Welsh, many respondents expressed a very positive view of the Welsh language and its institutionalization post-devolution. As in other ethnographies of Anglophone areas (Roberts, 1999; Aull Davies, 2006; Evans, 2007; Hodges, 2012) locals oriented

themselves towards Welshness through the language. In many of my interviews, the Welsh language was bound up with historical collective memory and served as a way of invoking a tangible link to the past and a way of defining a distinctive Welshness against Englishness; of positioning the Welsh as 'us', a nation defined by a collective injustice.

Elinor: well I think the language does play a part because it's precious to us, mainly I think because it was taken away from us, it isn't something which died out naturally you know: it was beaten out of us. My father is from near Ammanford and when he went to school I think they were still wearing 'the Welsh not', he wasn't allowed to speak Welsh, and now of course he never taught us to speak Welsh because you know 'to get on in this world you need to speak English', so I think it's the fact that it was sort of beaten out of us, taken away from us, I think it's precious to us.

Paul: The only reason we don't speak it 'cos it was banned by an English king wasn't it!

As Roberts (1999: 123) notes, this historical invocation of the language as something which was 'beaten out of us' creates an emotional bond to an imagined (and in this case perhaps a mythologized) collective past, but also served to anchor the individual, regardless of peripherality, to this wider collective history and sense of injustice through historical familial links to a Welsh speaking past (see also Hodges, 2012).

DE: Do you think the Welsh language is an important thing to Wales?

Byron: Now my mother and father could speak Welsh. They were from a place in Merthyr called Mountain Ayre, there was a community up in the mountain, all

Welsh like. My grandfather used to work in the mines, in the levels, and he was all Welsh<sup>25</sup>.

For many older residents in particular, the language was bound up in demonstrating Welsh roots and a sense of historical belonging and collective memory which could irrefutably place them in the nation: it essentially strengthens the claim making process and importantly, overcomes place based ambivalence.

### *Choosing the nation*

Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008: 543) argue that nationhood is implicated in the conscious life choices people make, that whenever an array of options are defined in 'national terms', when people choose particular options, they make nationhood 'materially salient'. Moreover, if we accept that there is an implicit 'hierarchy of Welshness' within Wales, 'choosing the nation' may be seen as a form of conspicuous consumption related to how one is located within this hierarchy (McCrone, 2005). Sending one's children to a Welsh-medium school may therefore be conceived of as a way of 'choosing the nation' (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008:542). In Porthcawl, Welsh language education- one of the molecular changes of the passive revolution- for some locals undoubtedly offered the chance to become national, a form of 'claim-making' (ibid). As well as citing familial historical links to the language, however, a recurring theme in my research was for middle aged or elderly residents in Porthcawl to point to their children and grandchildren attending Welsh language schools or nurseries as 'evidence' of their own Welshness, echoing the work of Hodges (2012) whose analysis of Anglophone areas of South Wales ('Welsh Wales' regions) noted the integrative reasons for choosing Welsh medium education

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<sup>25</sup> The above quote illustrates a recurring theme within Porthcawl also present in Day and Thompson's (1999) study of Bangor, where, somewhat confusingly, the term 'Welsh' was used to describe not only the locals, but Welsh speakers too. So respondents who classed themselves as 'Welsh' would also refer to Welsh speaking relatives as 'Welsh' to denote a separate, 'more Welsh' category.

DE: Do you think the Welsh language has a role in Welshness?

John: Erm, the language itself- I don't speak Welsh myself, my grandchildren do, and I'm very pleased that they go to Welsh schools-

Karen: My little boy is learning Welsh and he speaks Welsh with a very heavy accent

Alan: Our granddaughter, she's nearly 3- she's doing Welsh in nursery and we're fostering that.

Douglas: The Welsh schools in this area are proving very popular, and the Welsh nurseries are doing well here, and that's Welsh medium schools. My father was a Welsh minister and my brother was...my father didn't speak English till he was about 14 or 15....

Wendy: in fact my mother, who's in the other room, her parents were only Welsh speaking... in all fairness to you [to husband], when Daniel was born you took Welsh classes, because we wanted Daniel to know about Welsh and to speak it, because it is our culture isn't it? So David in fairness tried....and now Daniel speaks better Welsh than David and I, and he can sing happy birthday in Welsh.

The last excerpt above neatly demonstrates how citing familial links, both to the past and to a 'more Welsh' present /future served as a tangible, concrete link between the individual and a Welsh identity. Even if the parent had not sent their child to a Welsh school, citing a positive opinion of the institutionalization of the language through education was another way of demonstrating membership of the nation. 'Choosing the nation' must therefore be understood in terms of the national narrative and the value placed on certain markers. In post-devolution Wales, the Welsh language, even in Porthcawl, an Anglophone town, emerged as a central pillar

of Welshness. The penetration of new cultural apparatuses- specifically, Welsh language schools- into this 'ambivalent' place provided a more tangible relationship with an element of Welshness which had hitherto been distant.

As Fox & Miller-Idriss note, however, it is important not to impute too much into these choices. Choices can often be unreflexive and banal. People send their children to Welsh speaking schools because of peer group advice, because of judgements about a better quality of teaching, because they themselves speak Welsh, and so on, rather than consciously trying to become 'more Welsh', and I spoke to young mothers who sent their children to the Welsh primary because it was 'on the way to work', rather than any national sentiment. Equally, the logistical difficulties in sending children to schools outside of Porthcawl did not mean that locals were consciously 'not choosing' the nation either. Given that 'Welsh schools' were sometimes described to me as 'better', or 'like free private schools' (echoing the findings of Hodges (2012) and Packer and Campbell (2000)) then the actual 'nation-ness' of the 'choosing' in fact becomes related to class and social mobility: something which I did not have time to explore in depth but which surely warrants further exploration.

*'We should all speak Welsh'*

To my surprise, support for the language extended to many Anglophone residents forcefully arguing for stringent enforcement of Welsh speaking bureaucratic apparatus:

DE: Do you think the language is an important part of being Welsh?

Bobby: Massively so, massively so yeah. They've got to take more stringent steps really to reinforce the fact... I think we need to be really thinking about bringing in more stringent laws where Welsh must be spoken in the work place, and where possibly you must have one of your ten workers must speak Welsh, just as you must have someone who's a first aider, you must have someone who speaks Welsh, so if

someone did get into difficulties or something and wanted to converse in Welsh they should be allowed to, just as if you want to do your census form in Welsh you can do it in Welsh. You want to do your tax for your car in Welsh you can do it in Welsh, you want to draw some money out the hole in the wall you can do it in Welsh, and I think that needs to be reinforced.

In such statements we can again witness a 'sense of duty' and commitment towards the language, an appeal to the collective and an acceptance of the role of the language post-devolution, with it being deemed as important as first aid training. Some locals argued that Welsh should be the first language, attesting again to the widespread acceptance of the language as a marker and central pillar of Welsh identity in post-devolution Wales:

Ragine: I think it should be compulsory to be honest with you. It should be the first language. I'm not necessarily, I'm not a nationalistic type of person as such like, but at the same time I do think 'this is Wales, we should speak Welsh'.

Karen: I'm a firm believer that if we live in Wales we really should speak Welsh, not that I can speak Welsh myself (laughs).

Within Porthcawl such solemn statements about a sense of duty regarding the language represented a way of orienting oneself towards Welshness, a way of demonstrating membership of the nation. Yet when I asked respondents if they themselves had learnt Welsh or were planning on doing it, the overwhelming majority had not, and indeed a local Welsh tutor told me that she considered Porthcawlians uniquely disinterested in learning Welsh. This contradiction between attitude and practice was interesting, since it seemed on occasion that respondents were perhaps responding to perceived new norms about the language, an unthinking sort of 'political correctness'.

*Guilt, regret and shame*



DE: How would you define your national identity?

Keiran: Welsh

Neil: Welsh. English speaking! Haha!

In the above excerpt there is an implicit assumption made that there are different types or strains of Welshness. The prevalence of such caveats in many ways problematizes the 'homogenizing' thesis of Coupland et al: this 'admission' signals an instinctive awareness of a hierarchical notion of Welshness, in effect as a way of saying 'I am Welsh, BUT'. The aforementioned goodwill towards the language somewhat strangely went hand in hand with other emotions. Locals frequently expressed regret at not being able to speak Welsh, and even 'guilt' about not being able to speak Welsh:

Kevin: I can't speak fluent Welsh, that's one of my regrets actually- I would've loved to speak fluent Welsh

DE: When you were growing up and going to school in Porthcawl did you have to learn Welsh?

Karen: Yeah, up until you picked your O levels, and I didn't do Welsh, I did French and German, and I very much regret it

Gareth: To be honest I only think it can be a good thing. I don't actually speak Welsh myself, it's something I've always been a bit ashamed of, I'm Welsh and I'm proud of it and I should be able to speak the language.

Heather: Being a teacher I have to use some Welsh in classes, but I do struggle with it, I mean all the children learnt Welsh at school, as part of their education they

learnt Welsh in Nottage right from the beginning, but I'm ashamed to say none of them are Welsh speakers....

These sentiments reveal the confusing and often contradictory attitudes which surrounded the issue of the language and its functional role in the process of locating oneself within the nation. Regret, shame and a generally apologetic tone emerged as ways of expressing a positive view of the language, as well as representing an implicit understanding that one could always be 'more Welsh'. Mixed in with these 'emotive' responses were clearly 'non-national' references to the utility of the language in contemporary Wales- respondents regretted not speaking Welsh because it may have furthered their career. The absence of Welsh from the locality and the inability to speak Welsh, often seemed to prompt a nervousness or paranoia in locals, that they were somehow 'to blame' for not possessing the language. As one gentleman put it:

Gareth: It's just unfortunate that we're in a part of the Wales which is a very strong English speaking part. I would've liked to seen more of us speaking Welsh, like for argument's sake, I can't speak Welsh, my siblings can't speak Welsh, my parents couldn't speak Welsh, my grandparents could only speak a few words of Welsh....so it has been lost back generations ago, it's no good blaming us, it's been lost a long time ago, and the only reason that would've happened is because of the high development of industry in this part of South Wales from England, and of course when you've got English bosses coming down, and they don't speak Welsh, they're forcing people to speak English....the language was lost unfortunately.

Here again it was 'unfortunate' that Porthcawl was an Anglophone place. Emphasizing a sense of powerlessness helped locals 'exonerate' themselves from the perceived judgements that they evidently believed 'others' were making about them. As in the above interaction this often involved a shaky grasp of history and the displacement of blame, normally to 'the English'.

There were frequently value judgements attached to the discussion of Welshness, namely, that not speaking the language was perceived to be 'bad', and by extension that also Porthcawl's Anglicization was 'bad', or shameful. This clearly contributed to the problems of asserting a local variant of Welshness. The prevalence of this self-flagellation regarding the inability to speak Welsh suggested that despite arguments to the contrary, a strong and secure Anglo-Welsh 'civic' identity did not have much traction within Porthcawl. We can begin to see in the above exchanges some problems and discomfort when discussing the language. Throughout my fieldwork it became impossible to ignore these issues, and I was inexorably drawn back to Khleif's (1975) 'unfashionable' arguments about the prevalence of 'guilt' and 'self hatred' amongst the 'anglo-Welsh' which he brands a problem related to "suppressed identity, of conquered people, of stigmatized people" (1975:57). Khleif's work on language suggested that the English speaking Welshman is neither psychologically British or Welsh but is a 'marginal man' (1975:68), characterized by 'self hatred', 'torn consciousness', 'ambivalence' and a 'split identity'. Recall that chapter 2 revealed that this same insecurity was also present in Thompson (2007: 131), Evans (2007), and Roberts' (1999) ethnographic studies of Anglophone areas.

This sense of 'shame' and guilt represented an implicit assumption that one's Welshness was being 'judged' or indeed contested by 'others'. The widespread support for the language often belied a quite tangible insecurity:

DE: So again, it's a tough one, it's a vague one, but how would you define Welshness? What does it mean to you?

Alan: Well one, the obvious thing we've got...apart from living here, or being born here I should say, as well as living, we've got our own identity, culturally, and we've got our own language. So, I mean, what more do you need, other than that, to prove it? Erm, if anybody said to me 'you can't claim to be Welsh', I'd say 'but on what grounds?' I was born there, I live there, I speak the language. What more do you want?

Here we see, apropos of nothing, the assumption that his claim may be contested by others within the polity.

The language, then, had something of a schizoid effect on Porthcawlians' relationship to Welshness. Whilst many locals used the language positively to help construct their own Welsh identity (e.g. 'I am proud of the language'), or to orient Porthcawl as a place towards Welshness (e.g. 'Porthcawl has a lot of Welsh speakers' ), the language or 'Welsh speakers', also represented a fear that an inability to speak Welsh defined them as 'less Welsh'. It was frequently assumed that 'Welsh speakers' 'looked down' on those who could not speak Welsh: the language was a central theme within the hierarchy of Welshness.

This was all largely interpreted spatially: these 'others' were from 'the West' or 'up North':

Matt: If you go up North, they won't even speak English! Like, they literally look down on us!

Lloyd: and down West as well....

The above excerpt vividly outlines the 'them and us' notion held by some locals towards 'more Welsh' regions, based on the internalization of the perception that other regions of Wales held an exclusionary idea of Welshness and would not accept the claim making of locals. Another woman, upon finding out that I was studying in Bangor, asked: 'are they very prejudiced?' referring to North Walians. Indeed, I was frequently quizzed about my time in North Wales by locals, and for many locals it was simply obvious that 'they' (in North Wales) didn't like 'us' because 'we' couldn't speak Welsh. I heard the anecdote 'I walked into a bar [down West/up North] and they were all speaking English, but when they realized I wasn't local they all started speaking Welsh' on numerous occasions. Some locals openly stated they didn't like 'Gogs', because 'they hate us'. The Welsh speaking West and North appeared as an inherently different, faceless 'other', against which locals measured their own Welshness and understood

the identity of Porthcawl as a place, defined against this 'hardcore Welsh' heartland. Recall that this 'other' was central to reinforcing the ambivalence of North East 'British Wales' in Dafydd Evans' analysis (2007).

The narrative of the 'Welsh speaking other' extended to Welsh language as being tied to extremism and nationalism- to threatening 'bogeymen'- was also present within Porthcawl:

DE: What do you make of the upsurge in the language?

Derek: Erm, difficult question. Yes, provided it was promoted rightly and not...a lot of South Walians think of Welsh being promoted as more of an extremist...more of a Welsh language extremism and we're not all like that. Although we don't speak Welsh we're very Welsh and we're not extremists, and most of south Wales would think pushing Welsh on people is extremism, burning bloody cottages down and things like that y'know.

In the above exchange the man identifies with the whole of South Wales against the internal extremist other. Again the assumption is of an inherent difference between different types and degrees of Welshness between geographical regions.

Gareth: I think it's great and the more people I hear speaking Welsh the better! The only downside is... erm, the only thing I don't agree with is a situation like we had on the news the other day, where a chap took over a pub down West, up in West Wales or North Wales or whatever, and because he didn't speak Welsh- he wasn't Welsh speaking himself, and none of his staff could speak Welsh- there was a big row there because some of the punters were ordering their drinks in Welsh, refused to order their drinks in English. Now to me that's just being pig headed! Fine, promote the Welsh language: it'd be great to see it grow, the more people that speak it the better, but to treat people like that is totally wrong. If you can't speak the language then everybody speaks English, it's not as if somebody speaking Welsh

can't speak English- they're just being pig headed and awkward, and they don't deserve to be served as far as I'm concerned.

In the above excerpt there is a clear tension. It is assumed that efforts to promote the Welsh language are part of a spectrum, at the end of which lies 'extremism' and intolerance.

DE: Have you noticed attitudes changing towards the language over the years? What was the perception of Welsh when you were in school, for example?

John: Yes, I think that, well...yeah ok, there were people who spoke Welsh and there were people who didn't speak Welsh. We didn't pay that much attention to it. Ok, then you had the sort of, the enclave if you like of Welsh speakers and people who were really trying to keep Wales Welsh...but we looked upon them as a bit odd y'know, because after all, and I would say they were mainly down the West, y'know, whether we were right in thinking that I dunno, but you had the free Wales army sort of nonsense, and people burning second homes down in Pembroke and what have you, we thought they were a bit over the top certainly.

In Porthcawl there had been a widespread internalization of the disarticulating narratives of 'extremism' outlined in chapter 4 and 5 that Welsh speakers were by nature intolerant, keen on 'denying' Welshness to non-Welsh speakers (Day and Thompson, 1999:43). The apparently confused love/hate relationship with the Welsh language extant in Porthcawl constitutes a 'lived ambivalence' or 'paradox of identification' (Jenkins, 2011: 292). Karner (2011) claims that 'ideological contradictions' are performed and lived by actors, whose inconsistencies reveal a 'complicated consciousness'. He reminds us that people do not typically possess a single 'attitude' on an issue such as language; instead they possess variability, and use different common sense repertoires on different occasions (2011: 177). In Porthcawl this complicated consciousness is best understood as being intimately related to the process of transformismo and disarticulation inherent to the post-passive revolution power struggle. As Johann Unger

(2010) notes, one cannot understand how a language is perceived within a country or how it relates to identity without first understanding how it is constructed in discourse (2010:100) - i.e. to draw attention to an 'underlying language ideology' (114).

Clearly, politicized discourses of the nation exert a profound influence upon people's common sense understandings of Welshness. The residue of these narratives led to a confused relationship with the language, which also served to reinforce the issue of place within the polity, as Porthcawl as an innately anglicized region was defined against the faceless North and West.

### *Cosmopolitanism*

Echoing Evans' (2007) work, one of the ways that residents explained and 'dealt with' this perceived lack of linguistic Welshness was by arguing that Porthcawl was a more 'cosmopolitan' place:

DE: Have you noticed any changes in Porthcawl itself regarding the language?  
More use?

Kevin: I haven't really no, I have to say. I think in terms of that we're more cosmopolitan, I think the further West you go from Swansea, westwards, that's when you start to get a heavier concentration. I think a lot to do with that has been the M4, because people spiral down the M4 corridor, and they're now settling in towns which before weren't accessible, like Cardiff, Newport, erm, Porthcawl's just 2 minutes off the M4, Bridgend now is heavily a commuter town. And the Welsh language in this area has been diluted quite badly.

The 'cosmopolitanism' of Porthcawl was an adjunct of the above narrative about these intolerant 'others' and represented a positive way of dealing with being 'less Welsh' or of possessing a 'thin Welshness': one could 'worry' about being 'less Welsh', or one could

celebrate it as a virtue, particularly when 'more Welsh' members of the nation were easily othered. Frequently, locals would do both within the same discussion. Over the course of the fieldwork, the frequency with which Welsh speakers and Welsh speaking regions were invoked as 'other' echoed Mann's assertion that individuals in 'less national' places frequently utilize geographical or regional differences as a proxy way of saying that certain elements of the population are different from 'us', i.e. certain bounded regions contain different 'types of people' (Mann 2011:112). Welsh speakers and Welsh speaking regions were implicitly portrayed as parochial and insular, and the Welsh language viewed as an 'imposition of the past on the present' (Calhoun, 2002: 148). These views, and this loaded utilization of the term 'cosmopolitan', represented the internalization of the 'civic' narrative outlined in Chapter 4, whereby the Welsh language is seen as a regressive, 'ethnic' issue, somehow inappropriate to Porthcawl, which was by extension modern, urbane, progressive and civilized. Moreover, as in Evans's study, 'Anglicization' and 'cosmopolitanism' were frequently elided by locals (2007: 133-5). So Porthcawl's 'thin' type of Welshness- this 'third way'- when framed in this manner, was reminiscent of Bryant's (2006) conception of a 'modern Wales' which is defined against traditional ideas of Welshness which he claims are backwards looking. That is, a 'thin' or 'weak' sense of Welshness was here not problematic but in fact representative of a sophisticated (and implicitly Unionist) 'post-national' identity.

DE: Do you see the Welsh language as being a part of Welshness?

April: No. No, certainly not. I don't see the Welsh language as being important, I think it's a trivial issue really when you consider, what is the word they use for the world being....er,

DE: Globalisation?

April: Globalisation sort of thing, it's a minor, it's a bit of a distraction really



Sam: doesn't seem to be a point to it [the language]

DE: why... 'cos it's not used in Porthcawl?

Sam: since the world's been globalised, seems like if you can speak English, it's pointless

Pete: I think it's er, totally retrograde, I think it increases the sense of...insularity that the Welsh seem to be getting more into as a reaction against the neglect of Wales by London. I think what's happening to Wales, the North East, all the far flung regions is to do with the concentration of power in the South East

Thus the Welsh language could simultaneously be the 'good' type of Welsh which was learnt by grandchildren in school, but also the 'bad' version associated with rurality and 'extremists'.

Denney et al (1997) explicitly argue that the Welsh language is the preserve of the middle classes and is a badge of bourgeois prestige (1997: 563), used in the process of classification within the Welsh habitus. The 'anglicized' middle classes in Porthcawl represent the converse of their thesis. That is, if there is, in their words, a 'Welsh class' (1997:564), by which they refer to middle class Welsh speakers, there is equally an English speaking middle class in Wales, which in reframing their 'weak' Welshness as cosmopolitan/progressive, derives 'prestige' from its distance from the 'regressive' and 'ethnic' Welsh language, and indeed from all 'traditional' ideas of Welshness. In the above excerpts the Welsh language is incompatible with the individuals' sense of cosmopolitanism. This was pronounced amongst some of the young University students I spoke to in Porthcawl, for whom the language, rurality and 'nationalism' were interrelated and incompatible with their own implicit 'progressiveness'. Porthcawl, although a small town, was implicitly part of a more 'urban' and sophisticated way of life. 'British Wales' as a region was felt to be more cosmopolitan.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated both the instinctive Welshness of locals, yet also demonstrated that place still matters ‘on the ground’ in post-devolution Wales. So although top down analyses suggest that the British Wales region is gradually dissolving, place remained salient as an ontological category in everyday life for many locals. Locals in Porthcawl understood Welshness as innately hierarchical, and were aware of their position within the hierarchy. Place and individual identity were frequently intertwined- locals understood their own Welshness as intimately related to the Welshness of their town. Yet this perceived ‘peripherality’ did not produce uniform results in Porthcawl. Whilst the majority of locals worked around this perception of ‘unWelshness’ to articulate a sense of Welshness, the ‘weak Welshness’ of Porthcawl helped produce ‘indifference’ towards Welshness in others.

The Welsh language had a contradictory impact on locals’ sense of Welshness. It emerged as a ‘gold standard’ of Welshness in Porthcawl which allowed locals to orient themselves towards Wales and Welshness (through their proximity to and proprietary view of the language) but also simultaneously undermined their sense of Welshness by reminding them of the hierarchy of Welshness. Porthcawl’s distinctiveness as an ‘Anglicised’ place was reproduced as locals constructed symbolic regional boundaries against the Welsh speaking ‘West’ and ‘North’. Central to this schizoid view of the language was the internalization and reproduction of the politicized narratives about the Welsh language and the Welsh speaking ‘other’, outlined in chapters 3 and 4.

In the next chapter I build on the issues outlined above to deepen our understanding of how locals negotiated their Welsh identity vis a vis dominant images of ‘proper Welshness’. Whilst this chapter focused on how locals confronted *linguistic* Welshness, the next one focuses on how locals measured their Welshness against ‘working class Wales’.

## Chapter 8

### Class, Place and 'Proper Welshness': the national habitus as a class habitus

The previous chapter showed that although Porthcawlians claimed an instinctive Welshness, their claims were complicated by their assumption that neither they themselves or their town measured up to their understanding of 'authentic Welshness'. Welshness was understood to be *hierarchical*, and locals measured their Welshness against a relatively intangible *linguistic type* of Welshness, associated with the 'hardcore Welsh' rural *other*, and as I am about to show, with a working class, 'valleys' version of Welshness. The preceding chapter showed that this Welsh language 'world' was a relatively abstract phenomenon, as Brooks (2006) puts it, lurking at the corners of the polity, but not looming large in *everyday life*. The linguistic concept of Welshness simultaneously allowed locals to orient themselves towards Welshness whilst also instilling a sense of insecurity about their own national identity, reminding locals that they were at the periphery of the nation.

This chapter builds on the complexity of Welshness in Porthcawl and deals with the second and more prevalent image of authentic Welshness in Porthcawl- the Labourist idea of Welshness- and how it influenced local understanding of place and nation. This chapter illustrates how, for the majority of locals, Welshness was bound up with '*working classness*', as the local, 'Valleys' habitus was the instinctive gauge for 'proper Welshness'. This localized 'other' represented a more tangible idea of Welshness than the linguistic form, as locals encountered it frequently in everyday life. The link between 'proper Welshness' and a working class habitus meant that Porthcawl's 'obvious' middle classness- elucidated in this chapter with the help of Bourdieu- complicated locals' claiming of a Welsh identity. The chapter shows how locals negotiated their Welshness vis a vis this classed national habitus, and how, because the working class habitus carried both positive and negative connotations, locals veered *towards* or *away* from this type of Welshness much as they did with the linguistic concept of Welshness.

### *Porthcawl as Posh and unWelsh*

As I illustrated in the previous chapter, Porthcawl's 'distinctiveness' or *difference* as a place within the local social formation was taken for granted by the overwhelming majority of locals, and this was because of its class identity. It was self-evident for the majority of respondents that Porthcawl was distinct from the surrounding areas and places by virtue of its ostensible affluence, or as it was understood and interpreted colloquially, '*poshness*'. As one elderly lady, (originally from the Valleys) patiently explained to me: "once you got past Bridgend, you're getting down the posh area then!" Certainly, in Porthcawl, regional boundaries between Porthcawl and the neighbouring towns and regions (the neighbouring towns of Cornelly, Kenfig Hill and Pyle acting as the immediate local others, and 'the Valleys' as a general catch- all term for the area north of the M4) were instinctively understood as *class boundaries*. Locals understood their own place and collective identity by constructing symbolic boundaries between Porthcawl and the surrounding working class regions.

DE: Would you say then that Porthcawl was different...

Gwyn: Oh without a doubt, without a doubt! You could more than sense it, you were made very conscious of it!

Patricia: Yes, my son married a girl from Nantyfyllon, where Gwyn comes from, and in the wedding it was ohh (cocks nose) 'Porthcawl people'

Gwyn: And you still get this don't you! 'Ooh, he's from Porthcawl'

Haydn: Oh yeah, I mean certainly in my 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s, let's say my 50s, certainly that was a predominant attitude, that Porthcawl was a bit snobbish, that yes it was all well off people, I won't say wealthy but well off people

For many elderly residents it was clear that, despite Porthcawl's historical connections with 'the Valleys' and the flows of people from 'Welsh Wales' to Porthcawl, the 'commonsensical' image within South Wales was nonetheless of a 'posh' town.

Karen: yeah people judge you, as I say if you say you're from Porthcawl people judge you, they assume you're going to be snobby, but are they jealous that y'know we're right on the sea? I dunno

Ted: The image of Porthcawl- I'm not saying it's reality- but the image, that you get from other people is that there's lots of money in Porthcawl, erm, Porthcawl is privileged, so mainly people who live in Porthcawl, they might be better off than you, whoever you are, you know. If you come from Porthcawl, I've said that to many people and they've said, they've raised their eyebrows like 'ooh yeah...aren't you doing well?' just because I come from Porthcawl (Man, 50s)

As the above excerpts demonstrate, locals were acutely aware of how 'others' (in neighbouring regions) viewed them. These 'working class others' therefore represent the second, and most prominent, 'other' at play in Porthcawl. Whilst the linguistic others from 'down West' 'looked down on *us*' for not speaking Welsh, 'people up the valleys' thought 'we were posh'. Both these symbolic others helped reinforce the understanding of place and difference within everyday life, and ultimately influenced the negotiation of a distinct Welshness. Again emphasizing that identity is about 'playing the vis a vis' (Jenkins, 1996: 5) or the '*internal/external dialectic*' of identity (Jenkins, 2011) locals were aware that others viewed Porthcawl as affluent and 'posh', which in turn reinforced the collective identity of the town as distinct. Clearly, where you come from influences your understanding and image of yourself, which is in no small part based on how you think others perceive you.

### *Class behaviours and regional boundaries*

Porthcawl's difference from the surrounding areas was understood in terms of 'intrinsic' *behaviours* of the locals themselves. In short, locals possessed a distinct middle class habitus, associated with their *locality*. These embodied class habits were central to the locals' understanding of Porthcawl's, and by extension, their own identity:

Patricia: Gwyn's from Pontycymer, but I wouldn't say you're a typical valleys person

Gwyn: well, what's a typical Valleys person? I had the advantage of going to University, and then I went into the army, and it changed me completely, because you're living in a completely different environment!

Patricia: The Valleys people seem to be a little bit more....I don't know how to describe it...more outgoing I suppose, Porthcawl people are kind of reserved... you know, yes, sort of quiet

In the above exchange the gentleman, a former army officer and local historian originally from the Llynfi Valley, was seen as not 'typical' in his behaviours and speech - basically that he was more *reserved* than would be expected from someone 'from the Valleys'. Classification by *behaviour* was central to understanding Porthcawl's difference:

Eleri: here, people say Ton [Tonyrefail] is really rough or whatever, but my friend Aaron lives there, and you go...and I've never seen a community so like tight knit. Like you walk down the street here and you say hello, good morning to someone or whatever, but up there you won't just say hello to someone, you'd know them, and you'd have a conversation with them. You'd be like 'oh how's such and such', blah blah, so it's different in that they're all from Ton, whereas in Porthcawl there's no....there is a community, but there's no, 'we all do this job', or...I think Porthcawl's more diverse in that there's no one thing that people do, so there's not one thing

that they have solely in common, like we don't all live on a terrace in the middle of a valley

Kylie: [on moving to neighbouring Pyle] Our next door neighbours...that's all I can say...they're nosey! But they're lovely, they're really really nice.

DE: they take an interest?

Kylie: Yeah, I suppose haha, they want to know about you!

DE: so in Porthcawl not so much?

Kylie: no, I think you could live next door to people in Porthcawl and not actually know them, whereas living in Kenfig Hill they're a lot more sort of nosey, and y'know, like he comes over, he hops over his wall and cuts our grass and stuff...so it's a bit more....

Byron: up the valleys it's different you know, different community! Everybody, they stick together like, down here they just don't....Valleys people are salt of the earth, you can go anywhere. Down here now you go into a pub you'd be sitting on your own all night. You do it where I come from, Merthyr, the Gurnos, now that's rough! Rough! I mean people say about Cardiff and Newport, I mean they're cities, but the Gurnos is massive- but you go into the Gurnos club, you'd be sitting in rounds with the people on the table, that's what it is mun! A big difference with down here. You go to Cardiff mun, I went to Cardiff once, the Heath (hospital), I couldn't wait to get out of there. The doctors and nurses were fantastic, but they wouldn't talk to you the patients mun! Now up the valleys, up there in hospital, you're butties mun! People fetching you custard slices in and Welshcakes!

Class habitus differences were influential in reinforcing the ontological role of place, since class identity and habitus is related to the local class milieu (Ingram, 2009; 2011). Individual class habitus and the *local habitus* may 'lock together to construct powerful boundaries' (Ingram, 2009:422): *place* often moulds the specificities of a class habitus. The stark structural inequalities between the different regions of South Wales, between 'British Wales' and Welsh Wales in this case, were widely understood in terms of class habituses which were related to *specific localities*. As Southerton argues, "space is inherently social, understood *socially*, not in terms of geography" (Southerton, 2002: 191, my emphasis). Central to the process of regional distinction and the understanding of collective identity was the construction of these binaries or a 'network of oppositions' or 'antagonistic adjectives' between classes and groups (Bourdieu 1984:470). This occurred here in terms of the embodied class habitus: this colloquial warm/cold or friendly/reserved binary was understood to represent the main difference between Porthcawl and the surrounding areas. As the above respondent (Byron) shows, this binary represented a perceived 'cultural divide' between places, based on the idea that the working class 'structure of feeling' was about *collectivism*, whereas Porthcawl as a more middle class place represented bourgeois individualism (Savage, 2000: 32). These translated into corporeal traits, as the 'Valleys character' or 'working class character' was seen as outgoing and friendly, versus the Porthcawlian who was perceived as reserved, cold, snobbish or 'stuck up'.

#### *Classed aesthetics and local boundaries*

Porthcawl locals also understood class, and their *local place*, in terms of *lifestyle and consumption patterns*. As I explained in chapter 2, the habitus and class position is understood through its extrinsic, *aesthetic* manifestations, in the process of *distinction*.

Lauren: Well it's a lot posher here isn't it? I live in probably the only nice street in Pyle, the one nice street, and that's not even nice compared to Porthcawl (laughs), erm, it's a lot, like, y'know, it's kind of like the OC of Wales, laughs, with all the pools and everything [class laughs]



DE: What, you mean like Rest Bay?

Lauren: [between fits of laughter] I mean lots of pools down Rest Bay and that, won't get any of them in Pyle, you'd be laughed out of Pyle if you had one of them

The above excerpt constitutes a perhaps extreme example- very few people in Porthcawl have swimming pools- but it usefully demonstrates how local class boundaries and local *places* are understood in terms of aesthetic trappings of lifestyle and taste (Savage and Warde, 1993: 181). It was common sense that Porthcawl was just 'much nicer' than the surrounding areas. The 'surf' or 'beach' aesthetic and lifestyle emerged as a significant marker of Porthcawl's desirability as a place to live. Living by the beach, having clean air and so on, i.e. the local environment was implicitly contrasted with the neighbouring towns which were, by extension, obviously 'not nice' places to live. As in Watt's (2006) analysis of distinction between places *housing* emerged as an important aesthetic marker of class and lifestyle boundaries between Porthcawl and the surrounding working class localities.

In Porthcawl, class distinction between Porthcawl and the surrounding working class regions therefore involved *both* a focus on embodied features of class (intrinsic) *and* cosmetic issues of taste (extrinsic), although as the above extract shows, in reality these two issues were strongly enmeshed and people often used lifestyle and personality traits interchangeably (Southerton, 2002: 174).

### *The intersection of class and nation in the dominant image of 'authentic' or 'proper' Wales*

Now that I have shown how Porthcawl's 'difference' as a place was widely understood in terms of class habitus, I can begin to demonstrate how 'the nation' intersected with class and the implications this had for locals' own negotiation of a Welsh identity. Firstly, whilst the image of the 'hardcore Welsh (language) other' discussed in the preceding chapter was certainly latent in locals' construction of Welshness, their *primary* and instinctive gauge of 'proper Welshness' was the notion of a working class, industrial, *Labourist* Wales and its associated cultural apparatuses (Day, 2002:107) :

DE: So what does Welshness mean to you, if you had to describe it?

Haydn: well...it's about family, it's about friends, it's about community, it's about hiraeth, it's about supporting your rugby team, enjoying Max Boyce, that's what being Welsh means to me...

The above excerpt demonstrates the typical invocation of a Labourist 'stock images' of Wales and Welshness: rugby; choirs; mining; chapel. The penetration of this particular discursively constructed narrative was widespread within Porthcawl, particularly amongst older residents.

But far more important than mere iconography was that within Porthcawl, Welshness was primarily understood as a set of embodied characteristics or *habitus*. There were clearly understood 'Welsh' behaviours. As I alluded to in the previous chapter, there are national behaviours and personality traits which, by being implicitly understood by individuals, bind the individual to the collective. These traits are transmitted to the 'nation- individuals' at the micro-level, who internalise these 'ideal' images of the national character and disposition: the *'image of the nation is therefore also constitutive of a person's self-image'* (Maguire and Poulton, 1999: 19). These commonsensical national habitus codes within Porthcawl were fundamentally important in illuminating how Welshness is understood in everyday life, and how places and people can feel 'unWelsh',:

Elinor: "the original question was 'do you see us as being particularly Welsh?' if we compare with other towns within the borough really, place like Maesteg, places like Caerau, I would say that Bridgend is probably quite an anglicized place as well, but Maesteg I would say is predominantly Welsh, and probably so is Pencoed, and Caerau and so on, so I would still say that, certainly the perception, I would say, is it's not particularly Welsh"

DE: A number of you have said it's not particularly Welsh, when you say other areas in the borough are 'more Welsh', what would you mean by that statement?

Elinor: well there are Chapels and there are Welsh speaking people in Porthcawl, but the culture isn't as Welsh as you like, as in not revolving around the Chapel, even though we've got an awful lot of voluntary organisations of people doing that sort of work...erm I don't see that as particularly a Welsh (inaudible), especially when comparing it with my parents, both of whom are Welsh..it's a different sort of culture, it's a more 'keep yourself to yourself' sort of culture (Lady, 60s)

DE: if you had to describe Wales or Welshness and what it means to you, what would you say about it?

John: Very much a country that has a community feel to it, certainly very much a community background to it! Because if you go back to my mother's childhood [in the Valleys] then particularly in the mining industry- it probably stemmed from that- there was this very strong sense of community, everybody knew each other, everybody looked out for each other...[digression]...but I still like to believe that my Welshness, if you like, retains a certain amount of that community spirit

In both the above excerpts 'authentic Welshness' is related to working classness which was inextricably linked to community and *collectivism* (Savage, 2000: 32). Welshness was therefore "an essentially proletarian identity" (Francis, 1990:110): choir and 'chapel' here essentially denoted not cultural activities but instead represented bywords for collectivism. Most important, however, were the related set of *embodied characteristics, emanating from this particular class milieu*.

The following excerpt summarises the local perception of the 'Welsh character':

DE: Would you say Porthcawl is a particularly Welsh place?

Elinor: I think there is a perception, and I think there are...personally I think it is a Welsh place, because, erm, despite what some people say it's a very friendly place, or you could say a very nosey place. It's got a lot of the characteristics of Welsh people...some people will try to see it almost as a Pembrokeshire, you know- a little England beyond Wales-and that sort of idea. But I think that when you get down to it, when you talk to most people who live here it is Welsh! Not Welsh speaking necessarily, although there is an element of Welsh speakers in Porthcawl, but I would say that if you look at the real characteristics of being Welsh than I would say yes, it is a Welsh town!

DE: What are the main characteristics of being Welsh then?

Elinor: well as I said, I think being friendly, being helpful, you know, you can go to other parts of the UK and you know, you won't necessarily have a conversation on the bus or waiting at the bus stop, or just sort of standing outside a cafe or something. People will offer help, they'll see someone struggling with a bag and they'll go across and make a point of helping. Not everyone, but I think a large, the vast majority of people, they're not afraid to make that first move, whereas I think in other parts of the country people can, they're afraid it'll be seen as being intrusive, invading somebody's space. I don't think we have that element, yes it can be called being nosey: you can have a conversation in Wales and erm you know you've found within 5 minutes you're either related to them or you know someone who's related to them. But I think it's that friendliness and that wanting to know people and wanting to understand them and wanting to relate to them, I think that's a particularly Welsh trait.

These excerpts are evidently very similar to the opening ones which described the 'working class character', and this is because the *national* character/dispositions were understood as

friendliness, noseyneess, loquaciousness, i.e., *exactly the same traits which denoted working classness*. In Porthcawl, 'working classness' and 'proper Welshness' were interchangeable. Whilst the linguistic conception of Welshness was locally understood as a 'type' of Welshness, it did not generally refer to a 'way of being', as the popular understanding of the classed conception of Welshness did. Following Tim Edensor (2002), my analysis of Porthcawl demonstrates that conceptualizing the nation as a habitus should not then mean that this national habitus *supersedes* class, ethnic, or gendered forms of habitus, but rather, it is apparent that the national habitus *intersects with these dispositions and habituses*. Edensor states that "there are distinct forms of playing and watching sport, drinking alcohol, cooking and child rearing and home making that are *inflected by class, ethnicity and gender as well as by national identity*" (2002: 89, my emphasis. See also Skeggs, 2008a:22). In other words, embodied class habits become 'shorthand' for nation-ness. Todd and Ruane (2010, 2011) similarly argue against drawing a class/national identity binary, instead claiming that 'ethnic' identity or the national habitus is in reality 'fleshed out' with class or indeed other (e.g. masculine, religious) identities. In chapter 3 and 4 I showed how in Wales, the dominant Labourist narrative 'chained' Welshness to this particular class habitus: there is no *essential* link between Welshness and working classness, only one which has been fostered in discourse. At the micro-level in Porthcawl, the link between working classness and Welshness is internalized, reproduced and reified.

#### *Porthcawl as UnWelsh*

It was this conflation of Welshness and 'working classness' which problematized Porthcawl's Welshness. Porthcawl's middle class habitus marked it out as 'unWelsh'. Once more the embodied qualities of locals as *individuals* influenced the perception of *place*.

Jack: ...to a certain extent... it's not as Welsh here as it even is in Bridgend, it's certainly not as Welsh as it is in the valleys communities, especially when we used to go up to Pontycymer to see my wife's family- the change in the culture was drastic, completely, like a different world!

DE: Do you mean in terms of accent or?

Jack: Not only accent but the sort of community spirit that those places have: the towns and the villages there, everybody knows everybody. Now Porthcawl, because of the make up of it and because of the type of people who have moved in, it doesn't have that close sort of community feel about it- it doesn't really....I would go up with my wife to Pontycymer, and we'd go in the club and everyone would look, like 'who's he?', and so certainly it was one of those things 'who's he' 'oh that's Shep's relation' and so on.

Porthcawl is here viewed as being 'not as Welsh' because its middle class culture and behaviours, specifically a reservedness/alooofness, rendered it *unWelsh*. It is again thought to lack the community cohesiveness which denote a properly Welsh community and the authentic national way of being. Similar attitudes were all pervasive and not limited to any particular demographic. The following discussion among a sixth form class was revealing:

DE: What do you mean when you say someone is 'more Welsh' though? What does that mean in terms of the person?

Beth: I reckon it's cos, like, all the miners used to live there, and they just stuck around didn't they...

Laura: nicer community! Yeah much closer

Nicola: The Valleys are close whereas in Porthcawl you don't really speak to your neighbours...like I used to live in North Cornelly and we had like a really close street.

DE: Ok so you think it manifests itself in the way people interact with each other?

Class: yeah!

DE: In what way?

Nicola: well up there I suppose they speak to each other, like randomers who they've never spoken to before, they can have a conversation...but if you did that down here, you'd sort of get....tails off

DE: Porthcawl's maybe colder...is that...

Nicola: yeah, you get dodgy looks.

Once again, since Welshness was understood to refer to a set of behaviours, Porthcawlians were alleged to behave in an 'unWelsh' way. Welshness meant a close-knit community and working class lifestyle, and a loud, friendly disposition. The excerpt above represents almost a textbook understanding of the habitus as a way of being rooted in one's socialisation within a particular social milieu.

### *Circumnavigating class*

Negotiating Welshness within Porthcawl therefore involved dealing with this classed conception of Welshness and reconciling a local, middle class habitus with the classed national habitus. Much like the Welsh language, locals had a complicated relationship with this dominant image of the national habitus. A town councillor and ex-Mayor summed up the ambivalent local view of this classed Welshness:

Elinor: If you think about people as individuals, in their human traits, I'd say yes, probably pretty Welsh, but if you look at how they see themselves then they might not necessarily see themselves...they'd see themselves as more British than Welsh, and they might equate that to conservative, you know....rather than anything else"

I deal with the role of political conservatism shortly, but for now it is interesting to note the idea that locals were 'objectively' Welsh in their behaviours, although they themselves would not consider this to be the case. Locals' relationship with Welshness as an abstract concept, and their own sense of Welshness, was governed by their perceptions of 'working classness'.

In Porthcawl, working classness did have *high value* in the sense that it was often related to a 'heroic' image of the industrial or skilled working class (see, for example, Bottero, 2009). Like Savage et al (2010) my research suggests that Bourdieu's concept of value and distinction is too narrow in that the working class and working class signifiers are always 'low value' in his work. The above excerpts clearly demonstrate that this *Labourist* concept of Welshness was often viewed positively and indeed frequently romanticized. Locals articulated an idealized image of valleys communities and the working class habitus, comparing their assumed closeness and community spirit *favourably* to 'stuck up' Porthcawl's 'coldness' and 'rudeness'. Porthcawl's 'nature' was therefore something to be distanced from, and many respondents would wax lyrical and proclaim their own familial links to the valleys.

One teenager, who had recently left Porthcawl to attend University in England, demonstrated how the classed stereotypes of Welshness could be positively reinterpreted:

DE: So what does being Welsh, Welshness mean to you?

Eleri: err, well...when I'm in Uni it's to differentiate myself I think: like, I'm not English, I'm not British, I'm Welsh. And it's a whole different identity to an English person. I like the idea that we sing, and that we like to drink, and we like rugby. They're all stereotypes but they're true I think, like, countless people have said to me, 'oh you sing, Welsh people sing all the time', and I'm like 'yes!' I mean we don't necessarily but...

DE: so it's a good stereotype then?

Eleri: Yeah! I like that!

When away, in a 'stuffy' 'English' environment, she revelled in this *classed* national habitus which instantly marked her out- her 'Welsh behaviours'- as innately different from her English peers, but in a positive sense. Much like the Welsh language, locals could orient themselves



towards Welshness by 'becoming more Welsh' in their behaviours in particular contexts, by orienting themselves towards this class habitus.

### *Welshness as Rough/Loud*

But whilst these historical residues of the industrial working class often bequeathed a *positive* interpretation of working class culture which locals actively moved towards to demonstrate their Welshness, this working classness simultaneously carried *negative connotations* which undoubtedly problematized claiming Welshness for many locals.

DE: Ok, going back to differences between schools, you just said there was a difference between Porthcawl and St Clares, is there a difference between kids in Porthcawl comp and Cynffig?

Kat: it's just like where they're from, like most people that go to Llanharri are from the valleys

Lauren; it's just the accent is different, and the way we do stuff...well we do the same kind of stuff but they're a lot more...forward about it...I don't know how to say it! Llanhari's like the same, the accent is definitely the main difference but

Kat: the kids are more brash!

Lauren: we're a bit more mellow and they're a bit more...'waahhh' (makes noise denoting, wild)

Kat: more in your face like!

The above interaction between sixth formers demonstrates how it was a short step between 'friendliness' and 'warmth' to 'loudness', 'wildness' and so on. '*The way we do stuff*' in Porthcawl was fundamentally different, and this distinctiveness could either represent the aforementioned *lament* for a lack of community solidarity/friendliness or *relief* that 'we' were not as loud as 'valleys' people. Indeed, respondents could switch between these nostalgic and

positive views of Welshness/working classness to a negative interpretation of class/Welshness within the same interaction depending on where the discussion went. One respondent, who had spoken warmly of Wales and this classed conception of Welshness, as the interview drew to close stated that on her recent holiday to France the couple they had camped next to had been ‘really Welshy’, which as she then clarified meant they had been too loud, drunk too much and so on. This epithet- ‘*Welshy*’-cropped up frequently. Saying someone was ‘really Welshy’ was a shorthand way of denoting working classness or indeed ‘common-ness’, as I discuss shortly in my section on the role of *accent*.

#### *Evolution of the class narrative, ‘Trecco Togs’ and the impact on Welshness*

To further explain the problematic nature of the classed national habitus for locals, it is necessary to appreciate how the narrative of class has evolved in our epoch, since this certainly impacted on the understanding of Welshness in Porthcawl and on locals’ attitude towards ‘being national’. Whilst, as I have demonstrated, Welsh Labourism remains wedded to a romantic version of the ‘traditional’ (Welsh) working class, yet this is an antiquated image which has been overtaken. Recent work has drawn attention to the systematic demonization of the white working class (e.g. Skeggs, 2005, 2009; Tyler, 2008; Bottero; 2009; Jones, 2011). In an epoch of rampant inequality, the narrative of the underclass and the prevalence of ‘class disgust’, crystallised in the abusive term ‘chav’ has been discursively constructed and proliferated through various forms of media. This phenomenon is, for Tyler (2008:18) indicative of a “heightened class antagonism which marks a new episode in the dirty ontology of class struggle in Britain”. The chav stereotype is centred round a host of easily recognisable aesthetics and embodied traits which aids in the distinction process, with the underclass easily spotted by their skinniness or fatness (unhealthy), cheap clothing, low intelligence, vulgarity, promiscuity and so on.

Welshness as a national category in Porthcawl had been sucked into this evolving discourse of class. Whilst Welshness and ‘the Valleys’ were on the one hand associated with collectivism and a heroic industrial past, on the other they were associated with ‘chavviness’ and the associated iconography of social decline. The proliferation of this discourse of the underclass

impacted on how locals understood their relationship to Wales and Welshness. In particular, the interaction with *working class tourists*-specifically, the routine clash of class habituses-played a central role in the construction of symbolic boundaries between Porthcawl and the rest of South Wales, helping to reproduce place in everyday life.

The 'troggs' often prompted hostile responses which illustrated the centrality of class and distinction to the understanding of place and individual identity:

DE: What about the relationship between locals and tourists?

Eleri: Trecco troggs init! Like, no one's going to fall over themselves to be, like obviously if you run a business in Porthcawl, I mean obviously I understand that tourism is essential for Porthcawl to function, and we wouldn't be a town without them like, because we need them. But it doesn't mean that anyone's gonna be particularly nice to them or anyone's gonna like them, because they're different people to us.

DE: different in what way?

Eleri: Like, someone who would come to Trecco and consider that a nice holiday, would not be compared to someone in Porthcawl I don't think...we cater for, I know it sounds horrible but...budget holiday people, we have the biggest caravan park in Europe or something ridiculous like that, and they come every year, and every year people complain about them because they're Trecco troggs, and they drink too much, and they get horrible in the clubs and they bite people's ears off [referring to well known local incident/urban myth], like you can always tell when the Valleys people have come down to Porthcawl 'cos it is a hot day and they come down the beach, and it's a horrible thing to say but it's true!... You can instantly tell the difference between someone who's come to Porthcawl for a holiday and someone who lives in Porthcawl

‘Troggs’ are to this respondent (who, like so many others, expressed a sentimental and romanticised view of the ‘friendly’ valleys earlier in the interaction) completely different from ‘us’ in their habitus and taste.

Stacey: Well I'd say the people that come down here are less sports orientated....I mean I'm only generalising but I would say...they're just interested in eating, perhaps.... cos they're so big and fat

DE: So you think you can spot tourists?

Stacey: I mean, [laughing] you've only gotta go down the high street and you think 'oh my god! They're huge some of these people!', so they're not sporty people are they, they're just munching on fish and chips! So yeah... I would say the people that live in Porthcawl are fitter, yeah

Robert Minhinnick, a local writer and poet, has written about the classed aesthetic of Porthcawl's tourists:

“But what about the trippers, or the trogs as the townies call them?...it [Trecco] hasn't changed. It's thrills, it's dreams, it's getting off your face and getting out of your head. Whizz, whoosh, sherry strong lager, the ‘roid<sup>26</sup> boys tattooed like Samoans, the girls with their fishbatter tans and handbags between their shoes, screaming in the ghost train” (Minhinnick, 2010:70)

Troggs ‘from the valleys’ were thus identified by their intrinsic embodied qualities (violence, drunken-ness, loudness, accent) and their extrinsic aesthetic qualities (cheap clothes, overweight, emaciated) and so on. The above excerpts capture the process of classification undertaken as locals defined themselves *against* these working class ‘Welshy’ tourists. The

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<sup>26</sup> steroids

understanding of this 'valleys' social type ossified the regional class boundaries of us/them in the minds of locals. Indeed, 'the Valleys' was thus both a noble heartland and a '*demonised place*' (Wacquant, 2005) synonymous with '*roughness*' and common-ness. Thus the spatially understood working class habitus invoked *both* friendliness and anti-social behaviour; choirs, chapel, mining, solidarity on one hand; Strongbow, tracksuits, benefits, cheap tattoos and fake tans on the other.

### *Respectability and moving away from Welshness*

I now focus on the idea of the *collective identity* of Porthcawl as a local place and its relationship to Welshness. The classed nature of Welshness and its negative connotations ultimately *limited* the extent to which locals *wanted* to identify with Welshness. For locals, in some contexts, Welshness was in many ways *tainted* by its association with working class culture and 'the Valleys'. Welshness as 'roughness' was thus something they were uncomfortable with, as something which had to be moved away from. This finding regarding how Welshness was understood by middle class residents has direct parallels with Mann's (2012) study of Englishness which found that Englishness's associations with the *negative* connotations (behaviours and iconography/aesthetics) of working classness (football hooliganism for example) led to middle class *unease* about their national identity.

Bourdieu (1984: 99) engages with the nature of place, space and community and offers us insights as to how towns and local places acquire their sense of themselves. As well as the 'objective' differences between regions and places which have immediately recognizable traits, e.g. particular neighbourhoods and their unmistakable physical features, or segregated regions or ethnic enclaves within towns etc, he argues that differences/symbolic boundaries between places are also based on the *cultural capital* of the inhabitants, which individuals and collectives *cultivate* as they become aware of their place in the class structure through their collective lifestyles. He argues that distinction and difference between places and towns is bound up with town 'image' and linked to the cultural opportunities within localities. Just as national narratives

are associated with particular classes and lifestyles, certain *places* may therefore become associated with these class lifestyles and dispositions. Extending Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a set of dispositions, Judith Butler (1988; 1993) characterizes identity as a 'performative' concept: an iterative process of *repetition* of a particular discursively constructed set of norms and behaviours. She argues that the very act of repetition itself conceals the essentially hegemonic nature of identity. It is 'a construction that conceals its genesis', such that "the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions" (Butler, 1990: 140, cited in Leach, 2002: 3) For Butler, we thus rearticulate and reaffirm our identities through our *performativities* (see also Skeggs, 2010). Thus a working class identity is constantly *performed*. Whilst Butler's conception of identity is ultimately a corporeal one, it has ramifications for considerations of *place and space*. As Leach (2002:7) puts it,:

"...if identity is performed, then the space in which that performativity takes place can be seen as a *stage*. After a certain number of performances that stage will no longer seem neutral. *It will be imbued with associations of the activities that took place there*, on the part of those who witnessed those activities" (my emphasis).

Thus place is not a given ontological condition, i.e., places do not simply *have* a particular character which people internalize, but rather local identity can be conceptualized as *collective (and active) performance*, and communities can be imbued with the connotations of the social performances and lifestyles which occur within them.

Much like the idea of cosmopolitanism discussed in the previous chapter, whilst some residents were reluctant to accept Porthcawl's image as 'snobbish', others seemed to *actively cultivate* the image of '*respectability*' through a reinforcement of particular lifestyles and dispositions. Skeggs (1997; 2008; 2009) and Watt (2006) define respectability as the prism or concept through which middle class dominance is mediated in contemporary society. Respectability is about accruing and displaying the *proper* forms of cultural capital whilst rejecting others. This quest for respectability, particularly amongst the older residents I spoke to, helped explain Porthcawl's different or 'thin' type of Welshness, the persistent difference from 'proper

(classed) Welshness'. The conscious construction of Porthcawl as a 'respectable' and 'nice' place involved the *cultivation* of a middle class habitus and the concomitant display of conspicuous lifestyle patterns:

Michael: Now, the old Porthcawl people, the established Porthcawl families, nothing has changed with them- they still call their houses erm, you know, 'Holly Cottage' or 'Rose Tree...Rose Tree bloody House' or something....they are exactly the same as they were when I first came here, that sums it up really.

This process of actively constructing a respectable place via aesthetic taste and dispositions is perhaps not surprising in itself. What was significant, however, was that this cultivation of respectability of place and the construction of a binary between respectable/rough was bound up with *national categories*: since Welshness was for many locals synonymous with roughness or being common, 'becoming respectable' thus necessarily entailed jettisoning any vestiges of Welshness, or at the very least distancing themselves from the dominant, classed interpretation of Welshness. This is immensely important and a central finding in my examination of the idea that places can be 'less Welsh'

Eleri: I think in a way when you're talking about Wales having a referendum on independence, I think Porthcawl would relish that, because there's an element of Porthcawl who'd like to put the gates up at the top of Danygraig hill...there are people in Porthcawl who don't want to see tourists here, trippers, and yet that is our only industry, it's what we rely on. But yeah....there are people who, and there's quite an element of this on the town council I think, who see themselves as better than the surrounding areas; a little oasis of sanity, you know, in amongst all these natives, so there is that element

DE: Is Porthcawl a particularly Welsh place?

Ragine: Personally I think it is a Welsh town, obviously it's not as purely Welsh due to the fact that it being a tourist town. I think a lot of people, mainly the middle

class and upper class, may distance themselves or have other roots from Welsh, I think those are the people who would distance themselves more from Welshness.

Haydn: Now if you come to Porthcawl, because of the influx there's been over the years from outside Wales, erm, and because of, and I'm going to say it, and because of the inbred attitude in some of the old Porthcawlians that they were middle class, upper class, that their politics reflected that as well, and there was this slight inference, you know, that...'why do we worry about being Welsh?', but having said that I feel Porthcawl is a Welsh town! Am I making sense? So what I'm saying is that...sometimes I just get that slight feeling from some, some people who've lived in Porthcawl for years as well!- that there's a little bit of resentment against some of the imposition then of the Welsh heritage.

The classed nature of the national narrative therefore produced unease about Welshness amongst locals with a middle class habitus. Another respondent stated angrily that Porthcawl's 'Anglicized character' was down to the performance of this 'respectability', which necessarily entailed creating a distance between Porthcawl and Welshness:

Michael: I would say its fundamentally different...it's, er....it's Anglicized, very Anglicized, and...but..I've noticed that a lot of the... Porthcawl people- people who've always lived here, they tend to think of themselves as er, British but Welsh

DE: OK, so you don't think that'd be the case in other areas sort of thing? [taken aback]

Michael: erm, all my friends out of the area, for example in the Rhondda, would say 'stuff the British bit butt, I'm Welsh'



The gentlemen then elaborated and stated that Porthcawl “erm, ahh, it's less Welsh in that it embraces things like Royalty” .

Welshness and Britishness were here perceived as *competing* or as polarized ethnicities related to class practice and performance. Porthcawl's ‘respectable image’ was arguably *consciously* ‘unWelsh’ demonstrated by the prevalence of implicitly middle class public performances and celebrations of Royalty- collective local class rituals which represented an affront to Welshness. ‘Britishness’ here denoted middle classness and ‘respectability’. Although this binary was not commonly present in Porthcawl, the idea that Welshness was incompatible with this notion of respectability is interesting. A local councillor similarly claimed that Porthcawl's ‘weak Welshness’ was related to the town's conservative tradition:

Eleri: They'd see themselves as more British than Welsh, and they might equate that to [being] conservative, you know....rather than anything else

These respondents alleged that becoming ‘respectable’ involved *becoming British* (and voting conservative). Porthcawl was seen to collectively *perform* this ‘respectable’ ‘unWelsh’, *British* identity. So whilst locals claimed an instinctive Welsh identity, the common conflation between Welshness and working classness meant that many locals also simultaneously defined themselves against this ‘common’ ‘*Welshy*’ other- they had to somehow reconcile their Welshness with this simultaneous process of distancing.

Porthcawl's position as a (struggling) tourist resort perhaps exacerbated this sensitivity to the ‘image’ of the town and how it was viewed by others, in particular, the need to claim or reaffirm respectability. As Watt (2006) argues, within the wider context of socio-economic decline, the need to maintain and to emphasise one's own respectability vis a vis others paradoxically becomes *more* ‘necessary’, precisely as the material basis for drawing such distinctions has become harder (as, for example, more people have access to designer clothing and other traditional aesthetic class signifiers).

The bars and hotels of Porthcawl served as a microcosm within which one could observe the performative aspect of class and respectability, and the need to maintain a particular image of Porthcawl as a *place*. The *institutional habitus* reflected the (ideal) *local habitus* (Ingram, 2009). Management and staff in both the bars I worked in were conscious of the need to attract the ‘right type of people’, and equally conscious of what type of people they did *not* want to attract. Management were at pains to emphasise and reinforce the tasteful and ‘classy’ nature of the bars and reinforced appropriate behaviour amongst staff through, for example, insisting that customers were referred to as ‘sir’ or ‘madam’, by banning visible tattoos and ‘chavvy’ hoop earrings and so on. As staff we ritually performed this respectability, and these classed aesthetics and behaviours were central to maintaining the image of the hotel and the town itself, and I could witness the daily construction and reinforcement of symbolic boundaries between locals and ‘rough’ local others. Working class customers would constantly (mostly jovially) comment on how ‘posh’ Porthcawl was. Through these interactions Porthcawl’s distance from the rest of South Wales was routinely enforced, recalling the earlier claim by a respondent that Porthcawl was an ‘oasis’ within the rest of South Wales. Staff would frequently complain about ‘rough’ or common families or groups of tourists (from the Valleys) who were too loud and who ‘didn’t belong’ in ‘classy’ places. The ‘posh’ menus were deliberately designed to dissuade ‘certain people’ from coming to the venues; one colleague was banned from answering the phone to take bookings because, in the words of our manager, he was from Cornelly and was therefore too common and ‘Welshy’.

### *Social mobility*

A particularly interesting theme related to ‘respectability’ and its relationship to Welshness was social mobility. An elderly resident explained this short range migration from the Valleys to Porthcawl:

April: people with aspirations tend to come to live in Porthcawl, like the Jews retired to Israel, the people from the Valleys retire to Porthcawl, so everybody who've had [sic] a chipshop in the valleys or was a station master or who taught in the local

school always had aspirations to retire to Porthcawl, and if you know people in Porthcawl most of them are from north of the M4

Many older locals were convinced that people who moved to Porthcawl from the Valleys were keen to embrace this respectability and distance themselves from Welshness:

Gwyn: Some members of my family, once they outgrew the homes they were in because they were pretty run down, no indoor toilets or bathrooms etc- they would say 'oh we're going down, we're moving to Porthcawl...and up!....And that went up there (gestures to his nose)

DE: oh, once they moved?

Gwyn: Once they knew they were moving! They'd cross other people out....they wouldn't exactly spit at them, but...

Eleri: An awful lot of people do move down from the valleys, but a lot of them immediately when they move down, they want to forget their roots

Discussing the idea of 'snobbishness', another local businessman opined:

Gareth: No, no, the people who've lived in Porthcawl all their lives, who come to Porthcawl at a young age, no. I have come across it a few times in a few of my customers over the last few years where they've come down from the Rhondda valleys and they suddenly think they're something special

Similarly an elderly lady bluntly claimed:

Joan: I think the biggest snobs are the ones that are coming into Porthcawl, like 'A'! Her mother still lives in Maesteg, and her sister. Now not that I've got anything against Maesteg, we've got people coming in there from Maesteg and they're lovely people, but it's this thing she's got! 'Oh, don't you have them caravan people'

April: Porthcawl can be a bit cliquey: those who've got two and a half pence looking down their nose at those with two pence, you know...they forget they all come from the Valleys and everyone knows the scandal in the family from a couple of years ago, that type of thing

One gentleman discussed his father's social mobility, the notion of 'attaining respectability', and how this had impacted on his political views:

Bobby: My dad was from the valleys and when I was growing up he used to say to me when I said 'so and so across the road are going on Spain for holiday, we've never been anywhere abroad dad', and he'd say 'Spain, what on earth do you want to go to Spain for? you're already living in Shangri La...[and on Porthcawl's conservatism]... the ones that have made it to Porthcawl out the valleys, my dad was one bless him, I think there's an upwardly mobile thing there so they're not likely to vote Labour anyway

Interestingly, of course, the quest for respectability in itself- in Porthcawl, a constant striving to stave off the encroachment of 'roughness'- says something about Porthcawl's 'objective' class character: the struggle for 'upclassing' and against 'downclassing' is by nature the preserve of the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1984:127-128).

#### *Accent, Welshness, Common-ness*

As Brubaker et al (2006) note, national categories become salient in social interaction, especially between different ethnicities, as people understand certain behaviours and contexts

as requiring national markers and some as not. In Porthcawl, one of the main ways that national categories interacted with social class in everyday life was through *accent*. Accent plays a large role in the reproduction of *local habitus*, and demarcates places and regional cultural identities within everyday life. Accent can express habitus, in other words (Paasi, 1991), and is vital to the process of *distinction* (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991:54). In Porthcawl, the role played by accent served as a microcosm which illuminated the positive and negative connotations of class and how locals could move away and towards this classed idea of Welshness as they sought to place themselves in the nation.

DE: When you said that Porthcawl seemed less Welsh, did you mean in terms of language too?

Byron: I don't speak Welsh, but my accent you know, you can speak to a person from Mountain Ash, Abercynon, Merthyr vale, all up the Valleys, it's different to what they are down here. When you speak it sounds English. You go out to Bridgend it's the same. It's cos they're living in Porthcawl! You go from Trecco Bay over to the village there now, Newton, the post office, and it's very English! English! Nothing against the English mind, they came down here with their jobs I suppose like everything else I suppose

Porthcawl's 'posh' or 'English' accent meant that class and nation-ness were *inscribed* on the speaker within everyday social interaction (Skeggs, 2008:22), and played a central role in distinguishing locals from the working class local other, reinforcing regional symbolic boundaries, and ultimately Porthcawl's 'distance' from 'proper Welshness'. In Porthcawl, class, place and Welshness were mediated through accent, and allowed locals to construct a Welsh/unWelsh/'English' binary which also translated as posh/rough within social interaction

DE: Would you say Porthcawl is a particularly Welsh place? Is it a Welsh sort of town?

[Class all shake head and say that it is not]

Harriet: No... it's very posh- posh language

Jessica: yeah it's a posh accent!

DE: You said you moved here from Jersey, did you notice anything 'Welsh' about Porthcawl when you moved?

Harriet: The accents are totally different from the ones from the Valleys and stuff

Sasha: yeah they've got a more stronger, more common accent up there!

In the above excerpts, Welshness and working classness is once more conflated. Porthcawl's weak Welshness and distance from 'proper Welshness' is manifest in the unWelsh accent of the locals. Since possessing a Welsh accent meant being 'common', an 'unWelsh' accent was therefore (in certain contexts) something to be proud of and even to cultivate, something noticeable amongst young and old in Porthcawl.

One respondent, originally from Merthyr, was very forthright about how the class and cultural differences between Porthcawl and Merthyr were mediated by accent.

Byron: I've got five children right, and I used to go up Somerfields like [local supermarket], and you'd see these people coming in 'oh, a slice of bacon please' [here mimics a 'posh' RP accent], now there's me init, with my five kids like

Here the 'posh' Porthcawl accent is central to Porthcawl's middle class 'attitude' and way of being. The respondent was very aware that the locals were 'looking down on him' for his working classness, evidenced by his 'common' Welsh accent and large family, a popular signifier of 'the underclass' (see, e.g., Skeggs, 2005; 2009; Tyler, 2008)

DE: some people have said Porthcawl isn't particularly Welsh...

Melanie: I would agree with that yeah!

DE: how?

Pete: Accent! Listen to her! Listen to you! You don't actually say 'hello butt' and stuff do you??

The Welsh accent ('Wenglish' vernacular in general) was frequently lampooned by locals, a proxy way of saying someone was 'common' or 'thick'. Younger locals in particular tended to mock the 'Welshy' (valleys) accent and the greeting 'butt' in particular. The following excerpt from an interview with a teacher in the comprehensive is illustrative:

DE: You said about your accent, you said it's a problem, what do you mean by that?

Claire: No, I don't like my accent at all! And that's probably really bad, and it makes me embarrassed to be Welsh, but I'm not embarrassed to be Welsh...but

DE: So why don't you like it?

Claire: I don't know why I don't like it, I'm just really Welshy and people make fun of me all the time! Like, especially in Porthcawl, the children in the school make fun of my accent, they'll copy what I'm saying

DE: Do you think there are negative connotations?

Claire: Yes! Definitely! I think it makes you sound uneducated and, I dunno, I don't like the accent at all. It's different in Porthcawl: there's a very different accent

obviously, and I'm kind of talking properly for this now! I'm much worse than this!  
But, no, I am kind of embarrassed by my accent and if I have to go on the phone I'll  
put a posh voice on because I'm embarrassed

The negative, classed connotations of the Welsh accent had clearly impacted on this respondent who consciously attempted to suppress her accent and, by extension, her working class habitus. The idea that 'sounding Welshy' meant being 'common' shows how accent and language are infused with *symbolic violence* and central to classification (Myles, 2010:19). The subordination and demonization of working class dialects makes subordinate groups feel stigmatized and intimidated by their accent, as demonstrated above (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991: 52).

Conversely, however, demonstrating the complicated nature of the relationship between class and Welshness, locals would often affect a 'more Welsh' or 'Welshy' accent in particular circumstances:

Eleri: The first thing people notice in Uni is that you're Welsh, because of your accent. Like I said, my accent here isn't too strong, but my accent in England is like 'woah, you're Welsh!'

DE: So maybe you've become more aware of it?

Eleri: yeah, like when I'm drunk I speak with a much thicker accent, when I get angry I speak with a much thicker accent, and when I talk to other Welsh people I speak in a much thicker accent.

Myles (2010) notes the *relational* nature of class, which is mirrored in the relational nature of accent, specifically that working class accents may have symbolic value in certain context, for example through their association with masculinity and 'authenticity' (2010: 16-18). Thus as in



Day and Thompson's study of Bangor, where locals could become 'more Welsh' vis a vis their affiliation with the Welsh language (which, as outlined in the previous chapter, also occurred in Porthcawl), locals could become '*more* Welsh(y)' by adopting a stronger Welsh accent-particularly common when interacting with 'Welshier' relatives or friends. Illustrating the schizoid view of working classness, which was simultaneously exalted and abhorred in Porthcawl, just as any traces of a 'Welshy' accent would be suppressed in some contexts. 'poshness' would be suppressed in others, as locals would make a conscious attempt to 'Welshify' their accent.

This oscillating position within the national hierarchy vis a vis class position, mediated through accent and behaviour, was interesting to observe within the young men of Porthcawl, and in particular within the context of the football team. Playing against teams from the Valleys represented a clash between different types of masculinity or at least different performances, interpretations or 're-traditionalizations' of the same strain of industrial, white, working class masculinities (Ward, 2013: 72). In such games Porthcawl's middle classness was inscribed on the players' bodies, evident in their distinct middle class aesthetic such as haircuts (Bourdieu, 1984: 206) but it was primarily through their *accents* that players were distinguished as 'posh' and as *anglicized*. Players reacted to the clash in cultures in two ways, although again these were not mutually exclusive and once more revealed the ambivalent attitude towards class and nation-ness which prevailed in Porthcawl. First, some 'played up' to this stereotype and wound up the opposition in a crude fashion, on some occasions calling them 'peasants' and 'inbreds', telling them to 'get a job'. Second, they could adopt a 'Welshier' accent and the affectations of working classness, for example by using the term 'butt'-as outlined previously the 'classic' example of 'Welshiness'- when greeting each other and the opposition. Context was important here: when facing teams from Cardiff, Porthcawl's 'type' of 'Welshness' suddenly seemed very 'traditional' when set against yet another 'type' of identity and way of doing Welshness, (this time a multicultural, urban performance). Here Porthcawl's accent became 'more Welsh' than the Cardiff accent. Similarly, whilst playing Brecon, the ostensible affluence of the town and its 'English' accent, automatically placed it 'below' Porthcawl within

the hierarchy of Welshness. Once more ‘Anglicization’ was bound up with affluence and class, and Porthcawl’s machismo palpably intensified by virtue of being ‘rougher’ and ‘more Welsh’ in both accent and disposition. With interest I noted my teammates affect suddenly thicker Welsh accents.

### *Chameleon habitus and Welshness*

Abrahams and Ingram (2013) note that individuals may possess a ‘*chameleon habitus*’ which they may use to negotiate different fields. This welcome expansion of the concept of habitus reflects the fact that over the lifecourse, people are not always rooted in a particular class or place, but may be subject to multiple influences and dispositions, often bound up with *social mobility*. The prevalence of this ‘switching’ in Porthcawl, exemplified by the football players, is in my view reflective of the complicated class structure of the town, which, despite the best efforts of many gatekeepers, is not simply a ‘posh’ place<sup>27</sup>. The *ability* of many locals to switch to ‘more Welshy’ behaviours was facilitated by an intimate knowledge of different habitus codes of different classes: the ability to switch in itself revealed a mixed class background and the multiple influences which produce habitus.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has outlined how Welshness intersected with social class within Porthcawl and the impact this had on locals’ relationship to Welshness. Porthcawl’s distinctive class habitus was understood both in terms of behaviours, dispositions and lifestyle aesthetics, and national categories intersected this process of distinction. Welshness was understood as synonymous with working classness, and this association impacted on locals’ understanding of Porthcawl and their own place within the nation. Whilst the link between Welshness and the ‘traditional’ working class habitus evoked a positive view of Welshness as related to collectivity and friendliness, Welshness as a category was also associated with the negative connotations of

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed I believe the ‘constant dialectic between pretension and distinction’ (Bourdieu, 1984:174) within Porthcawl, the attempts to differentiate the town from the working class ‘hinterland’, revealed its general petit bourgeois character.

contemporary working class culture. These negative connotations in turn created ‘unease’ about claiming a Welsh identity for many locals, and helps explain the symbolic distance between locals and Welshness, and indeed why many locals were more than happy to maintain, and even to cultivate this distance. Locals’ own *respectability* and middle class habitus essentially *clashed* with (at least elements of) the national habitus.

Clearly, as in the previous chapter, negotiating a non-classed, alternative ‘type’ of Welshness which didn’t embody these classed behaviours was evidently problematic: as noted in chapter 7, there were few ways of being Welsh which fell outside this ‘ideal’ disposition (an unfriendly Welsh person, for example, seemingly becomes ‘English’). That is, there was again seemingly ‘nowhere to go’ outside the two dominant images of Welshness, hence the difficulty in reconciling a middle class habitus and ‘respectability’ with Welshness. The narrowness of popular understandings of Welshness meant certain dispositions and pretensions were simply incompatible with being ‘properly national’.

This chapter alluded to the evolution of the narrative of class towards the notion of an ‘underclass’, and how this impacted on perceptions of Welshness. In the following chapter, focusing on my research undertaken within Porthcawl Comprehensive School, I build on my exploration of the interplay between class identity and national identity and how the *younger generation* of people within Porthcawl charted their Welshness in light of these changing notions of the working class habitus.

## Chapter 9

### **Situating the self in Porthcawl- young peoples' responses to class and popular culture**

The previous chapter demonstrated how the commonsensical understanding of Welshness as being synonymous with a working class habitus meant that many locals had trouble relating to Welshness. The perception of Porthcawl as a middle class place meant that it was perceived as being at a distance from 'authentic' Welshness, associated with the working class 'Valleys' habitus. Moreover, whilst Welshness was often associated with the positive connotations of the Labourist narrative, such as collectiveness, friendliness and community, Welshness was also frequently elided with some of the negative connotations associated with the contemporary 'underclass', such as roughness and common-ness. I therefore argued that the town's 'image' as a 'respectable' place, which was tied into the self-image of many residents, created a distance between Porthcawl and this classed version of Welshness, which was deemed incompatible with respectability.

This chapter analyzes Welsh identity amongst the younger people of Porthcawl, focusing in particular on my fieldwork conducted in Porthcawl Comprehensive School, although it also involves observations drawn from my embedded position within the 'young person's' 'world' of the bar, hotel and the football club. The analysis of younger people is significant, since they have been socialized in the post-devolution era, and are well positioned to consider the nature of post-devolution Wales, to illuminate what Welshness means in this epoch, and of course to illuminate whether class and place still matter in contemporary Wales and whether there are any differences between this post-devolution generation and the pre-devolution generation. Embedding myself in this younger world allowed me to consider the impact of the molecular changes of devolution and their 'nationalising' effect.

The data generated by my school visits was extensive, and this chapter therefore represents a brief collation of the most salient themes to emerge from the school. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first explores the Welshness of the younger students (years 7 to 9) and discusses their understanding of nation and place. The second section moves onto the

discussions I had with older students (years 10- 13), their perceptions of place, and how older students in Porthcawl demonstrated a growing awareness of class, before looking at how they went about performing their own class identity through the cultivation of particular lifestyle aesthetics. It next outlines the central role played by the media and popular culture in perpetuating the commonsensical image of Welshness as linked to a class habitus and how this complicated younger people's relationship with Welshness. The third and final section looks at the Welsh language and how it influenced students' perception of the nation and their own position in it.

### *Welsh identity and place amongst younger Students (year 7 and year 9)*

It is necessary to make a distinction within the school fieldwork between the younger students and the older students. Because of the limitations imposed by class sizes, but also by the age and self awareness of the students, the younger students were particularly enthusiastic and vocal about Welshness. Of course, they were allowed the opportunity to be because of my use of visual stimuli (flags on the OHP and so on) and relatively structured 'lessons', overseen by teachers, as opposed to the more informal discussions I conducted with the older students. In the younger classes, it became clear that younger children in general have fewer resources from which to draw on when constructing their national identity (Scourfield et al, 2006: 93). In the younger classes where I set group work and asked students to list the things they associated with Wales, the list of referents was always a variation on a theme: sheep, rugby, dragons, daffodils- in short, national iconography or 'condensation symbols' of the nation. Indeed these symbols featured heavily within local schools on classroom walls (plates 2 & 4), so their prevalence as markers was not surprising: these 'stock images' served to nationalise the class room, the daily space that these children occupied. Rugby featured prominently in the younger students' sense of Welshness and noticeably in their sense of difference, Welsh rugby and Welsh national distinctiveness being most heightened when playing England. For the younger students, Welshness was not yet linked to a set of *behaviours* as it was for the older population of the town, but tied to symbols and sports. The following excerpt is from a

discussion with a year 9 class when I asked the groups to explain their 'number one thing' they associated with Wales:

DE: OK, so we've got rugby, the countryside, sheep. Next group, what's your number one thing?

Group: daffodils!

DE: Ok, daffodils, why have you put daffodils?

Group: it represents Wales

DE: OK, good, yeah, it represents Wales, it's a national symbol. Ok next group?

Group: Dragon, because it's on the Welsh flag, and it's personal to all of us because we all wrote it individually as our number one thing

DE: ok, next group?

Group: sheep! Because there're more sheep in Wales than there are people [class laugh]

My naivety is perhaps outlined above in the daffodil exchange: it was unreasonable to expect such young children (or indeed anyone) to ruminate about the reasons *why* the daffodil represents Wales. Their blunt answer highlights the 'obviousness' of it- it just is a national symbol, a national reference point. When the Welsh flag appeared on the OHP, in each of the younger classes the children spontaneously cheered and yelled 'Wales!'- the flag was clearly associated with national celebrations and sporting performances, demonstrating the central role played by these national-popular rituals in 'nationalising' people. The following excerpt from a discussion with a year seven class again demonstrates this instinctive and vocal patriotism:

DE: Ok, Chloe's team, what is the number one thing you've got associated with Wales and Welshness?

Group one: the rugby team....

DE: ok, the rugby team, and why's that?

Group one: 'cos they represent us

[Move to group 2]

Group two: the rugby!

DE: ok, so how come the rugby team boys?

Group two: 'cos....we're the best!

The centrality of rugby perhaps attests to Wales' recent successes in the sport – amongst the younger classes I spoke to there was a palpable sense of *prestige* linked to Welsh rugby. Maguire and Tuck (2005) note how central sport is in reinforcing the national habitus and the 'imagined charisma' of nations. In addition, the school had recently produced two Welsh internationals<sup>28</sup>, further cementing the link between this local scale and the nation- two 'Porthcawl boys' playing for Wales. When discussing my 'picture round' in the pub quiz (see picture B), the role of *celebrities* became evident in inculcating a sense of Welshness in these younger students. Moreover, the existence of *national* celebrities with links to the *local area* meant that the intangible idea of the nation, through these famous people, was domesticated to the local scale. For example, when a picture of Gavin Henson was identified, one year 8 girl excitedly told me a story about how "my Mam met him and Charlotte [Church] in Bridgend!"

As in Scourfield et al's analysis (2006: 91), for the younger children *England* emerged as the

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<sup>28</sup> Tom Prydie and Ryan Bevington, both of whom made regular trips into the school to speak to the children and help the PE department

most tangible significant other, helping youngsters to define their own Welshness, rather than other local versions of Welshness. That is, for the younger students, Welshness was not understood as hierarchical. Presumably, this was because England was a clearly defined sporting rival, central to the dramatic sporting events whereby Welshness became salient to these young students. Interestingly, even at this young age, the stereotypical view of 'the English' was of an implicitly, middle class identity. When I asked one class to describe a typical Welsh person the responses yielded were things like 'mint [i.e., nice/cool] accent', 'country people', whereas 'describe an English person' [to illuminate perceptions of difference between the national habituses] yielded responses centred around 'poshness', with students routinely mimicking an RP English accent. The awareness of this 'other' at this young age allowed the younger children to assert their own Welshness- Welshness as an identity linked to sport and being 'different from England' was relatively straightforward.

DE: Ok, what would you say the difference is between Wales and England?

Kyle: Wales is better!

Harry: We're better at rugby!

I did, nonetheless, attempt to problematize this straightforward idea of an identity based on 'difference from England', hoping in the process to tease out further markers of Welshness, to test their understanding of the post-devolution cultural reservoir.

DE: Let's say you meet someone on holiday who doesn't know where Wales is, how do you describe Wales to them?

Connor: Sheepy!

Matthew: our like, culture, the flag and stuff

Lewis: small!

Taylor: I'd say it's like by England, and there's sheep and that



Lloyd: I'd say there's loads of green

Connor: I'd say that like they're, we're all the same, we've all got the same things really, except for a couple of things, they have the same things as us but some things are like ours

Here we see how the landscape emerged as a referent, as did nebulous, unspecified notions of 'our culture'. The boy above implies that Wales is similar to England 'except for a couple of things', the English/Welsh binary clearly complicated outside the sporting arena.

*Concepts of place and local identity amongst younger students*

Generally speaking, younger children's conception of place and what Edensor (2002) calls the 'homescape' was based on more 'innocent' interpretations of local distinctiveness rather than issues of nation and class. Porthcawl's difference was largely understood in terms of the physical and built environment.

Chloe: In Porthcawl you've got really good houses but in Cornelly you have like, not small houses but like....[looks sheepish]

DE: different yeah? Ok I get you

Kyle: I like Cornelly, it's a nice place, but in Porthcawl you have like... nicer everything really... nicer beach, nicer places, and its like a bigger space, it's not like as crowded

Gavin: more facilities

Katie: The snow sticks around Cornelly and Pyle [elicits cheers from some] [year 7 class]

So Porthcawl's difference was based on the sea, beaches and so on, in contrast with more 'urban' places. Porthcawl was not yet understood as 'unWelsh' or 'peripheral' to the nation, and consequently Welshness was by and large not impacted upon or problematized by an

understanding of place or an understanding of class. One student from Pyle proudly announced to me and the class that Pyle was in fact better than Porthcawl because it had a 'proper swimming pool', whereas Porthcawl did not.

Having said that, however, within this basic understanding of the 'homescape' one could occasionally notice the emergence of a nascent grasp of class divides understood through housing stock and behaviours. A year 8 class discussed the difference between Porthcawl and other local places:

Taylor: I know there's more crime and stuff, but it's more friendly, like everyone knows each other up there

DE: Taylor's just made a very interesting point, do you think people in Porthcawl are different?

Leah: NO! [others nod and murmur 'yes']

Sophie: yeah, they're stuck up I reckon

DE: Ok someone's just said people in Porthcawl are 'up themselves', what does that mean?

Jay: they're not as friendly to people they don't know

Sophie: stuck up!

DE: In Porthcawl?

Jay: yeah they're posh!

Interestingly, some even younger children in a year 7 class (age 11) also demonstrated an awareness of difference:

DE: Do you think that Porthcawl is any different from places like Cornelly, Pyle, Kenfig Hill, the Valleys?

[Class agrees enthusiastically]

Scott: In Cornelly and stuff they speak Wenglish, we speak more English

Accent, which as I have already discussed is a central marker of both class and ethnicity, is one of the most basic and understandable markers of difference, even noticeable to children at a young age.

### *Year 10 and up*

Most of the teenage students I spoke to claimed an instinctive Welsh identity and viewed Welshness in the same way as their younger schoolmates, through references to the 'stock images' of Wales which were scattered across the walls of the school: daffodils, dragons and so on. Sport, specifically rugby, was central their understanding of Welshness, as it was for the town as a whole.

Steph: When like Wales are playing a game, it feels like you have to watch it, I don't know why but it's kind of like...

DE: like an event?

Steph: yeah, Welsh pride!

Justin: you've just gotta watch it even though they're probably gona lose

Steph: Fern would probably be there

Fern: I love rugby!

DE: Do you mainly watch the regions or the Six Nations?

Michelle: Six Nations I think, I don't really watch much, it just comes on, it's a big family event 'cos we all go straight to one place and everyone's screaming at the TV

As with the rest of the town, Welshness was linked to these national-popular celebrations. Taking part in these sporting rituals, whether it be 'down the pub' or on television within the family home was evidently important in the process of 'learning' Welshness. As the male student put it, so central was this ritual that you 'had' to watch it. Indeed it seemed that for many teenage students, watching the Welsh game 'down the pub' was seemingly part of a rite of passage to adulthood.

*The growing importance of class and local identity amongst older students*

Significantly, these older students, like the older residents, demonstrated an instinctive awareness of place and Porthcawl's difference, mediated through a growing awareness of social class. Despite being only a couple of years older than the younger students, social class was central to many of the students understanding of individual identity vis a vis Porthcawl's 'middle classness'. Evidently, class identity is something you learn as you grow up.

DE: So you think people from other areas think of Porthcawl in a certain way?

Class: YES!

DE: Ok, so what would they think about people from Porthcawl?

Thea: Snobby! Stuck up!

Carter: They think we're all rich!

DE: Yeah? Obviously that's not true then?

Thea: No. There are a lot of posh places in Porthcawl though.... you know like on the seafront, where there's like those massive houses, by Rest Bay and Nottage (class agrees)

The identity of Porthcawl and of the students themselves was clearly based on processing and negotiating 'external perceptions' of Porthcawl and themselves. Students had already learned that 'they' all thought 'we' were snobby. Paasi (1991) makes the important point that just as places are buffeted and *changed* by structural forces, *different generations* may either reproduce regional identities or come to interpret the same place in a different way (1991: 251-252). In Porthcawl, the younger generation continued to internalize and reproduce Porthcawl's distinctiveness.

Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge from the school, however, was the prominence of the aforementioned discourse of the 'underclass' and the negative connotations associated with a working class habitus and 'the Valleys'. Compared to many of the older residents, the students exhibited less desire to claim 'ordinariness' in order to avoid the stigma of 'snobbishness'. To return briefly to Adamson's arguments (1991), in the last chapter I argued that older members of the town often exhibited 'residual' collectivist sentiments and an emotional and familial attachment to 'Welsh Wales'. Many of these school students perhaps represented Adamson's predicted '*final turn*', whereby the cultural links with 'traditional' Wales and valleys collectivism/working class culture are severed by the children of short range migrants from the valleys.

DE: Based on the feedback that I've had in other classes...there's a perception that Porthcawl is 'different' to places like Cornelly, Kenfig Hill, the Valleys, Maesteg and so on.

Emma: What do you mean by different?

DE: Just different, I'm not going to define it

Chloe: Not to Cornelly but to like Maesteg and stuff it is

Emma: Don't think it's that different

DE: Why do you think it's different to Maesteg?

Chloe: Well it's nicer obviously [class laughs]

DE: In what way?

Chloe: Well, Maesteg is just horrible [more laughter]

DE: just horrible?

[class]- Yeah!

DE: In what way is it horrible?

Chloe: Council houses everywhere! [class laugh]

This year ten class (which one teacher had already described to me as being 'full of rich kids') demonstrated a pronounced awareness of regional class divides. In the excerpt above 'the Valleys' are 'horrible', understood as a 'rough' place, mediated through the symbolism of the working class, in this case 'council houses'. Class disgust was present in the construction of

symbolic boundaries between Porthcawl and 'the Valleys', and implicitly between the students and 'valleys people'.

As I briefly discussed in the previous chapter, holiday makers from the Valleys frequently provided the local 'working class other' within everyday life, against which young students defined Porthcawl and indeed their own identity:

DE: What about people who come to Porthcawl on holiday? Do you guys have much contact with them? [class descends into laughter and name calling at this point]

Josh: Troggs!

Amy: gypsies!

Josh: Not gypsies! It's just what you say, like 'I seen loads of trogs in town today'

Amy: if they look really rough like

Ryan: really ugly and smell haha

DE: Where would they come from on holiday then?

Class: THE VALLEYS!

DE: Going back to Porthcawl, you said you didn't like the fair, you don't like 'trogs', so you wouldn't go down the fair?

Josh: I know this'll sound very stuck up, but you can never feel ashamed down the fair...like we went down there the other day, someone was walking through the fair in the bra, and no one gave her a funny look, whereas if she was in town everyone would look at her!

Emma: Yeah like town is civilised, the fair is not....

Clearly the negative connotations of the working class habitus- the 'chav' narrative- was personified in everyday life for these students in the form of the 'trog'. Students and young people displayed an awareness of the seemingly endless aesthetic signifiers of 'trog', from types of music, clothing, haircuts to particular drinks (Strongbow). The prominence of the negative connotations of the working class habitus contrasted with the more balanced views of older people within Porthcawl, raised with a 'nobler' image of the working classes.

#### *The performance of a class identity amongst younger locals in Porthcawl*

As I spent more time with younger people in Porthcawl, and as my younger work colleagues bragged to me about their parents' expensive cars (and indeed their own expensive cars), I began to consider the performative nature of class amongst younger people in Porthcawl and how this served to reinforce the salience of place in everyday life. The significance of class and distinction within the school and outside was palpable, from the way the students and young people dressed to the way they spoke. The role of aesthetic lifestyle markers was central to their performance of a Porthcawl 'type'. These students were learning and performing their class identity and constructing symbolic boundaries between themselves and working class others, both within the town and outside Porthcawl, at a relatively young age.

The palpable performances of these classed identities chimed with the disapproving words of elder residents earlier on in my fieldwork:



Karl: I've got to say- my son was born in Porthcawl, he's 41 now- the perception of Porthcawl as posh is more created by the Porthcawl youngsters, you know what I mean? It's gone down the generations, they do seem to think they're better than Cornelly and Pyle!

DE: So you think they create it? Play up to the stereotype?

Karl: Yeah, the Porthcawl kids do, there's no doubting that. My son's born in Porthcawl, my grandson's born in Porthcawl...my grandsons are even gone down the generation of feeling that way. If you're born in Porthcawl you probably know that yourself.

A head of year, in describing his move from a Valleys school to Porthcawl summarized the aesthetic nature of the classed identities adopted by pupils:

DE: how is Porthcawl different from other schools you've taught in, y'know, that's if it is different at all?

Graham: It's the balance really I think. If you were to look at the demographic of Porthcawl, then 75% of the kids are pretty able, mostly fairly affluent or above the subsistence line, and say 25% are disadvantaged academically and there's not a high proportion of people who aren't that well off. Whereas in the previous school [in the Valleys] it would've been almost a mirror image: 25% the kids were your A-Cs, and free school meals would've been over 50-60%, and the social problems attendant upon that were almost the inversion of what's here. So it was a culture shock really to encounter so many well prepped, well groomed kids. I know that sounds a bit naff but the grooming- the physicality of a lot of the kids...the boys, they're much more, were much more...fashionably dressed because they perhaps

had more awareness, and the girls seem more willowy, they had nicer hair, and whether that's their background or just a coincidence of maybe...

DE: So you can physically notice it in the kids?

Graham: well I remember saying to my friends, you know, the boys seem much more 'ripped' for want of a better word. There's a sense of availability and pride in their physicality, and the girls, I mean there weren't many, for want of a better word, how do I put it...overweight girls or girls who were not very well groomed. Obviously there are some, but it's the proportion of kids who've got obviously an expensive haircut, the nice clothes. Obviously it's a uniform but still within that there's a...

DE: you can tweak it...

Graham: yeah there's a tweaking of it...they're all wearing shoes! I know there's a policy here-you could get away with black trainers- but everyone seemed to wear shoes, which in my place, and my kids go to a Cardiff school, they all wear trainers. It's just one of those things, one of the things you notice: 'shoe, shoe, shoe'. It's a very superficial impression but there's this idea that they just had a more affluent and healthy air about them!

For this teacher, the local distinctiveness of Porthcawl students was understood through visual lifestyle markers of clothes, physique, hairstyle and a confident demeanour amongst the students. Many of the girls I interviewed were, as the above respondent notes, 'willowy', and many of the boys had a distinct 'surfer' aesthetic of long, highlighted hair. The centrality of lifestyle symbolism to local distinctiveness was discussed in the previous chapter: older residents of Porthcawl performed a collective class identity through the subtle notion of 'respectability'. What was interesting from embedding in the young person's world was the

observation that the younger generation in Porthcawl also performed a collective, localised class identity, i.e., *doing the same thing as the older residents, but in a different (and less subtle way)*. For the younger generation, consumption patterns and lifestyle aesthetics were more conspicuous, 'louder', as they attempted to distinguish themselves from the working class others.

As the discussions in the classrooms drifted towards popular culture and television habits in particular, it was interesting to hear how much the girls in particular enjoyed reality shows such as 'TOWIE'<sup>29</sup>, 'Made in Chelsea', and American luxury reality shows like 'the Hills'. In discussion with a particularly reflective sixth form class, one female student conceptualised Porthcawl's distinctiveness in an interesting way:

Jess: Well it's a lot posher here isn't it? I live in probably the only nice street in Pyle, the one nice street, and that's not even nice compared to Porthcawl [laughs], erm, it's a lot, like, y'know, it's kind of like the OC of Wales, laughs, with all the pools and everything [class laughs]

The student here relates Porthcawl to Orange County, California- infamous for the iconography of its decadent lifestyle, showcased in numerous reality TV series. Skeggs & Wood (2011) argue that reality TV accentuates the *performative* nature of class, which they brands the '*normative performative*' (2011: 20) by providing 'new visual imperatives to perform the norm' (2011:15). Whilst this may work to reinforce *working class behaviours* (i.e. in working class reality TV shows) it may also reify and encourage *middle class behaviours*. Of particular interest to my study is the role played by such aspirational reality television shows, which offer a new dimension of class relations through the selling of alluring shows which fetishize wealth and luxurious celebrity glamour and the 'performance of greed' (Skeggs & Wood, 2011: 21. See also Taylor, 2011). It was interesting to see how some pupils and younger locals performed and cultivated a 'glamorous' (and implicitly *rich*) aesthetic, *local to Porthcawl* - ostensibly aping the behaviours and lifestyles encouraged by shows such as Made in Chelsea, the Only Way is Essex, and American shows such as The Hills.

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<sup>29</sup> *The Only Way Is Essex*

Referring to the preoccupation of some locals with ostentatious displays of wealth, the owner of the Hotel told me that Porthcawl was like the 'Chelsea of Wales', telling me about 'WAGS' and confessing that he bought a Range Rover to 'keep up' with this process of conspicuous consumption. The cultivation of this particular aesthetic was of course *relational* and *spatial*, helping to reinforce local distinctiveness, a glamorous 'beach' aesthetic set against the 'roughness' of working class tourists.

DE: Would you say there's a stereotypical Porthcawl person, and if so, how would you describe them?

Rhiannon: yeah, everyone likes Hollister clothes

Ellie: My cousin said like all my friends all wear Hollister and we're all really, like, stuck up

The ubiquitous presence of 'surf' lifestyle brand Hollister and the 'rah' Jack Wills brand<sup>30</sup>, both within the school and amongst younger residents more generally (although the former brand has since become somewhat devalued through 'overexposure') helped signify regional difference and class in everyday life. Clothing acts as a powerful signifier of class and status, a central element of self-presentation (Bourdieu, 1984:200-202) and helped define both the Porthcawl students and the working class other. As one teacher told me, 'non-uniform' days in the school were dreaded by staff because they represented an 'arms race' for the richer pupils to show off their expensive clothes, whilst the poorer children would be mocked for not having fashionable designer clothes. In fact, less affluent students would wear school uniform, apparently because this was preferable to being mocked.

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<sup>30</sup> The Jack Wills brand's slogan is 'Outfitters to the Gentry. See Daniel Smith (2014) on the 'the elite fiduciary' of Jack Wills brand name

Jordan: I think tourism's really pushed Porthcawl up and given us money to spend, that's why people think we're posh, we spend more money.

One senior teacher wearily informed me that sixth formers had taken to driving their new Audi TT cars to school; pupils were very excited to tell me about their annual 'prom', to be held at a 5 star hotel in Cardiff bay. Coincidentally, a year later, the hotel I worked in hosted this 'pre-party', and I could observe first hand the performances of this identity (and also the subtle taste distinctions within the party between 'new money' 'OTT' dresses, for example and more refined middle class pupils) as students and their parents ordered expensive champagne and so on. Buttressing my ideas about the cultivation of a 'luxury' aesthetic, the MTV show 'Sweet Sixteen' focused on a pupil from the local convent's £50,000 birthday party at Porthcawl's Grand Pavillion (Wales Online, 2009); and the MTV show '*Promzilla*', which focuses on sixth formers' glamorous prom nights, appropriately visited Porthcawl and met students who showed off their pools and hot tubs ('Porthcawl', 2011) further reinforcing and celebrating this decadent lifestyle and classed behaviour which was performed by many younger locals, although rarely to these extremes. These ostentatious displays of wealth reflected the permeation of these discursively constructed contemporary notions of glamour into contemporary Welsh society, re-enchanting and reproduced in daily life in Porthcawl: *old* regional class boundaries now understood through *new* performances. This, then, was how many younger locals 'took up their position' and situated themselves as 'distinct' within South Wales.

### *Welshness and working classness in popular culture*

As I wrote in my methodology chapter, my planned roadmap of prompts and questions quickly evaporated when interviewing the older teenage subjects, who did not relate well to 'dry' questions about national identity and 'politics'. Instead, I had to promptly overhaul my line of questioning and move onto 'their territory' (which I naively expected to be *au fait* with) in order to tease out their thoughts on locality, class and nation by discussing popular culture, (for example their television habits, sport, favourite bands, films and so on). These discussions

proved to be incredibly helpful in illuminating the centrality of *pop culture* in constructing and reinforcing the national habitus (what it is to be Welsh), and in particular the intersection between nation-ness and class amongst younger people. My fieldwork, in particular the time I spent with younger folk, demonstrated Edensor's (2002), argument that our understanding of the national habitus is not simply drawn from 'high' cultural forms and practices. Instead, these traditional cultural forms are supplemented and increasingly replaced by imagery, performances and so on in *popular culture* (2002: 12) which, through its consumption and ubiquity in everyday life, inculcates the national habitus into citizens far more than 'high culture'. Pop culture provides a "host of reference points which provide the basis for everyday discourse and action" (2002: 19).

During discussions of representations of Wales and Welshness in the media, two central themes emerged. The first was the awareness of an *absence* of Welsh 'cultural stuff'. This issue is engaged with in the following chapter. The second was that pupils were acutely aware of the stereotypes and 'stock images' of Wales and Welshness, and this certainly impacted on their understandings of what it meant to be Welsh and consequently where they themselves stood in relation to the nation.

DE: So what do you think about Welsh people in the media, in movies and stuff?

Lauren: we get good roles, funny roles, what's that guy? Rhys Ifans!

Kat: It is a stereotype though, that all Welsh people are stupid!

DE: What's the stereotype then, of a Welsh person?

Lauren: like, a farmer init

Harmony: happy go lucky, never sad, like...just a comedy...stupid person

Kat: yeah simple...Dai cap

Nathan: easy going!

The national habitus or Welsh 'way of being' was frequently understood through references to popular representations of Welshness, and from the actor Rhys Ifans in the Richard Curtis drama *Notting Hill* (1999) to movies like *Twin Town* (1997) pupils understood Welshness as a *class habitus*. These portrayals of Wales and Welshness were also understood *spatially*, reinforcing the idea of 'proper' Wales being synonymous with *heartlands*, i.e., 'the Valleys', as well as with a rural image of Wales, reflected in the references to 'farmers' and 'country folk', (although the latter image of rurality did not in fact arise in any discussions of Welsh popular culture). In short, 'proper' Welshness was reinforced by these media constructions of Wales and Welshness, and this was then 're-enchanted' and internalized in these youngsters' understanding of Welshness and how they themselves 'measured up':

Thea: yeah like if you see a Welsh person in a film they have to have a really strong accent, but if you come here it's not really strong, but it's like everyone is from the valleys

At the time of my fieldwork, *Gavin and Stacey* (2007) was immensely popular, and became the main talking point in the classroom discussions of Welshness in the media. The show was perhaps more prominent in Porthcawl because two of its main stars, Rob Brydon and Ruth Jones, are from the town and alumni of the school. The show represented on the one hand a traditional view of the Welsh/working class habitus as linked to *community* and its associated character traits and on the other a 'modern' portrayal of the Welsh working class. Edensor (2002:92) outlines the dialectical relationship between discourse and the habitus- how everyday ways of being and behaving are conveyed in the popular representation of everyday life, in soap operas, magazines, movies, works of fiction and so on. As Edensor argues, these 'familiar worlds' of television, cinema and so on entrench such habits and routines, our understanding of what it is to be national:

"...so dense are these intertextual references to habitual, everyday performance in the fictional worlds of television and media, and so repetitive are their enactions by

one's intimates, that they acquire a force which mitigates against deconstruction" (Edensor, 2002: 92).

The media construction of the national habitus feeds back into everyday life and consolidates this 'shorthand' way of understanding the nation. As in wider discussions of the national/class nexus, students' perceptions of the show encapsulated the ambivalent view of the classed national habitus. A year 12 Welsh class spoke of the importance of the show in reinforcing 'Welsh humour' and a sense of the collective:

DE: Did you watch Gavin and Stacey? What did you think of it?

Carys: It's good actually 'cos it caught all the humour, pride, everything like that, it did...it was over the top slightly but it described us all down to a detail really

Elis: Yeah like if someone from England watched it, they wouldn't find it funny, but to us it's hilarious pretty much

DE: Laughing at in jokes, is it?

Elis: yeah in jokes at us that people from England don't get it at all

Carys: Yeah, people from England wouldn't get it

Popular culture and representations of Welshness reinforce the sense of groupness here. The Welsh character is intuitively understood through reference to 'our' humour, 'our' way of being. Moreover, the students' own Welshness is reinforced by 'getting' the 'in jokes' within the show. Although the above speakers claim that 'English people wouldn't get it' is untrue, since the show was a hit in England, it reflects pride at 'being on the inside'

DE: Talking about Welsh media, Welsh TV, did any of you watch *Gavin and Stacey*?  
[Class all respond with yes]



Natasha: Yeah! Nessa! That was a big hit!

Jemma: Yeah that was really popular

Natasha: It was really popular in England as well 'cos when I met people from England they always mentioned Gavin and Stacey

DE: What did you think about it? The show itself?

Natasha: Amazing!

Demi: Yeah like, typical Welsh...

Jordan: I think it portrayed Wales in a negative way, but they did it really well and everyone loved it, which made Wales popular

DE: Mixed bag then?

Jordan: Yeah

The above exchange highlights the complicated impact of the classed national habitus and the imagined 'group charisma' of the Welsh. Welshness is understood as related to good humour- a positive quality which elicits pride. These positive elements of the classed habitus allowed students to orient themselves towards Welshness. Moreover, their own *local* experiences and were reflected in this 'national' humour. Simultaneously, however, the classed habitus is related to *stupidity*, which elicits a sense of embarrassment and unease because of the low prestige of this element of the national habitus.

Amy: They look down on us, they seem to think we're like, stupid or something

Emma: It's cos of Gavin and Stacey like, Nessa and that

Shani: I think it's like, really stereotypical, cos like, Amelia when she went to Tenby, there're people there from England and they were like 'oh what's occurring?', they like think that we talk like that and stuff

Zoe: They're making fun of us, 'cos they're like, saying all these lines

[at this stage a few students protest, saying 'so, it is funny!]

Rhiannon: I think they stereotype us to make us look a bit dumb, which isn't fair

Catrin: yeah when we are stereotyped its as really dumb people in films

In the above exchange, 'Welshness'- understood through reference to Gavin and Stacey- is again linked to *stupidity*, chiefly mediated through the 'thick' Welsh accent, (although even in this exchange, however, students protested and claimed this portrayal of Wales and Welshness was funny and positive). The negative stereotype of 'stupidity' was a recurrent theme in the school when discussing Welshness, as was the common idea that 'they' (the English) thought 'we' (the Welsh) were all thick. The assumption amongst the students was of course that *Porthcawl wasn't like that*. In a sixth form English class, students discussed a known radio advert for a used car dealership, in which a 'slow' man with an exaggerated Welsh accent stars<sup>31</sup>:

Kat: those adverts are annoying!

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<sup>31</sup> This advert, for the dealership 'Trade Centre Wales', is voiced by local comedian Mike Doyle. Despite winning awards, the adverts have been accused of mocking local accents. see <http://walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/trevor-wins-uk-prize-radio-2166992>

Lauren: I love it, it's hilarious!

Kat: I hate it! It makes me cringe, it sounds so twp!

The above exchange again illuminates the ambivalent view of Welshness as represented in the media. One girl found it funny, the other found it 'cringeworthy' and *embarrassing*. Thus students were constantly being pulled towards and pushed away from this classed Welshness, relating to the positive elements, recoiling from the negative elements.

The MTV reality show '*The Valleys*' (2012), which was released after my fieldwork in the school, helped reinforce the Welshness/working class nexus throughout Porthcawl, providing a big talking point in the bar, hotel and football team. In the opening episode of the show, the cast were followed on a night out in Cardiff. Observing the chaos, their boss, Jordan, speaks to the camera:

"Oh my God. I was expecting some real diamonds in the rough, but I just really forgot how rough the Valleys is".

Skeggs & Wood (2011) note that reality television does not simply reflect but actively *constructs* (2011: 7) and reinforces social types and values- in this case, classed *national* stereotypes - trades in class disgust and ultimately encourages 'class antagonism' (2011: 2). *The Valleys* provided the most obvious example of how Welshness has been caught up in the evolving discourse of class. As well as obviously reinforcing the 'demonization' of the valleys as a place, the show constructed and reinforced the link between Welshness and *roughness*. Welshness for these younger folk, mediated through popular culture, remains associated with working class behaviours and iconography. This idea of the working class is no longer inextricably linked to the romantic, Labourist image of working class Wales, but instead frequently carries negative connotations.

Amongst young people and teenagers in Porthcawl, the lack of *prestige* attached to Welshness in popular culture led to 'cultural cringe' (Unger, 2010) and *unease* about Welshness. Maguire (2005) argues that unequal power relations and stratification between states and nations (and indeed between classes, genders etc) are imbricated in everyday life and are manifest in

people's self-esteem and image of others (2005:9). Like the *positive* notion of 'group charisma', which is sustained by structural power relations, without which any imagined prestige/charisma would fade away, Maguire argues that these images of powerful groups are structurally dependent on the media, education system and so on. Unequal access to power means that that 'power differentials' generate 'group charisma' and 'group stigma' (2005: 9). Established nations utilise their power and organisational skills and capacities to cultivate a high status public image whilst simultaneously constructing a negative image of outsiders. Crucially, 'the stigma of collective disgrace can be made to stick' (2005:10). Thus it is extremely difficult for outsider groups to resist internalising these negative characteristics attributed to them by the outsider group and individuals will internalise a sense of *disgrace* regarding their national identity. Pritchard and Morgan (2001:171) have noted the continuing negative portrayal of Wales and Welshness in the British national media, thus when we consider Edensor's idea that externally constructed images of the nation are *re-enchanting* back into the nation's perception of itself, my fieldwork undermines Lindsay's (1997) assertion that the nation only internalises positive stereotypes, since these self- images were clearly not always positive.

Yet the low prestige and negative connotations attached to the dominant classed image of Welshness did not mean that these younger folk remained 'outside' the nation or did not feel Welsh. As aforementioned, they expressed an instinctive Welsh identity. Rather, the low prestige of this classed version of Welshness, coupled with their distinct middle class identity, reinforced the 'thin-ness' of their own particular type of Welshness, limiting the extent to which they *wanted* to claim a Welsh identity.

### *The role of the Welsh Language in young peoples' negotiation of a Welsh identity*

In chapter 7 I outlined the often contradictory view of the language and its relationship to Welshness within Porthcawl. My fieldwork in the comprehensive school largely focused on the English department, whose teachers had displayed great enthusiasm towards Cwricwlwm Cymreig, and were proud of their efforts to integrate Welsh into their classrooms. Within the

school setting there were marked differences in attitudes towards the language. Predictably, students with Welsh speaking ability, (the overwhelming majority of whom had gone to Welsh medium primary schools or begun their secondary education in local WM secondaries and then transferred) held a far more positive view of the language than the rest of the school population.

DE: Ok, so what about in terms of the language, do you think the language is an important part of Welsh identity?

Elis: Yes definitely

DE: So you think it's an important part of being Welsh?

Elis: yeah!

Carys: Yeah well through speaking Welsh we learn quite a lot about our own traditions and culture which we talk about in classes and stuff anyway, so through our language we learn more about our own country, so I think it is important to start off

Whilst other young people rarely saw the Welsh language as being central to their identity, or at least saw it as something which was important to the identity of the nation as a *collective* but not to them as an *individual*, Welsh speaking students viewed the language as central to their own Welshness. It was striking to think that within the same town, school, and even within the same class, different individuals could have completely different perceptions of the nation and what it meant to be national. The children in the Welsh class, for example, displayed a far more confident sense of Welshness than their peers. Whilst they acknowledged Porthcawl's perceived 'lack of Welshness', for example, their sense of place did not impinge upon their own individual sense of national identity in the same way that it complicated things for the majority of locals. Clearly, the possession of unproblematically and unambiguous marker of Welshness-

Welsh language ability- overcame any issues surrounding the nation-ness of their town, and provided them with ontological security regarding their national identity. The above excerpt also draws attention to the focus on Welsh society, culture and history within Welsh classes, which the speaker argues immersed these students in 'Welshness' to a far greater degree than their counterparts.

Outside the Welsh class the reaction of the students to Welsh was mixed, with some students expressing great pride in the language and some expressing great hostility towards it. The maelstrom of opinion was evident in one year 9 class when, immediately following a frenzied period of patriotic yelling about Wales and rugby, I raised the topic of the Welsh language. This was met with a barrage of contrasting opinions, outlined in the following excerpt.

Saskia: [Polish student]: I think it's a really nice language, 'cos it's like one of the oldest languages in Europe, but the teachers don't teach us it correctly. To learn a language you have to learn it, if not, 'cos most people even if they do a GCSE on it they won't speak it that well. I think that in lessons we should like be spoken to in the language, because then you have to learn it if you want good grades. So I think that's the biggest mistake teachers are making right now.

DE: Very good answer Saskia!

Chelsea: it's useful, but like it's hard to learn, apparently it's the second hardest language to learn

Luke: It's boring!

DE: You think it's useful?

Luke: not really, we all speak English so why...tails off

Geraint: I think we should learn it 'cos it's like our language, and we should respect it

Connor: I dunno, like it's good in a way but it's not 'cos like the teachers shout at us if we don't do it right, but there's no good in shouting 'cos we're not gonna get it anyway. They should break it down to us like

Chloe: Loads of jobs now need you to speak Welsh, so it's kind of useful in a way, if you want to get a job in Wales

Will: It's like useless for us really 'cos like no one really cares about it in this school, like in our year

Paula: I think it's important that we learn Welsh, 'cos we're a small country as it is and there's only a few people in Wales who can speak Welsh really, 'cos if you go up to North Wales, there're people who speak Welsh more than English

Will: people mess around in lessons as well, no one takes it seriously

At this stage some male students attempt an impromptu rendition of the anthem [significantly, they don't know the words, so just hum until they get to the chorus]

There are numerous issues at play here, neatly demonstrating the complicated position of the language amongst younger people in Porthcawl. Some students adopted a reflective and proprietary view of the language as 'ours', and others had already begun to think about its *utility* and perceived role in the job market- 'choosing the nation' was not a 'nationalistic' decision but a pragmatic, career oriented one, the language viewed almost as an educational qualification in itself. Other students demonstrated the role of *place*, seeing the language as 'boring' and pointless, since it was never used or even heard in their everyday life in Porthcawl. What was clear was that for many students, Welsh was not viewed as a cultural marker or way of orienting oneself towards Welshness, but simply viewed as just another subject like physics or maths- something divorced from Welshness, associated with school and with teachers.

Much of the hostility, therefore, was not about the Welsh language per se, but to the way it was being taught. Many students complained that because children could only achieve a C

grade in this compulsory subject<sup>32</sup>, everyone ‘messed around’ in class. Because of this ‘non-ideological’ view of the language, many of the students saw no contradiction in their vocal ‘arms park nationalism’ and their negative view of the language.

The main difference between the school and the rest of the town was that *hostility* towards the language was more pronounced amongst younger people I spoke to, a finding which differed greatly from other analyses of the penetration of the Welsh language into Anglophone areas post-devolution (e.g., Hodges, 2009). Much of the negativity towards the language emanated from the ‘forced imposition’ of Welsh onto the students.

Martine: You're like forced to learn it, if you weren't forced...I'm like happy with people learning it but like being forced to learn it shouldn't happen [year 10]

Bridie: I don't think you should be forced to take it at GCSE, I think you should only have to learn it if you want to...I don't particularly like the language... [year 13]

Sarah: Yeah they just try and indoctrinate you with Welsh... and then people just don't want to learn Welsh! [year 13]

Here we see an example of how a top down cultural initiative will be imperfectly refracted and not uniformly accepted at the micro-level. Compulsory Welsh for these students clashed with the cultural norms of their Anglophone town. These opinions directly contrast with the discourse that states the status of the Welsh language post-devolution is something of a ‘success story’, and is now ‘owned by everyone’. Whether or not these early negative perceptions of Welsh impacted on national identity long term could not be proven, although I did speak to a number of young people outside the school who certainly retained a lingering resentment towards Welsh. It was interesting to compare this resentment to the proprietary attitudes of many older locals: whilst they complained that they never had the chance to learn

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<sup>32</sup> All students taking compulsory Welsh were entered for the *foundation* GCSE, whereby a C grade is the highest possible (WJEC, 2011)



Welsh and that it was ‘taken away from them’, many in the younger generation had the opposite problem.

At the more ‘extreme’ end of the scale, pupils displayed a remarkable distance from the language, which attested to its general invisibility both within the local environment and the school. This has much to do with the context of Porthcawl as a *place*. Despite the (uneven) penetration of Welsh into the students’ lives in school, the Welsh language and Welsh language culture remained clearly ‘alien’ to many young people in the town, demonstrating the continued disconnect between ‘British Wales’ and elements of ‘proper’ Welshness.

Connor: I’m Welsh and I’m proud!

DE: Ok, but you’re not too bothered about the language?

Nicola: It’s too hard!

[Chaos ensues at this stage, with kids arguing amongst each other, yelling out etc]

Connor: If we learn Welsh, if I learned Welsh, and everyone else does, I bet you that we will NEVER speak it, apart from maybe once a year, we would never speak it

The idea that ‘we’ never speak Welsh attests to the continued relevance of place and an instinctive awareness of local difference. Despite their constant and daily exposure to the language, speaking Welsh was for ‘others’, not ‘us’. The ‘otherness’ of Welsh for many young people, despite their constant exposure to Welsh throughout school, was demonstrated starkly in a discussion with a year 12 media studies class:

Jordan: I just think it's too much of a cheap copy of the English language (everyone laughs)

DE: you know it's an old language in itself though?

Jordan: Yeah but I just don't like it cos it's so generic, everyone thinks you just add 'io' to the end of things...

This belief that Welsh was in fact English with extra vowels added on the end was perhaps the logical outcome of the widespread lampooning of the language by students, (something also present during my own time as a student) who would make up their own Welsh words 'hatio' 'chair-io' etc, mimicking the phonetic adaptation of English words by the contemporary Welsh lexicon e.g. 'ambiwlans', 'beic' and so. Similarly, other students claimed the language was 'weird'. This scarcely believable perspective neatly illustrates the near complete absence of the language within Porthcawl, as students insisted that no-one in Wales 'actually spoke Welsh'; Welsh was not viewed as a living language but as something students encountered only in school and whilst filling in forms.

I have already talked about the notion of 'prestige' and how the classed representations of Welshness in (Anglophone) popular culture impacted on younger people's relationship to Welshness. In addition to this, my discussions with younger folk established that Welsh language media and culture was perceived as 'sad', 'uncool' and generally low status- something to be ridiculed. This was in keeping with the wider phenomenon of students making up their own Welsh words and mocking the Welsh language. An English A level class, a group of students who were generally very positive about the language, evidently saw contemporary Welsh language popular culture as somewhat moribund.

DE: does anyone watch Welsh language TV? [class seem incredulous at this question]

All: NO!! [laughter]

Lauren: My mum made me watch Pobwl Y Cwm during GCSE's to help me, I just sat there like 'what is this?!'

Lizzie: It really annoys me, 'cos I just can't understand them 'cos they speak so fast!

DE: So you wouldn't watch S4C?

Lauren: Only if I want a laugh, haha

The low status of the Welsh language and the subject matter of S4C (something discussed at length by Gramich, 1997) were implicitly contrasted with Anglo-American entertainment. Welsh language popular culture, even for students who were positively disposed towards the language, was associated with backwardness - the thought of choosing to watch Welsh language television was seen as absurd. As well as further undermining the notion that the Welsh language is in resurgence within Anglicised places, the othering of Welsh language culture served to emphasize the distance between Porthcawl as a place and other images of Wales and Welshness. It was self evident that 'we', i.e. *us in Porthcawl*, would not watch stuff like that.

The contradictory view of the language in Porthcawl is best summed up in the following excerpts from discussions with sixth formers, which also tell us something about the status of the language in post-devolution Wales and the complicated relationship between cultural developments at the national scale and this peripheral region.

Demi: I think it is a good thing to learn how to speak it but I still think it's pointless

This excerpt relates to the pointlessness of Welsh *locally*, its otherness and absence from the lives of local young people, combined with the post-devolution norm that Welsh is useful or for everyone.

Samantha: I think it's like a really nice language but people don't appreciate it, and it's probably going to die out, and people choose English over Welsh because when you hear it on the radio it's just like 'chhhhh chhh' and you're all 'what's he

saying??' but when you actually listen to it it's a really beautiful language and you have to respect it.

Here, the student can't understand the language, makes fun of it, but simultaneously claims that it is 'beautiful'. In this case I believe the girl felt she had to qualify her negative view of the language within the interview context so as to not seem 'extreme' or 'rude' (after all, maybe I was a Welsh speaker), but again the issues of 'respect' demonstrates the attempt to balance the other-ness of the Welsh language with the need to negotiate a place within the nation. These excerpts demonstrate the nature of the 'restoration-revolution' on the ground: expressing at once the conservative nature of devolution and its limited impact on everyday life, as well as alluding to wider concrete changes.

### *Eisteddfoddau*

As I mentioned in chapter 6, national rituals and performances occur within schools and connect pupils at the local level to the wider nation. In Porthcawl Comprehensive, the Eisteddfod demonstrated once more the imperfect way in which Welsh language culture, and indeed 'proper Welshness', embedded in Porthcawl:

DE: What do you guys think of the Eisteddfod?

Josh: It's the one day of the year that everybody pretends to be Welsh and pretends they care about Wales... at the end of the day no one really cares but on this day suddenly everyone's like 'wooh, Wales', it's like...shut up

Amy: I like the Eisteddfod! It gives Wales an identity, as like, entertainers who like to have fun, it gives us more depth

The above excerpt captures the ambivalent view many students had about the Eisteddfod: on the one hand scorned as a tokenistic gesture of Welshness in a non-Welsh place; on the other

seen a positive construction and reproduction of the 'imagined charisma' of the Welsh. The Eisteddfod within the School would ostensibly appear to be central to the renewed emphasis on Welshness within the national curriculum (Phillips, 2005), yet at the local level, much like learning Welsh, the Eisteddfod had in many ways been emptied of its nation-ness. In an earlier interview, a local Welsh language tutor had bemoaned the fact that local Eisteddfodau now had 'nothing to do with Welsh culture', but were simply a talent show. A student within the same year ten class demonstrated the banal or 'non-national' nature of the Eisteddfod:

DE: Ok so you sing in the Eisteddfod, do you think about the cultural aspect? Do you think the cultural aspect is important?

Louise: No....it's a song from a show so it's not exactly Welsh y'know, there's like nothing Welsh in it except for the Welsh recitation, and the dance, but no one does the dance....if you are competing, so much hard work goes into it, and then people just make fun of you for it

As part of my fieldwork, I attended one Eisteddfod within the School (plate 5), and as the Welsh tutor and the student above claimed, the lack of Welsh 'cultural stuff' was noticeable. Although senior teachers often spoke Welsh to present the awards, the majority of the event was taken up with singing songs from a show, performing comedy sketches, contemporary dance and so on, all conducted under an 'X factor' style of a panel of judges. At no stage was Welshness or Welsh culture prominent. Thus this local celebration of a national event was meant to bind the local to the national, but instead it was permeated by contemporary popular culture. The above excerpt also shows how the Eisteddfod- much like the language- ostensibly because of its association with *school rituals*, rather than as an abstract cultural category, was viewed as 'uncool' or 'sad'. It was instead perceived as variously, a boring, enforced school trip; an opportunity to skip school; or an opportunity to perform.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown how in the post-devolution epoch, place continues to matter for young people and is largely mediated by local class differences. Like their forebears, younger locals *performed* their class identity and reproduced their local place through the cultivation of lifestyle markers and a particular aesthetic. Unlike the older generation of locals, however, the connotations of working classness were frequently more negative. Their class identity reflected their socialization in an era of extremes and a departure from traditional understandings of the working class/middle class binary: many young people embraced a brash, celebrity influenced ‘glamour’, and distanced themselves from local working class others whom they associated with ‘the underclass’. Whilst the process of distinction is constant, the markers of class were therefore different between generations.

My engagement with young people illustrated the extent to which the national habitus is mediated by popular culture, and how in post-devolution Wales, Welshness is still very much linked to working classness. As they negotiated their place in the nation, the class identity of younger folk clashed with these crude classed portrayals of Wales in popular culture. So whilst younger locals instinctively claimed a strong Welsh identity and expressed pride in Welsh rugby, for example, the simultaneous *low prestige* of this classed Welshness (linked to stupidity) reinforced local boundaries (Porthcawl as distinct from the rest of South Wales); and created unease about claiming a Welshness (embarrassed to be Welsh). Younger folk, like their older peers, had to negotiate their Welshness within the constricted confines of a classed national habitus which bore little resemblance to their everyday experiences. Indeed, the class identity adopted and performed by many young locals was at odds with their understanding of ‘proper Welshness’.

Finally, the chapter demonstrated how ostensible ‘nationalising’ initiatives may be refracted by local place. Younger locals, much like the rest of the town, displayed an ambivalence towards the Welsh language which they had grown up hearing in school. Like the rest of the town, many students ‘proved’ their Welshness based on their support for the language. However, rather

than feeling more positively predisposed towards the language, as might be expected, for many of them, Welsh was associated with school and carried negative connotations.

The next chapter explores the unspoken or 'banal' ways in which Welshness is embedded in Porthcawl, and through which locals engaged with Welshness.

## Chapter 10

### **The unreflexive elements of everyday nationhood: flags, ceremonies, and the national deixis**

The previous chapters have looked at the way *place* persists in post-devolution Wales and how this impacts on national identity. This chapter outlines my attempts to investigate the *unreflexive* ways in which the nation inheres in everyday life, the *spatiality* of banal nationalism and the perception that, through the saturation of local public space with symbols and the presence of national institutions and clubs, local places can be *more or less national*. This analysis of the unreflexive in everyday life helps explain the idea of regionally constituted Welshness in contemporary Wales. Far more than ‘flag counting’, however, the chapter ultimately outlines my efforts to document the unreflexive elements of the national habitus and *when* and *how* the nation arises within everyday life at the local level.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, I show how locals perceived Porthcawl to be lacking in ‘latent Welshness’ in terms of ‘Welsh stuff’ happening in the town. I then examine the various *visual manifestations* of Welshness within Porthcawl, focusing on the various ‘flagways’ within the town and when and in what context symbols of the nation are deployed. Next, I look at the way Welshness periodically ‘heated up’ in Porthcawl in line with developments at the national scale and contributed to the town becoming ‘more Welsh’ at certain periods. I then discuss the local/municipal as a scale of power and explore the ‘underground Welsh world’ within the town and the possibility that the ‘feel’ of local place was being dictated by local councillors. This section then discusses the classed nature of ‘popular Welsh celebrations’ and considers how this may impact on local notions of ‘respectability’ and subsequently on the town’s image *vis a vis* Welshness. Finally, I move away from popular celebrations and material manifestations of the nation to discuss my observations of the ‘Welshness’ of everyday life in Porthcawl and consider what this says about post-devolution Wales.

#### *The Latent Welshness of Porthcawl*

Mann (2011) argues that people frequently interpret how national their local place feels by looking to the characteristics of locals as *individuals*, and indeed my argument thus far has



supported this, since Porthcawl's distinctiveness as a place was understood in terms of *behaviours*. Yet as I argued in chapter 6, the individual habitus of locals is not the whole story when understanding the 'feel' of a place. Locals in Porthcawl stated that there was simply 'nothing Welsh about Porthcawl'- it lacked the material, visual manifestations or quotidian reminders of Welshness or national distinctiveness, and that its 'unWelshness' was about the place *itself* as well as the people:

Carys: it's ironic people come to Wales to experience Welsh culture but they come to Porthcawl, but if you think about it they're not gonna actually get much of the Welsh culture as they would compared to the Valleys or something

As in McCrone's analysis of Berwick upon Tweed (2000) and Evans' (2007) analysis of NE Wales, Porthcawl's 'unWelshness' was understood in terms of the lack of 'Welsh stuff' or 'latent Welshness' within the town.

These excerpts in my view demonstrate why, when considering what makes a place different- in this case what makes a town 'Welsh'- we must consider *both* human and these unreflexive 'material' factors. To focus on the characteristics of individuals alone is to ignore the material manifestations of Welshness and the unreflexive ways in which the nation inheres in everyday life within towns. In the above exchanges, the pupils allude to the 'unwelshness' of Porthcawl in *itself*: on top of individual traits of locals themselves, the town does not 'feel Welsh' to locals. This widespread perception of Porthcawl echoes Bertha Thomas' 'Picture Tales from Welsh Hills' (1912, cited in Bohata, 2005:144) whereby the protagonist, Elwyn, describes his hometown, which "*on the face of it, it didn't seem very Welsh. The language was seldom heard; the names, types, manners and address of these fisher farmers and others...were too like Wessex*". I now explore *how* the nation embeds itself in towns in unreflexive ways.

*'Flagways' and the ethno-symbolic geography of Porthcawl*

Through the deployment of flags and other national symbols, *public spaces* within towns and cities become *nationalized* (see Alonso, 1994:386). These prominent symbols contribute to the *ethno-symbolic geography* of the locality (Brubaker et al, 2006: 142), or the 'latent' Welshness of place (Evans, 2007). Returning to an excerpt I have already used earlier in my thesis helps illuminate the role of this ethno-symbolic geography.

DE: Ok, going back to what Chris said earlier, that maybe Porthcawl's more of an 'English' town than other places, erm, would you say there's a difference between Porthcawl and England? Is it an 'English' town or is it just 'less Welsh' than other places?

Lauren: yeah just less Welsh...I think if someone came here from England they'd still find it quite welsh

DE: What do you think they'd notice?

Lauren: The Welsh shop in town [laughter]

In this excerpt the girl alludes to the 'Welsh shop', a well known local purveyor of tourist trinkets and a focal point within the town for the visual iconography of Welshness- flags, stickers, dragon signs and so on, *presumably* oriented to English tourists (plate 6). The students' awareness of the role played by this shop and its display in 'nationalizing' Porthcawl demonstrates how such visual symbols (regardless of whether 'hot' or cold') may contribute to how Welsh a place *feels*. Billig, analyzing the presence of national symbols and institutions within localities, writes that '*these reminders of nationhood serve to turn background space into homeland space*' (1995:42). In Porthcawl, however, the local 'background space' of the town was evidently *not* perceived as a 'homeland (i.e., national) space'. The 'Welsh shop' and its conspicuous displays of Wales and Welshness was the exception which proved the rule.

Jenkins (2010) investigating the ethnosymbolic geography of towns, draws our attention to the myriad ways in which the *national flag* may be used in everyday life. Through these 'flagways' and other visual symbols the abstract idea of the nation penetrates and embeds in towns (2010: 296). As the students in the excerpt above argued, public space in Porthcawl was hardly saturated with visual displays of Welshness. Local businesses in the main do not advertise in Welsh or use the Welsh language as national chains (banks, supermarkets) do (presumably for reasons of expense). The only permanent 'cold' displays of the Welsh flag within the town centre were in the two 'pound shops' within Porthcawl, which had discount Welsh flags prominently displayed year round, and in the aforementioned 'Welsh shop', which sold and prominently displayed a wide array of Welsh paraphernalia such as lovespoons, rugby balls, rugby jerseys, fridge magnets and so on (plate 6). In addition to this, the local Co-Operative, a 'British' national chain, had a Welsh flag stencilled on the outside. Bilingual signage was prominent in multinational chain stores, (BBC, 2008) and the Co-Operative offered a permanent shelf for Welsh trinkets.

The nationalization of public space within Porthcawl was thus largely down to what Jenkins refers to as 'vernacular' (2010:135) uses of the Welsh flag, flown by local and national businesses - '*trading on the flag*'- rather than official/statist in origin. These 'private' uses of the flag by both local and national businesses, designed largely to appeal to non-Welsh visitors, nevertheless served as 'reminders' of Porthcawl's Welshness. The molecular changes of devolution were crystallized in these banal displays of Welshness by large multinationals and chains, forced to recognize and reflect the new Welsh public sphere.

Welshness was also flagged in other 'informal' quotidian settings and traditions in Porthcawl. The annual Christmas morning swim, for example, was 'national-ized' through the prominent presence of the Welsh flag in the centre of the beach. Similarly, the local Elvis festival, an ostensibly 'non-national' celebration, was also marked by a prevalence of Welsh flags flown alongside Elvis Presley memorabilia. A local DJ insisted on the innate *Welshness* of the Elvis festival:

Bobby: It again has become something which is distinctly Welsh, it's part of Welsh culture now to come to Porthcawl for the Elvis Festival! Cos not many English come down y'know, I've spoken to people over the weekend and when over the hi-tide one of the Elvis guys is singing 'I wish I was in the land of cotton'...and people are waving Welsh flags! There's a real distinct Welshness about the Elvis festival, so like on your calender 'you must go to the Royal Welsh show, the Elvis festival', it has become that.

Because flags are available cheaply and anyone can fly them, any amount of local events and rituals may become nationalized by individuals (see Edensor, 2002:78), and help domesticate the abstract idea of the nation into everyday life within local places.

#### *Individual flagging of Welshness*

Through the display of these 'cultural ciphers' (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008:545), the strategic deployment of visual symbols and objects of the nation on number plates, flags in the window and so on, the *individual* can 'Welshify' himself and his immediate surroundings (plate 7). Thus, as in Airriess et al's (2012) analysis of the spatiality of visual flaggings of the nation, *private* acts of self-identification, because of their prominent visual manifestation, may contribute to the collective 'feel' of a locality. Clearly, both private individual and public flagways, be they for commercial/business reasons or civic, may contribute to the nationalizing of local public space and consequently the 'feel' of the town.

The idea of 'private' flagways is interesting. A local woman spoke of the way her relative nationalized *himself* through his deployment of these national symbols:

Joan: I've got a nephew now living out in Ireland, and it's all Welsh with him- Welsh flags on his car and so on, and he doesn't speak Welsh, although his brother went to a Welsh school.

Here her relative made himself as an *individual* 'more Welsh' through his deployment of visual markers of the nation on his property. A local writer suggested that Porthcawl's perceived 'weak Welshness' made locals *more willing* to deploy visual markers of Welshness, be it through themselves or on their property:

Ted: I think that places like Porthcawl will always hold on to people for whom identity is important, and they'll kind of flag up the badges of that identity: being able to speak a little bit of Welsh, rugby, anything else that you think is Welsh, they'll use.

Objects and material symbols of the nation such as flags and trinkets of course offer a simple and accessible way of demonstrating nationhood to others. It is easier to hang a flag from your window than to learn Welsh, for example, and of course visual symbols do not necessarily depend on human interaction or 'being judged by others'. For this reason perhaps flagging individual space and property may offer 'less Welsh' places or individuals an 'easy route' to nationhood which is not challenged or 'undermined' in the way that lacking the 'embodied' features of Welshness (accent etc) may be. The 'thin' Welshness locals understood they possessed could therefore be overcome through the deployment of national symbols. Just as locals could become 'more Welsh' through altering their behaviours in different contexts, these symbols also facilitated a way of becoming 'more Welsh' in particular contexts. I witnessed players from my football team, for example, indifferent about their Welshness in interviews, buying Welsh flag towels to take on their 'lads' holiday', whereby they also had t-shirts made up saying 'Welsh lads on tour'. These symbols allowed them to flag their Welshness outside Wales, and in doing so overcome their peripherality within Wales.

Flags therefore build a connection between the local place and the national scale. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in football matches, where townsfolk routinely write the name of the town on the national flag (plate 8). This serves as a way of connecting the supporter to the club but also placing the town (and the individual) within the nation. In pubs in Porthcawl, local supporters of Swansea City and Cardiff City occasionally displayed Welsh flags adorned with slogans such as 'Porthcawl Jacks'. By flying the flag, Porthcawl's own peripherality is erased, and the town and individuals become, temporarily at least, part of a (working class) Welsh culture. Flags therefore facilitated locals' *chameleon* relationship with the nation.

### *Heating Welshness at the local scale*

Skey (2009) draws attention to the fact that 'banal' nationalism may 'heat up' depending on developments at the national level, just as 'hot' nationalism may 'cool' over time. Whilst it was clear that Welshness was not ordinarily visible or latent within Porthcawl, this state of affairs was not static. Indeed at certain times, public space within Porthcawl became 'more Welsh' in terms of the visibility and ubiquity of national markers. In one of my discussions with the football team this 'heating' was alluded to.

DE: So you think Porthcawl is maybe less...

Owen: I think it's still patriotic....to a degree....but it's not....

Martin: About rugby though!

Owen: Yeah, basically, but it's not...

Paul: But about rugby and stuff only

Matt: A few weeks a year it's patriotic

In particular, Welshness became far more visible in Porthcawl during the two main annual national celebrations of firstly, St David's day and secondly the unofficial, yet unarguably more important, Six Nations rugby tournament. During these ceremonies Porthcawl became awash with flags and other symbols of Welshness (plate 9), illustrating that, as nationhood is 'heated' at the national scale- *the media in particular heats up*- localities also become 'more national'. The 'heating' of Welshness within Porthcawl during these national celebrations demonstrated the link between national *ceremonies* and visual *symbols* of the nation (and localities). As Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008:545-7) claim, national rituals and celebrations provide occasions for choreographed collective exhibitions of national symbols, and through the deployment of these symbols, the local becomes connected to the national.

The difference between the two events emphasized the central role of popular/vernacular celebrations of nationhood in the modern epoch. St David's day, an 'official' national ceremony, was far more low key within Porthcawl- marked by subtle adornments to shops and houses- and affected the 'latent Welshness' of the town far less than the carnivalesque nature of the six nations. The packed pubs during the Six Nations represented a *collective participation* in Welshness as in the wearing of rugby shirts and singing of national songs. Through mass local participation in this national-popular ritual, Porthcawl as a *place* undoubtedly 'felt more Welsh' for this fleeting period of the year, as Welsh flags and rugby jerseys became ubiquitous in the town. Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008:547) argue that sport succeeds in nationalizing people where other 'high rituals' falter because of the drama inherent in competition, noting that through raucous participation, fans become the *physical embodiment* of the nation during these events. In Porthcawl, this was quite literally the case, as locals would don their daffodil or leek hat on top of the regulation Welsh rugby jersey (plate 10).

A local writer perceptively spoke about the role played by rugby internationals as mass ceremonies in defining Welshness:

DE: Do you think the Wales rugby internationals have become a big event then?

Ted: Well in a way, yeah. It's a big sports item in the media, it's covered by the BBC, S4C and everybody else so, 'if it's on TV, it must be good'. So, y'know, it's kind of self-fulfilling! We're stuck with it, and it's not going to go away, it's only going to get worse. And I think the way we're going to see ourselves, about feeling Welsh, will be based round big things like your rugby internationals and attending those, or just having them on the television and supporting those. And that's your Welshness for you, and that'll be our identity

This quote raises interesting issues about scale. Whilst rugby matches entailed the nationalization of public space within Porthcawl, as the above respondent demonstrates, this 'heating' of the town is driven, and ultimately contingent upon, ubiquitous media coverage- i.e. a non-local source. Thus whether or not localities periodically heat up in their Welshness is largely out of their control. Porthcawl's 'periodic patriotism' should not be divorced from the role of the media in particular, which fosters the collective interest in the Six Nations tournament through constant 'patriotic' advertising.

#### *National ceremonies and class distinction*

Cognisant of Porthcawl's aspiration towards *respectability*, I considered whether the consumption practices associated with the annual heating of Welshness lent a class dimension to national popular celebrations. Bourdieu (1984:208) writes that perceptions of sport are refracted by the perception scheme of the individuals' class habitus, and therefore people of different classes inevitably view sport and popular culture differently. It is not so much the sport *per se* which influences its perception amongst the middle classes, but rather the aesthetic nature of the *mode of its consumption and its relationship to other class practices*. He notes, for example, the disgust felt by the bourgeois towards the 'commonness' of boxing (212) and towards 'vulgar crowds' at popular sporting occasions (214). Sport and its consumption,



style and support are thus loaded with class aesthetics and understood via the process of distinction.

The meaning and connotations of the ubiquity of rugby and the Six Nations championship in Wales is ambiguous. On the one hand the sport is immensely popular and a vessel for national pride. On the other, the centrality of a working class sport as a national spectacle and its carnival-esque atmosphere undoubtedly raises questions of stigma and class connotation<sup>33</sup>.

The relationship between rugby as a national popular performance, alcohol and 'underclass' behavior such as alcohol and violence has been both constructed and reflected by journalists (e.g. *Daily Mail*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2012; *Sun*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2012). The popular celebration of Welshness is thus inseparable from the issue of *leisure* and alcohol consumption in particular, lifestyle choices which are inherently classed (Bourdieu, 1984: 175-180).

In Porthcawl, the Six Nations *celebrations* (not the event itself) were viewed, certainly by workers in both the bars I worked in, as 'rough' and associated with the working classes. Whenever I worked Six Nations weekends my colleagues and I braced ourselves for 'carnage'. This suggested to me that national ceremonies may be performed and indeed interpreted differently in different places because of the cultural norms/issues already in place in the locality. In the case of Porthcawl national performances were frequently bound up with issues of class and distinction, and the heating of Welshness was concentrated more in working class bars and pubs, with the 'posh' bars shunning overt displays of national iconography, my own hotel making the conscious decision not to televise matches. The very symbols of rugby fandom- Welsh rugby shirts, flags, inflatable daffodils, leeks and sheep, Welsh cowboy hats and so on- thereby periodically took on a class character as they became associated with drunkenness and with 'Welshy' 'non-locals'. Conversely, the iconography of Britishness when it was heated, whilst similarly soaked in alcohol, did emphasize respectability through 'afternoon

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<sup>33</sup> Although rugby's class origins are complex (e.g. Smith and Williams, 1980), the popular connotations of the sport and its imagery are related to a particular Labourist, masculine image of Wales, although the imagined representation of the nation embodied by the national team are fluid (Harris, 2006. See Bourdieu, 1984,:210 for an in depth discussion of the sport)

tea', 'classy' drinks such as gin and tonic and Pimms. Whilst pubs put out complimentary sausage and chips for the rugby, sandwiches and scones accompanied Wimbledon and the Jubilee (plate 11).

Thus the *national performances* of popular Welshness had the potential at least to reinforce the Welsh/working class nexus and increased the distance between locals and 'Welshy' working class others. Conversely, however, once more demonstrating locals' 'chameleon' relationship to (classed) Welshness, participating in carnivalesque national popular rituals also allowed 'middle class' locals to engage and connect with 'proper' Welshness, to participate in this classed national pastime and once more to become, albeit momentarily, as Welsh as everyone else.

#### *The Welsh language, clubs & institutions in the Welshness of local place*

It is not just the deployment of visual *symbols* which nationalizes a local place, however. The visibility or presence of the Welsh language within a locality may flag Welsh national distinctiveness (Jones and Merriman, 2009) and indeed contribute to the 'feel' or 'latent Welshness' of local place. So the language, in Welsh speaking regions, may be considered a 'banal' daily reminder of Welshness even for those who do not speak Welsh: national distinctiveness is flagged *aurally*- it is present in signage and in businesses and so on, helping to nationalize the town. As I already alluded to in chapter 7, the invisibility of the Welsh language in Porthcawl was considered by many locals to exemplify the lack of 'latent Welshness' in the town. This was illustrated when I interviewed a year 12 Welsh class:

DE: alright, so would you say Porthcawl is a particularly Welsh place?

Carys: I wouldn't say so, we've got the language and everything else taught...but we're not Welsh...[PAUSES] place

DE: So it's not just in terms of accent and language?

Carys: It's like... just up the Valleys and stuff init, they're more Welsh! like you get like, I dunno, Llanharri and stuff up there, they're all Welsh, like down here, in schools you've 'gotta do a couple of lessons a week haven't you, but that's it

DE: So is that in terms of the accent, or is it....

Carys: No, it's the language as well yeah. There's not much down here at all, there's no schools down here, Welsh schools, there's one up in Cornelly, and they're all up in, duno, the valleys and everything

Elis: The valleys and down West, like

Carys: Yeah down Cardiff way as well, yeah

For these students, doing Welsh in school was no substitute for living in a more Welsh place. Ethnicity at the local level is sustained and reproduced by institutions, associations and clubs- “the organizational and institutional basis of everyday ethnicity” (Brubaker et al 2006:265). Jenkins (2010:292) notes that being national is about ‘doing stuff’- being immersed in implicitly or explicitly national activities, clubs or societies. The presence of such institutions clearly helps contribute to how national a place ‘feels’ (Brubaker et al, 2006:170). Welsh language education, for example, is here viewed as a way of making a local *place* more Welsh. Other local areas (noticeably, Anglophone areas like Cardiff and the Valleys) were deemed more ‘latently’ Welsh because of the visible presence of the Welsh language and Welsh language institutions like schools.

DE: Ok, you said earlier that maybe there's not that many Welsh institutions?

Carys: In the town, in general, ever since the start of this year, I've wandered around Porthcawl, I've only ever heard one person speak Welsh...down the phone...in Porthcawl. Other than in class I've only ever heard one person speak Welsh outside school

DE: Ok so it's maybe like you wouldn't really come across it?

Maria: people wouldn't think about it really, there're no clubs or anything is there?

The role of institutions and clubs were viewed as important to sustaining and reproducing the nationality of individual and also the nation-ness of Porthcawl. The lack of Welsh 'things', institutions and activities, more than the presence of visual symbols of Welshness, contributed to Porthcawl's 'unWelshness'. A central point here is that when locals referred to there being 'no Welsh cultural stuff' in Porthcawl, they were referring to *Welsh language culture*. This raises the question which occupied Balsom: *what is contemporary Anglo-Welsh culture?* I reflect on this question in the concluding chapter.

#### *Welsh language clubs and associations in Porthcawl: an 'underground world'*

I attempted to explore the role played by institutions and clubs in Porthcawl, and how these clubs and institutions etc collectively contributed to the 'feel' of the town. I spoke at length to a local Welsh tutor who had lived in Porthcawl for nearly ten years. She illuminated how 'Welsh' clubs and institutions were sustained and operated at the micro-level and its relationship to Porthcawl's 'Welshness'.

Vicky: We've also set up Merched y Wawr...like a WI for older women...but we meet once a month, and so, that goes across Porthcawl, Bridgend, Maesteg.....

Dewi: you've set that up for people in their 30s and 40s, it's like the mother's union for young women

Vicky: It's like a self help group for people who speak Welsh in this area!

Dewi: but those Clwb Gwawr women now, they're starting to send their kids to the Urdd on Wednesday night now, so you've got another network, an adult network she's set up who are now bringing kids on Wednesday nights

Vicky: ...I suppose it's natural isn't it- like the ethnic minority situation in Cardiff- you go out of your way to find other people of, who have the same interests or share similar, you know

Brubaker et al (2006: 283) note that 'ethnic' clubs and institutions are 'experientially pervasive' as friendships and bonds formed at schools, for example, carry over into people's private lives (Hodges, 2012). The Welsh 'world' within Porthcawl was densely interconnected and bound up with choosing Welsh language education. The location of Welsh medium education outside the town meant large sacrifices for parents and children in terms of transport logistics. Whilst contact through these logistic networks and nascent Welsh language institutions was necessary, it also led to the perception that, precisely because of these separate Welsh language institutions, clubs and associations, the Welsh language community remained distinct from the rest of the town- in this case the analogy is of an 'ethnic minority' having to 'stick together'. This limited familial engagement with the rest of the community and concomitantly a perceived exclusion from civic life echoed interviews with pupils who had transferred to Porthcawl Comprehensive because they felt that being educated outside Porthcawl made them 'strangers' within Porthcawl. This 'underground' Welsh speaking world within Porthcawl prompts a reassessment of the 'One Wales' thesis, and in particular the idea which states that the Welsh language is, post-devolution, 'owned by all' (WAG, 2003, 2012). The local Urdd group, for example, had just come second in the national eisteddfod:

Vicky: nobody knows about that though

Dewi: Nobody knows! Nobody around here knows! They've just come second and third in the Eisteddfod!

Vicky: 6 years it's taken us to get to that stage: that's an example now of how within the Welsh speaking world, the Urdd Eisteddfod is kept almost exclusively for Welsh speakers

Dewi: you've set the Urdd up, we've got through to national competition representing Porthcawl and nobody knows about it, the rest of Wales, who are really ardent followers of Eisteddfodau, they'll know about it, your aunties up in Dolgellau and North Wales will know about it, in Porthcawl you can go down this street and no-one knows, apart from Ruth because I told her, so at the end of the day, you've got the Urdd, you've got the Bore Coffi mornings...

Despite these efforts, however, the language tutors I spoke to within Porthcawl claimed that any successes remained unacknowledged, not registering on the local civic radar, reflecting the 'outsider' status of the Welsh language world within Porthcawl. The Urdd's success did not prompt local media coverage, for example. The couple argued that Welsh language institutions and clubs within Porthcawl- the Welsh speaking world- remained distinct from the rest of the town- they claimed it was an 'underground world'

Vicky: But we should be considered part of the community...I mean a typical example again is the carnival- we've never been invited! although probably because people don't know we're there although this year someone did ask Carl and he was fine, 'yeh you can come along', but it's us having to approach them all the time, it's not the other way around. Just little things when they do collections for clubs in the

Pavilion, we've never had anything from that, it's almost as if we've been left out, whether or not that's intentional I don't know..

The perceived 'separateness' of the Welsh speaking community in Porthcawl and the 'invisibility' of these Welsh speaking institutions and clubs was emphasized. There was, amongst these local Welsh speakers, a pervasive sense of being 'other' Just as in earlier chapters I have discussed how locals felt the 'Welsh speaking other' 'looked down on them', in this instance the situation was reversed, with the local Welsh speaking community feeling this 'exclusion' within Porthcawl itself.

Vicky: you almost feel.... like some kind of a freak I think! I often find that, when I take Indeg to swimming lessons to Pyle, and in the showers I'll be speaking Welsh to Indeg, and you'll see children literally stopping and just looking, staring at you

Dewi: as if you're speaking a foreign language!

Vicky: as if you're in a foreign language, you know 'cos they don't hear it! And immediately they see that's something different. So it's quite bizarre really, that that still exists whereas if we go shopping as we often do to Carmarthen, the children will say 'Mam, they're speaking Welsh over there', you know, they see it, it's an alien experience for them!

Dewi: you don't get stared at in Carmarthen!

Vicky: no, you don't get stared at in Carmarthen, it's alright to speak Welsh there.

Despite their best efforts, their 'world' remained underground within Porthcawl, and they themselves remained *foreign* within British Wales. Railing against their invisibility, however, the couple drew my attention to the *historical presence* of Welsh speakers within Porthcawl,

something they felt had been submerged in considerations of Porthcawl as a place. This of course raised questions about the historical non-influence of Welsh speakers within the town during the course of its development (appendix 7).

*Power and agency in the local reproduction of nationhood*

During my conversations with local Welsh speakers, the issue of *power* at the local level was frequently raised. I was struck in particular by the idea that lone individuals or small groups may be responsible for influencing the 'latent Welshness' of a whole town through their organizing and establishment of localized cultural apparatuses. The local tutor I interviewed had single handedly created this Welsh speaking world within Porthcawl. As the husband of the Welsh tutor put it:

Dewi: Daniel should focus on what you have done for the Welsh language in Porthcawl, because you have really raised the bloody profile! You set the Urdd up on a Wednesday night- they've just come second and third in the national eisteddfod, representing Porthcawl, that was unheard of before-

Yet in my lengthy discussion with this Welsh tutor, she alluded to other forces at work within Porthcawl who had a say in influencing the 'latent Welshness' of the town.

Vicky: you really wouldn't know that there was a Welsh medium primary school available in Porthcawl. Still, to this day....I mean if I was new coming into Porthcawl...there's nothing, no information out there to tell me that you know, Welsh medium education is an option, because of where the Welsh medium primary is located, which is in Cornelly which is out of Porthcawl

DE: ok, so you don't think...why might there not be advertising for the Welsh medium school then?



Vicky: I think it's political! And...looking back rather than forwards..and this is why I think this particular area we live in is quite erm, you know, you can see the difference between this area, say, and Swansea and Cardiff, where it's far more more progressive in their approach- the LEA's planning of Welsh medium schools- there's no getting away from the fact that there's been a steady increase in the demand, but in this particular area what you find, and for the life of me I can't see why they couldn't have located the welsh speaking primary within Porthcawl itself...bearing in mind there's 4 primary schools in Porthcawl, and some of those now are running on low numbers, so, you know, there's that element and by actually putting the Welsh school outside of the main town, you're automatically going to be cutting out an awful lot of that population because it means a bus journey for the child.

The Welsh tutor was convinced that the local council (who, as I have previously stated, spoke favourably of Welsh medium education in public) were *actively* attempting to prevent Welsh medium education within Porthcawl, i.e., resisting any attempt to make Porthcawl 'more Welsh' as a local place. Another local Welsh speaker similarly alleged that the town's influential Rotary club, amongst others, were hostile to the Welsh language, and he too complained that local civic groups spent significant amounts of time organizing 'British' ceremonies such as Jubilee commemorations and war memorials. Of course this flew in the face of what the councillors themselves had told me.

If we return to the TWM, as I argued in chapter 1, Balsom's analysis positions the *local scale*, in the form of local cultural and political apparatuses- and ultimately, *individuals*- as a producer and arbiter of the latent Welshness of a region. The issue of 'who controls how national a place is' is engaged with by Schwegler (2008) who argues that the municipal is more influential than the state in influencing the articulation of nationhood within a locality. He states that "municipalities are emerging as the nexus of national classification as a conduit for intimate

apprehension of relations among individuals, national concepts and global flows of information and capital" (2008:150). That is, *local authorities* govern how, (and in which forms) national a place is, and ultimately how the nation inheres in everyday life. He continues that towns' "constituent institutions, policies and practices change the very terms and referents of national identity" (2008:150-151). Brubaker et al's work on Cluj (2006) of course points to the influence of local 'ethno-political entrepreneurs' (2006:16), and how a nationalist mayor almost *single handedly* went about nationalizing public space in Cluj. This certainly raises interesting questions about the agency and influence of local authorities and how the 'nation-ness' of a town is arrived at.

In the following excerpt, the tutor explicitly engages with Porthcawl's 'unWelsh' feel:

Vicky: The interesting thing is, going back to the movers and the shakers, these people who come into to Porthcawl who are quite, you know, they run the rotary club, they run the lions, they do this and that, very often are English people. They have been really supportive on every occasion I have to say, and they've been almost you know, like we've had follow on invitations then to take part in various activities, and 'erm, some of which we've purposely, we don't take part in 'cos we're very conscious of the fact that the Urdd represents, the Urdd's motto is 'i Gymru, i Grist', so I feel perhaps personally uncomfortable with a lot of the, there's quite a lot of celebrations...memorial things going on with the British legion and things like that, so you know, we're conscious of that- not that we wouldn't want to support it- but there are certain you know, I suppose historically when you think of when the Urdd was set up, and this idea of peace and good will and whatever else, we're quite aware of that, but then it's almost as if we're having to push ourselves into these things as well just to show people we're there.

The above excerpt raises two interesting points. The first, echoing the work of Althusser and Gramsci, is about the *ideological nature* of 'banal' rituals and ceremonies, in this case the

militarism and Britishness inherent in the town's perceived enthusiasm for 'neutral' war commemorations. The second is that Porthcawl's 'Britishness' is alleged to emanate from a small group of influential gatekeepers, in particular from English in-migrants who were alleged to have 'imported' their own latent values and imposed them on the town, ultimately influencing the 'feel' of Porthcawl.

### *The material manifestations of Britishness in Porthcawl*

These exchanges led me to investigate further the notion that Porthcawl's 'thin Welshness' was influenced by the efforts of particular 'movers' and shakers' to emphasize 'British' events and rituals over Welsh ones. Recall that in chapter 8 some locals alleged that Porthcawl's 'respectability' and collective class identity was bound up with political conservatism and a desire to embrace 'Britishness' as a concomitant of respectability. Could this be reflected in the ethno-symbolic geography of the town?

Certainly, 'Britishness' was latent within Porthcawl in both banal and 'hot' forms, directly contradicting Thompson's (2007) arguments about the zero-sum 'Welshification' of everyday life at the *expense* of 'everyday Britishness'. In terms of the 'Britishness' of local public space, much like the Welsh flag, the Union flag was rarely to be seen within the town centre, although significantly, it was flown inside churches and prominently displayed within the local supermarket through nationalistic 'Buy British' marketing strategies. Businesses large and small traded on both the Welsh and British flag. Supermarkets and shops in Porthcawl all carry 'British-wide' marketing campaigns regarding the English football team ('*our* players').

Like Welshness, Britishness was both 'hot' and 'cold' and could be heated or cooled, through both 'official' and 'vernacular' ceremonies. State ceremonies, for example remembrance and military services, were predictably saturated with British iconography (plate 12) as the churches in Porthcawl and other public spaces were adorned with British flags. In these situations Porthcawl's Britishness became more visible, and in both the bars I worked in, staff were

required to wear poppies for remembrance Sunday. At one memorial Sunday event I attended, the assembled crowd sang 'God Save the Queen'. 'Vernacular' ceremonies such as the London Olympics of 2012 also temporarily turned the town red white and blue. 'Help for heroes' posters and collection tins, for example, represented the 'cold' element of this (militarized) British 'we', ubiquitous year round, fading into the background of everyday life.

The issue of local (English) gatekeepers actively promoting Britishness at the expense of Welshness was problematic. The town council held a ceremony to mark the Royal Wedding, and controversially spent over six thousand pounds giving each pupil in Porthcawl a medal to mark the Queen's diamond jubilee (plate 13). Thus there was some evidence of 'Britishness' being officially endorsed and supported by the town council, although as I shortly demonstrate, this was not at the expense of Welshness. Indeed, the gatekeepers in charge of the 'tone' of the town were, on the whole, Welsh, not English. Certainly many on the conservative town council were very vocal in celebrating Porthcawl's links with the military. Porthcawl's museum, for example, was largely focused on commemorating Porthcawl's role in both the world wars. In the town council meetings I sat on, councillors were all enthusiastic about officially promoting both the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the royal wedding (see appendix 6). Yet both these celebrations were also celebrated throughout Porthcawl by private individuals and businesses, blurring the lines between 'top down' council initiatives and private initiatives, thereby problematizing the perception that 'certain people' were definitively *in charge* of the 'feel' of the town.

This periodic 'heating' of Britishness also demonstrated the blurred boundaries between 'official' and popular ceremonies or indeed how 'high' cultural ceremonies may be interpreted differently on the micro-level. Whilst the town council seemed to advocate 'formal' events and rituals, local pubs and hotels capitalized on the bank holiday granted for the Royal Wedding celebrations by hosting their own 'street parties' (plate 11) festooning themselves with the Union flag, offering drinks specials on gin and tonic and Pimms- (allegedly 'British national' drinks). As my hotel manager put it, these 'national' celebrations were simply 'an excuse for a

piss up'. In other words, despite the extensive deployment of British national symbolism, it would be premature to claim that these events inculcated any lasting national sentiment or that they were anything other than a commercial enterprise. What these vernacular and official celebrations of Britishness did demonstrate, however, was the 'fuzziness' of Britishness, which could be both militaristic and 'cool' or prestigious depending on the context.

Public space in Porthcawl was not monopolized by British or Welsh iconography, and nor were the two flagways mutually exclusive. There was therefore no symbolic '*space war*' (Tamarkin, 2003; cited in Brubaker et al, 2006: 136) between competing national symbols within Porthcawl, and conservative gatekeepers were not attempting to saturate the town with 'Britishness' or prevent the Welshification of local public space. Indeed, within the various 'flagways' within Porthcawl it was interesting to see the Welsh flag being flown *alongside* the British flag at, for example, the Royal Jubilee celebrations (plate 14). The presence of the Welsh flag at these ostensibly 'non-welsh' celebrations demonstrated the 'nestedness' of British and Welsh identities rather than any polarization. Perhaps it also suggested the post-devolution 'Welshification' of historically 'non-Welsh' celebrations.

### *Banality, Power and Post-Devolution Wales*

As I argued in my methodology chapter, studying the unreflexive ways in which the nation becomes embedded in everyday life is about far more than counting flags. If this was the case we could claim towns or places were more or less Welsh simply by the amount of visual symbols we encountered on the high street. Although national symbols, signs etc represent an important symbolic element in the nationalization of space and place (Brubaker et al, 2006: 140; Jones and Merriman, 2009), it is important not to attribute too much significance to their role in nationalizing people, for even ubiquitous national symbols, monuments and suchlike can easily 'become invisible' (Brubaker et al, 2006:145-6). Whilst interviewing a sixth form Welsh class student, bemoaning Porthcawl's 'weak Welshness', she stated:

Kat: you've got Welsh on the signs and that I guess...but it's not exactly like you go out and people speak Welsh is it?

This excerpt perfectly summarizes the folly of solely focusing on cosmetic symbols at the expense of a deeper enquiry of the nationalization of everyday life. As Billig (1995:93) puts it, visual symbols such as flags are not sufficient to inculcate whole habits of thought about the nation. Instead, our unreflexive appreciation of who 'we' are is *discursive*, dependent upon "banal words, jingling in the ears of the citizens, or passing before their eyes". The media in particular forms a huge part of our everyday unspoken life and interaction, and helps create our instinctive awareness of the '*homeland deixis*', that is, who 'we' are, or who 'us' is (Billig 1995:105-9; 174-5)

Similarly, both Edensor (2002) and McCrone (2005) argue that 'cultural intimacy' comes about through *immersion in state structures* and engagement with the '*homeland deixis*' referring to the national 'we' or 'us' (Billig, 1995:105-9; 174-5). McCrone (2005), linking Scottishness in everyday life to Bourdieu's concept of the 'institutional state' (i.e. the power to impose recognition or validity), notes how the institutionalization of distinctly Scottish educational, legal, religious and media systems etc are what mark Scotland out as a 'quasi-state' or 'semi-state'. In short, working and living within the bureaucracy of these distinct apparatuses continually flag the distinctiveness of Scotland within everyday life, far more so than vernacular visual symbols. He writes:

"In short, people think of themselves as being Scots- and they do, in increasing numbers, over being British- because they have been *educated, governed and embedded in a Scottish way. It is a matter of governance, not of sentiment; and, if anything, the latter derives from the former. In other words, people think of themselves as Scottish because of the micro-contexts of their lives reinforced by the school system*" (McCrone 2005: 74 my emphasis).

'Banality' or the unreflexive penetration of the nation into everyday life is therefore contingent upon *power* and control of the national hegemonic apparatus, whether one reads national

newspapers etc. This is to say that there is a dialectical link between a separate civil society, a separate media, the state bureaucracy, and the nationalization of daily existence and increased national sentiment. McCrone's work is invaluable in connecting the 'banal' ways in which the nation is unreflexively absorbed through quotidian enactions within wider power structures. The penetration of a separate Scottish civil society into everyday life helps to '*Scotticize*' everyday social interaction and competencies (2005: 75). The national *homeland deixis* (Billig, 1995: 105-9), the commonsensical sense of 'we', is therefore '*a social achievement*' (Condor, 2000:199, cited in Skey, 2009: 342).

### *The absence of a Welsh national deixis*

In everyday life Porthcawl, as indeed everywhere else, a significant amount of interaction and conversation hinged on all forms of media, from popular culture including television, music, the internet and so on to political discussions about current events. Television in particular provides the nation with talking points, with shared references, with common interests and so on. These daily topics were of course refracted and understood through national (UK) news channels and national (UK) papers. The most significant finding from my observation of the unreflexive elements of the national habitus was that the overwhelming majority of locals in Porthcawl occupied what Bradbury & Andrews call a *British* 'cultural world' (2010:237). In Porthcawl, there was almost a complete disengagement from the Welsh media or indeed Welsh 'cultural stuff' of any sort. In everyday talk and interaction, the 'homeland deixis'- the 'we' or 'us'- did not refer to Wales but to *Britain*. As a work colleague put it, (outside rugby) Wales just 'never crops up' in daily life. I now briefly outline this disengagement with Wales and how this impacted on locals' sense of Welshness.

### *Football and the national deixis*

Sport is not just about sport, but holds a profound social significance in inculcating a sense of nationhood (Billig, 1995: 119- 121). As I have already demonstrated, rugby was central to many young people's understanding of Welshness. Yet rugby, and specifically the six nations tournament and the clash with England, was an *infrequent* national *event*. Football, on the other hand, was a ubiquitous feature of everyday life. As Billig notes, despite being, (like other

sports) ostensibly corralled into a separate section of the newspaper on nightly news bulletins, football is still something which forms part of everyday national existence commented on much like the weather, and therefore holds a profound social significance in inculcating a sense of nationhood and who 'we' are(1995:119). Football discussion in Porthcawl provided one specific example of the absence of a Welsh national deixis. Interestingly, some (Welsh identifying) players regularly wore England shirts to training and with a few exceptions, saw nothing wrong with supporting England, and explained to me that since they all supported English teams and watched English football and players week in week out, supporting England was simply a natural thing to do:

Paul: well because of the premier league, the focus is on there, most people support English teams anyway

DE: so would you support England in the World Cup?

Adam: yeah 'cos Wales aren't in it...I'd support England.

Hywel: we support English premiership teams anyway, may as well support England...

For these young footballers, and indeed for my work colleagues and young people throughout the town, hegemonic Anglo-American media and 'British' cultural institutions provided their entertainment totally, and helped construct the I/we narrative in the absence of Welsh media coverage or sporting success. In this footballing context, the 'we' the players had understood and internalised when it came to international football referred to England, not Wales. The English Premier League was 'our' league. Going to watch 'The game' referred to England if both Wales and England were playing on the same night. On numerous occasions players and work colleagues referred to England as 'we' or 'us'. Although players followed the Welsh national team too, they noted that Wales rarely played in big, prestigious tournaments, but were



instead confined to unglamorous qualifying matches which were rarely given the same media coverage as an England game. This again raised questions of power, representation and media coverage. Whilst Rosie et al (2004) argue that there is no *widespread* empirical evidence which connects mass media consumption to national identity, my fieldwork and analysis of everyday life and interaction certainly pointed to a homogenization in cultural terms and the absence of the Welsh national deixis.

Rosie et al (2004), discussing the national deixis in everyday life, note that within conversations in multinational states such as the UK there can be a '*wandering we*', as different contexts refer to different nations, in this context Wales on the one hand and Britain on the other. Demonstrating this, the resurgence and growing prestige of both Cardiff and Swansea City football clubs acted as vessels for a national identity (see Johnes, 2005; Rogers and Rookwood, 2007) and a mundanely frequent flagging and reinforcement of Welshness- enhanced by the clubs' direct opposition to English opponents- for young locals, as those who supported Cardiff or Swansea seemed to have made a consciously 'national' *choice* to support a Welsh team over a more successful English one. For these younger men, the 'we' on these occasions was implicitly 'us Welsh', although this was exceptional, and only a temporary departure from the norm.

#### *A dearth of Welsh cultural markers*

Barlow (2005:194) draws attention to this 'elephant in the room' within contemporary Welsh society, and adopts the position of a visitor to Wales who, upon attempting to acquaint themselves with Wales and Welsh culture via the mass media would be bemused to find no mention of Wales in either the popular press or television. Returning now to the school setting, in the previous chapter I stated that, alongside an awareness of the classed representation of Welshness in the media, a recurring theme was the *invisibility* of Wales and Welsh pop cultural markers:

Anna: We had like a welsh oral exam in groups and we had to think of a famous Welsh person, and none of us could think of a person, only Gavin and Stacey.

Growing up in the era of the Manic Street Preachers, Catatonia and the Stereophonics, all of whom overtly embraced their Welshness, I naively expected the younger generation of locals to be at least aware of these bands as they discussed Welsh popular culture. Yet the lack of awareness of these groups demonstrated my own age and also perhaps the fleeting nature of popular culture and fame (Rojek, 2001). Welshness had clearly cooled significantly compared to its temporary heating in the Cool Cymru era. Instead, the perception amongst teenage students was that Wales had no 'famous people' (again, other than the classed examples already discussed). A sixth form class reflected on this.

DE: ok, what's the difference then between Welsh people and English people then? between Wales and England?

Charlotte: England's somewhere most people are gonna know, and most famous people are from England too so that's how...

Amy: there are some famous Welsh people

Charlotte: yeah, but not worldwide like

Angharad: but they're mainly British or English, they don't really represent Welsh with British....they just think if it's British they're English

During the discussions with this GCSE class, other students explicitly stated that they felt Wales lacked cultural markers and reference points:

DE: Ok so, what are the things you associate with Wales, what does it mean to be Welsh to you?

Charlotte: I don't think there's much that like signifies Welsh people from anyone else...I really don't think there's like, we're not set apart from anyone else, we haven't got things that make us....Welsh....I don't think we do

The perceived lack of tangible cultural referents, combined with the classed nature of the few Welsh representations to surface within the British media, contributed to the struggle many of these younger people seemed to have in relating to Welshness. This of course is an issue which is contingent upon developments at the national scale and which transcends the local.

Brubaker et al (2006:211-212) argue that in 'asymmetric' societies, ethnic categories are 'marked' or 'unmarked'. The dominant culture is 'unmarked' (i.e., unnoticed) in everyday life because it is ubiquitous taken for granted, whereas the marked category refers to the 'different' or minority national 'other'. This is the '*privilege of invisibility*', something which was referred to by students in a year twelve class:

Charlotte: If there's a singer, like on a TV programme and the singer's Welsh, everyone's like 'oh my god they're Welsh', but like most of the other people are English, no one's like 'oh my gosh they're English' it's just 'cos like, there're hardly ever Welsh people who like would succeed as singers and stuff, and when they do it's made a huge deal of just because they're from Wales

This quote reflects the asymmetries within everyday life between Welshness and Britishness. Conspicuous (usually classed) representations of Welshness in the media in fact demonstrated its usual invisibility.

*Ignorance of Wales on the international scale and the low prestige of Welshness*

Hartley (2013) argues that the nation which does not see itself on the screen starts to believe it does not exist. This was not the case in Porthcawl. Instead, the 'low visibility' of Wales and Welshness contributed to the issue discussed in chapter 8, the 'low prestige' of Welshness as an identity. Wales' 'cultural invisibility' was related to the recurrent commonsensical assumption that 'no-one knows where Wales is'

DE: How would you describe being Welsh, Welshness to someone, if you were abroad for example, and someone who didn't know about Wales was to ask you?

Emma: I'm surprised they even know what Wales is! When I go abroad they all think we're English, they don't know where Wales is  
[everyone in the class agrees with this]

Conversely, Britain or the UK – 'us Brits' - offered prestige on 'the world stage'

Paul: one of the most advanced countries in the world isn't it, along with America, it's got a big name

After the recording had finished, the respondent, who had also expressed a strong Welsh identity, claimed 'the British army was the best in the world'. The rest of the footballers nodded- it was common sense that 'we' were the best. Such a discussion was highly typical, since 'this country' or 'us', especially in a *political sense*, referred not to Wales but to Britain. 'Our troops' referred to British troops, and indeed all *political* discussions, be it about war, immigration, all referred to Britain. Wales, therefore, was still not recognised as a distinct *political community* within everyday life but became the 'we' in sporadic sporting events.

## *Popular competencies*

Edensor (2002) further develops our understanding of how the nation unreflexively permeates everyday life. Moving beyond 'obvious' facets of 'banal nationalism' (flags and national ceremonies, for example) he focuses on the *habitual performances* of everyday life- the '*ultra banal*'. 'Cultural intimacy' is arrived at through familiar, quotidian habits and routines, what he calls our *popular competencies*: the everyday, practical knowledge we possess which enables us to accomplish tasks within the nation. These competencies essentially stem from the bureaucratization imposed by the state on the citizenry, what Habermas calls the 'colonisation of the lifeworld' (2002: 90). The nation thus enters our everyday life through the *infrastructure of the state*, and our need to interact with it: we need to know how to drive, how to abide by motoring laws, which side of the road to drive on and so on<sup>34</sup>. We need to know how to take public transport, how to buy goods, what money to use etc. The running of one's life thus requires an intimate knowledge of how to accomplish familiar tasks which are *implicitly national*. These competencies are duplicated across the nation since an infrastructure of recognizable venues and institutional settings provides shared sites in which to perform familiar actions (2002:93). These everyday forms of practical knowledge are rarely the subject of any reflection, for "they constitute part of the normal competencies required to sustain a livelihood and a social life. So instilled are many of these habits that they form part of a national habitus" (2002:93). These affective rituals *connect the individual to the nation*. The extent to which we are conditioned by our national *habits*, how nationally specific are our everyday competencies, become clear when we go abroad and struggle to perform everyday tasks such as taking public transport and so on.

Despite the devolution of many functions of government, Wales remains the administrative unit 'England and Wales' (Jones, 2013a). I noticed that locals' popular competencies are also *British*. The currency people use is not Welsh, for example. Many of the bureaucratic arenas which structure everyday life: paying taxes; social security; tax credits; posting a letter; gaining

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<sup>34</sup> Although, of course, not *all* our daily enactions are governed by the state! (e.g., saying hello, thank you and so on)

a driver's licence and so on, these daily functions are retained by Westminster and are not 'Welsh'. In these bureaucratic fields, Wales is thus not 'the container for everyday life' (Fenton, 2007:327). The non-penetration of the Welsh state into everyday life once more reveals the conservative nature of devolution.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have collated my analysis of the 'unreflexive' ways in which Welshness inhered in everyday life in Porthcawl. The chapter looked at the relevance of the local and national scale in inculcating a sense of 'groupness' and how all this influenced the notion of local place. Local clubs, councils and other municipal institutions, may set the 'tone' of an area and determine how 'Welsh' a place feels through the deployment of national symbols within local public space and the choice of local rituals/celebrations etc. The carnivalesque nature of the heating of Welshness through rugby at the local and national scale has the *potential* to reinforce the link between Welshness and working class-ness at the local level, yet I could not demonstrate that this influenced locals' relationship to Welshness. In Porthcawl, there was a suspicion from some quarters that local gatekeepers in Porthcawl were actively attempting to convey the image of a 'British' town. In fact, I found that in terms of ethnosymbolic geography, Porthcawl was both Welsh *and* British, even if local councillors and gatekeepers did occasionally display a preference for 'British' celebrations and local rituals. Local Welsh speaking individuals strove to influence the town's 'latent Welshness' through tireless organizing, yet their Welsh speaking world still remained 'underground'.

Although these localized issues had some impact on Welshness, how 'Welsh' people feel went far beyond the local scale, and is about much more than how many flags fly in a town, or whether or not local councils commemorate 'British' public holidays. Indeed it would be hard to claim that Porthcawl's public space was ever really 'national': Porthcawl's main street, John Street, displays many features of a (non-national) 'clonetown', with countless multinational chains and charity shops, betting shops and so on. Instead, the answer to how national people

feel is based on *power* and the ability of the nation, through its cultural and other state apparatuses, to influence and shape everyday life. Because of the link between political power and the ability to nationalize everyday life, as I embedded in Porthcawl and observed the national deixis in everyday life, I could not help but 'extend out' (Burawoy, 1998) from the field and consider what the Welshness of everyday life said about devolution and post-devolution Wales. In Porthcawl, whilst Welshness was routinely flagged in everyday life through national symbols and sporadic use of the Welsh language, everyday life was not *Welshified*, to use McCrone's language, and this is a crucial difference. Welsh 'stuff' therefore *punctuated* everyday life, rather than *pervading* it: people were not immersed in distinct Welsh institutional structures, and ultimately their national homeland deixis was not Welsh, but British. This of course reverberates far beyond the local level and brings us back full circle to the devolution settlement and its clearly limited and largely cosmetic impact on the national and local scale.

## Conclusion

This thesis has explored and analyzed the nature of Welsh identity in the hitherto underexplored 'British Wales' region through an ethnographic analysis of the town of Porthcawl. Hopefully this represents a significant contribution towards achieving a deeper understanding of this overlooked region, as well as contributing towards a better appreciation of the impact of place and social class on national identity in contemporary Wales. Yet this thesis has not just been concerned with British Wales and local identity in Porthcawl: from the outset, it endorsed the dialectical interplay between micro-level and macro-level. My analysis of Porthcawl functions therefore as part of a broader exercise which locates everyday nationhood in Wales within a wider, historical context.

Theoretically embedded (Burawoy, 2009:13) in Gramscian theory as I entered the field, my historical and theoretical interpretation of devolution (and the concomitant evolution of the discursive construction of Welshness) helped contextualise everyday life in Porthcawl and prevented me from reifying and divorcing everyday life and place from wider structural developments. Equally, in studying how the changes wrought by devolution play out 'on the ground', the ethnographic material in this thesis helps to illuminate the impact of devolution in post-devolution Wales and the process of passive revolution itself. Although I was 'armed' with theory, my journey back into my hometown- re-localising myself- involved continuously 'destabilizing my own analysis' (Burawoy, 1998:22) and reflexively coming to terms with latent misconceptions I had developed about the town as an insider. The unexpected Welshness of Porthcawl, for example, precipitated a deeper reading of passive revolution and its inherent instability and the concreteness of the molecular changes of devolution. Although traumatic at the time, these developments at the micro-level forced me to develop, reproduce and refashion my understanding of the process of passive revolution (Burawoy, 2009:13).

Accordingly, this final chapter pulls together the dominant themes to emerge from Porthcawl and summarises the relevance these have for understanding national identity within 'British Wales' before finally 'extending out' from the local to consider what the ethnographic material can tell us about post-devolution Wales and indeed the potential for *change* within the post-



devolution era. In pursuing the Welshness of British Wales, my thesis raised other questions and issues which indicate rich areas of future research. I outline these in this final chapter.

### *Passive Revolution and the post-devolution Interregnum*

Passive revolution is a recurring and indeed central feature of capitalist modernity (Thomas, 2006) which occurs in specific forms in different states (Hesketh and Morton, 2014), moulded by the particular cultural and economic circumstances of each individual case. In my analysis of nationhood 'from above', I applied this fecund concept to Wales. I believe my Gramscian framing of devolution constitutes an original contribution to the literature, and one which will hopefully provoke and encourage further critical theoretical analysis of devolution. The framework of passive revolution, unlike the paradigmatic post-colonial view of the state, facilitates a more nuanced view of change and subsequent developments in post-devolution Wales.

To briefly recap my theoretical analysis of devolution: using Gramsci's interrelated concepts of the integral state and hegemony, I demonstrated the sophistication and flexibility of the post-war British state (or *historical bloc*). Building on this account of the malleable nature of the 'state in the West', I argued against the 'celebratory' or 'positive' interpretations of devolution as a ruptural change, ushering in a reinvigorated, recalibrated Welshness which had blanketed even the 'unWelsh' regions of Wales. My analysis instead argued that popular unrest precipitated by Thatcherism was *statitized*: dominated and led by the Labour Party acting in the interests of the Union state. Garbed in radical rhetoric trumpeting progressive, democratic change, the process of devolution was ultimately designed to head off nationalist threats in Scotland and Wales and shore up Labour hegemony in these regions and the UK as a whole.

The period following a passive revolution is febrile. Thus when we hear the mantra that 'devolution is a process and not an event', developments subsequent to devolution must be understood within a field of *struggle*. To combat the initial post-devolution rise in support for Plaid Cymru, Labour begun a concerted political strategy of *transformismo*, neutralising Plaid by forming a political coalition with them and co-opting many of their policies- including a more positive view of the Welsh language; adopting a 'soft nationalist' stance and appearing 'more

Welsh', whilst simultaneously disarticulating 'menacing' elements which could not be co-opted, particularly 'language extremists'.

My analysis thus situated Porthcawl within this wider context of an interregnum, rather than within a 'more Welsh' Wales, as posited by 'optimistic' accounts of devolution. The question I posed in chapter 5 was whether or not the tension between restoration and revolution at the national scale had influenced Welshness 'on the ground'. What is the role of place within the interregnum? And, following the logic of the extended case method, what could everyday life, in turn, tell us about the nature of post-devolution Wales?

### *The Welshness of 'British Wales'*

My analysis dug beneath the data and moved beyond the unhelpful 'British Wales' epithet to investigate and illuminate the Welshness of Porthcawl. Based on my empirical evidence, it is necessary firstly to state that locals in Porthcawl *felt Welsh*, and instinctively claimed a Welsh identity. This central finding will hopefully help untangle 'British Wales' from the notion-related to the unhelpful binary fostered in Welsh political discourse between Welshness and Britishness, and perhaps subsequently encouraged by Balsom's terminology- that the region is somehow 'unWelsh'. Welshness was not straightforward for locals, but saying that locals' Welshness was complex should not obfuscate the *central finding of the Welshness of Porthcawl*. Indeed, in many ways, Porthcawl is an 'ordinary' Welsh town, and the majority of locals placed themselves in the nation in 'orthodox' ways, using the 'raw materials' of national identity construction, citing birthplace, residence, a proprietary view of the Welsh language, supporting Wales in rugby and so on. In this sense, Porthcawl's Welshness was 'straightforward', and mirrored findings from 'unproblematic' Welsh regions.

### *Negotiating Welshness*

Assuming the preceding has made the first key point, my second key finding is that once I probed beneath the surface, it became clear that for many locals Welshness *was* problematic, or perhaps more accurately, *complicated*. A good summary of Porthcawl's interesting relationship to Welshness was the assertion made by one respondent, that although Porthcawl

was in many ways an ordinary Welsh town, and that although the locals ‘objectively’ acted in ‘normal’ Welsh ways, the locals *themselves* did not believe this was the case. Mirroring Evans’ (2007) work on NE (British) Wales, Welshness was instinctively understood as *hierarchical*. The two dominant ‘ideal’ types of Welshness which locals gauged their own Welshness against were firstly, a *linguistic* conception of Welshness; and secondly and most prominently, a conception of Welshness associated with *a working class habitus*. Locals generally believed that Porthcawl as a place, and therefore they themselves as *individuals*, were Welsh but ‘not properly Welsh’. My thesis demonstrates the link between the identity of place and the identity of the individual, as locals understood their own place in the nation as related to the nation-ness of their place.

Despite this distinctive local identity and perceived ‘peripherality’ on the hierarchical scale of Welshness however, locals did not therefore reject or ignore Welshness, as Bryant suggests in his analysis of the British Wales region. Instead, their response was to *work hard* to articulate and negotiate a distinct Welsh identity, although as my thesis shows, this process was complex. The negotiation process can, in my view, be roughly divided into two responses. Firstly, locals claimed a Welshness *in spite* of their unWelsh local place: they could *circumnavigate* their perceived peripherality. This usually involved orienting themselves (and Porthcawl as a place) towards either the linguistic or classed conception of Welshness in order to become ‘more Welsh’, for example through expressing a proprietary view of the Welsh language; or by affecting a classed, ‘Welshy’ accent.

Secondly, locals could and would move *away* from these conceptions of ‘authentic’ Welshness, in particular when the ‘negative’ connotations of both the linguistic and classed versions of Welshness arose. These negative connotations made locals ‘uneasy’ about articulating a ‘strong’ Welshness, and instead they would articulate their own, ‘thin’ type of Welshness: a ‘third’ way associated with peripheral places like Porthcawl, which was portrayed as ‘cosmopolitan’ and modern compared to the traditional images of Welshness. One of the most significant findings of my thesis was how hard it was for locals to articulate a Welshness which was not related in any way to the ‘two truths’ of Welshness: there are few ways of being Welsh outside these dominant narratives. So for example, if you have a weak Welsh accent or do not

behave in a particular way, you become 'English'. This inevitably raises questions about contemporary Anglo-Welsh culture and identity.

Haesly (2005:252) has compiled a typology of the identities extant in contemporary Wales, including the category of '*superficial* Welsh'. He writes that for this group, 'all that remains' of their Welshness is a vague pride in the Welsh rugby team. In some ways, the 'thin-ness' of Porthcawl's Welshness could no doubt be perceived as similarly superficial, although this category cannot capture the complexity of the identity negotiation process, and cannot convey the struggle to claim a Welshness. Moreover, 'thin' Welshness suggests a static condition, whereas locals in Porthcawl frequently moved towards 'authentic' Welshness in one context and away from it in others, reflecting the fluidity and temporality of nationhood and the importance of context.

#### *Place, class and Welshness*

Porthcawl's complicated relationship to Welshness was ultimately mediated by a local *sense of place*. Locals' awareness that Porthcawl was distinctive primarily emanated from its class position. My contention is that contemporary Wales is cleaved into distinct regions based around class lines. Undermining Coupland et al's 'One Wales' thesis, these regional class inequalities between Porthcawl and the south Wales valleys (and more immediately local working class towns) were acutely understood and reproduced in everyday life. Demonstrating the utility of *Bourdieu* for understanding place and nationhood, I outlined the *spatiality of distinction* and how locals constructed symbolic regional boundaries between themselves and local working class regional others. These boundaries were understood and reinforced (and indeed to a large extent *performed*) within everyday life via the *embodied* traits of individuals and the extrinsic (i.e. aesthetic) trappings of class. Porthcawl, in other words, undoubtedly had a *distinct local class habitus*, demonstrated through accent, lifestyle symbolism, Toryism and so on. Moreover, this local class habitus was collectively *performed* and cultivated by local people and indeed by local gatekeepers. Through these everyday, local processes of distinction, the abstract idea of 'region' became a tangible '*sense of place*'. In many ways then, rather than moving towards the rest of Wales, British Wales is increasingly moving away from it:

significantly, the process of distinction between places was more pronounced amongst younger locals, reflecting these increasing wealth divides.

Again, one of my central findings was that locals believed that *to be properly Welsh meant to be working class*. Based on my empirical research I can therefore say that, *pace* Coupland et al's 'one Wales' claim, place continues to impact upon how people negotiate their national identity. That being said, it is important to appreciate that place and class do not impact on *Welshness* in and of themselves: Porthcawl and other peripheral places are not *inherently* or innately less national, just as certain classes are not automatically more national. Rather, mirroring Mann (2012) and Edensor (2002), place and class are significant determinants of how people relate to the nation in Wales because of the *discursive construction of Welshness*: the national habitus is man made and the outcome of struggle, which I located within the wider context of hegemony. Over the course of my 'observant participation', as I engaged with younger folk in particular, I was forced to move away from my initial narrow focus on the 'intellectual' level, as it became clear that the national habitus is mediated through *popular culture*. What also shone through was the continued construction in post-devolution popular culture of Welshness as an inherently classed identity. Despite the trumpeting of 'new ways of being Welsh' which accompanied devolution, my fieldwork points to the *non-emergence of new cultural forms* in post-devolution Wales. It therefore mirrors Blandford's (2005:191) analysis that, rather than a profound recalibration of Welshness marked by the emergence of new forms of Welshness, representations of Wales and Welshness within popular culture following devolution remain incredibly *narrow*.

The prominence of certain discourses within Porthcawl demonstrates that critical analysis of the intellectual level in Wales is vital to our understanding of Welsh identity at both the macro and micro level. Future analysis should build on Croll's (2000) analysis of the hegemony of Labourist thought at the intellectual level in Wales, something highlighted by the 'non-crises' of Welsh Labour history, a malady born of *dominance*. Increased focus on how ideas 'pass through the floors' within Wales can only benefit our understanding of national identity.

To negotiate a Welsh identity, locals therefore had to *reconcile* the clash between their own, local, classed habitus- manifest in the local 'posh' accent and 'reserved' behaviours- and the classed habitus of 'proper' Welshness. The 'imagined charisma' of Welshness was linked to many of the positive qualities of the working class habitus: warmth, friendliness, community, humour and so on. Locals placed themselves in the nation by orienting themselves towards these classed dispositions: locals could cite getting '*our*' (classed) humour; they could watch rugby, the classed national popular celebration; they cited familial links to the valleys; they adopted a stronger accent in certain circumstances and so on.

Conversely, however, Welshness was also conflated with the downsides of working classness- loudness, 'roughness', 'common-ness' and so on. This led to a schizoid view of Welshness, as the negative connotations of the classed national habitus instilled *unease* amongst middle class locals about claiming Welshness and a *distancing* from Welshness in certain situations. Welshness, as a class habitus, was often entangled in the local processes of distinction, and in my view, the biggest challenge for locals was balancing their desire for 'respectability' with a Welshness which was colloquially associated with 'roughness'. Shows like *The Valleys* reinforced this link between Welshness and the negative connotations of the working class habitus, and even less crude, more nuanced shows like *Stella* or the iconic *Gavin and Stacey* also reinforced negative, classed stereotypes about stupidity. When the negative aspects of the classed national habitus arose, locals sought refuge in the 'respectability' of their 'thin' or diluted 'type' of Welshness.

Many locals ultimately exhibited a '*chameleon*' position vis a vis this classed conception of Welshness. I believe the ability of many locals to move towards a working class habitus reflected Porthcawl's complexity as a place, which, despite the best efforts of many locals in performing a middle class identity, was not *simply* 'posh' or 'respectable', but rather a mixed social milieu. As a town which people move to- spiralists, retirees, the upwardly mobile working classes- it is a confluence of multiple class fractions and cultures. In the process of *the fashioning and refashioning of the self* (Bourdieu, 1990b), locals negotiated the multiple classed influences which impacted on them within this *mixed* class milieu (e.g., an aspirational working

class family, middle class and working class peers/relatives, the aspirational institutional habitus of the school) and this was evident when they confronted the classed image of Welshness. Consequently, moving towards this classed image of Welshness was easier for some people- in particular those with residual links to Welsh Wales- and harder for others (for example the children of spirallists or those born in England).

The complexity of Porthcawl's mixed class position suggests extremely fruitful areas for future research.

As I noted in chapter 6, one of the weaknesses of my thesis was my failure to properly analyze the relatively pronounced spatial class boundaries *within the town itself*. I was unable to ascertain whether or not more 'objectively' working class locals were influenced by the 'neighbourhood effect' (Savage and Warde, 1993:177)- a key issue when studying place- and whether they might feel more Welsh because of their 'objective' class position, or whether or not they felt the same ambivalence towards Welshness because they had 'bought into' the collective class identity of Porthcawl. This lacuna represents a rich opportunity for future research. Moreover, the prevalence of families and individuals with roots in the valleys (and elsewhere) but who had lived for most of their life in Porthcawl raises fascinating questions about social mobility, cultural capital, and how all this relates to Welshness. Over the course of my fieldwork I encountered those who seemed to be moving away from Welshness as they 'moved up in the world' but also those who retained a strong sense of Welshness because of their roots, the latter reflecting Paasi's claim that the understanding of 'where one belongs'- i.e., our identity- is often based on family and personal history and is not always tied to locality (Paasi, 2009a:28). The issue of social mobility, both between classes and *places*, raises issues about the nature of the *habitus itself*. Is habitus as 'durable' or static as Bourdieu infers, or is it open to change across the lifecourse? Following recent developments in Bourdieusian class analysis (e.g., Reay et al, 2009; Abrahams & Ingram, 2013; Freidman 2013), I believe we should adopt a more fluid understanding of habitus and place which allows for geographic and class mobility and the disorienting impact this may have on people, and indeed how this may impact on national identity. Finally, 'chameleon-like' behavior was more pronounced in young

men in Porthcawl. My time spent within the masculine world of the football team suggests that, as in Scourfield and Drakeford's analysis (1999), class, masculinity and nationhood remain intimately bound together in Wales. Despite the denigration of the 'Welshy' other, being a 'posh' man or boy in Wales is seemingly still highly problematic. This is a vital area of future analysis.

### *Porthcawl and Linguistic Welshness*

The Welsh language appeared sporadically in Porthcawl, mainly through bilingual signage. This reflected the 'thin veneer' of the molecular changes of devolution penetrating the locality. Yet despite bilingual signage and the efforts of local Welsh tutors to establish a Welsh speaking world, the actual *use* of the language within Porthcawl was minimal. Despite the absence of the Welsh language in everyday life in Porthcawl, many residents expressed a positive and proprietary view of the language. In this sense Porthcawl emerges as similar to other Anglophone areas which have been subject to ethnographic analysis. Many elderly locals placed themselves in the nation through familial connections to their Welsh speaking relatives. The language for many was bound up with a collective Welsh history, and the notion that 'it was taken away from *us*' bound locals to Wales and set them against the 'English' other. Because the language emerged as the 'gold standard' of Welshness, it allowed locals as individuals to become 'more Welsh' through their positive view of the language- be it expressing support for Welsh language education, learning Welsh or other ways of 'choosing the nation'. The presence of the Welsh language within Porthcawl was offered as proof of the town's Welshness, how it belonged within the wider nation.

Despite this 'goodwill' towards the language, however, its role in everyday life in Porthcawl and in how locals understood their own Welshness was complex and often contradictory. As well as allowing locals to become 'more Welsh', the language also prompted feelings of insecurity. Many locals would state that they were Welsh 'even though I don't speak Welsh', i.e., they were Welsh *in spite* of lacking this marker of nationhood- their 'type' of Welshness was automatically considered weaker because they did not speak Welsh. Their inability to speak Welsh in other words reinforced their 'thin' or 'weak' Welshness, just as the lack of Welsh in



Porthcawl rendered it less Welsh as a place. Relatedly, older residents were frequently torn between expressing support for the Welsh language with their internalisation of the disarticulating narratives of 'extremism'. In Porthcawl, this 'lived ambivalence' cannot be divorced from the discursive construction of the Welsh language and the historical *othering* of Welsh speakers, something which was continued in the post-devolution process of *transformismo*, whereby the Welsh language was simultaneously rehabilitated (co-opted) and *disarticulated* and 'othered'. This othering of the Welsh speaking population reinforced *regional cultural boundaries* between 'us' and them 'down West'. The negative connotations of the linguistic type of Welshness again allowed locals to seek refuge or solace in their own 'thin' type of Welshness, which they defined as 'cosmopolitan' and implicitly *modern* compared to the linguistic version.

Again, locals' constant focus on the Welsh language when talking about 'Welsh culture' raises huge questions about the state of contemporary Anglo-Welsh culture.

### *Flagging Welshness*

My thesis moved away from 'talk' and attempted to capture the unreflexive ways in which people come to know themselves as national. As part of this focus on the unreflexive, my analysis has shown how the nation-ness of place is not just about the embodied qualities of individuals, but also about the intangible 'feel' of a locality. Different places may feel more or less national through the 'ethno-symbolic geography' of local public spaces, which may be more or less saturated with flags, national monuments and other material manifestations of the nation. Equally, the presence of national 'cultural stuff' or cultural apparatuses within towns (e.g., Welsh language schools, clubs etc) help to nationalize them as places. In terms of 'everyday life', in many ways the *partial, molecular changes* associated with passive revolution were *materially manifest* in Porthcawl, contributing to the Welshness of the town, distilled for example in the deployment of the Welsh flag within Porthcawl. The popularity of the Welsh flag, its ubiquitous presence at 'non-national' events, even in Porthcawl, perhaps reflects (and *reproduces*) the increased sense of Welshness within post-devolution Wales. The visibility of the Welsh language in supermarkets and on road signs, although 'cold' signifiers of the nation,

similarly reflected the penetration of molecular changes into traditionally ambivalent areas. In small, limited ways and in particular arenas, nascent Welsh civil society was observable in everyday life. In Porthcawl Comprehensive, this was manifest through the presence of '*cwrricwlwm cymreig*' and the visibility of Welsh 'cultural stuff' in the school. My investigation of the material ways in which the nation embeds in local places drew attention to the role and agency of *local actors* in 'setting the nation-ness' of a place. The flagways within Porthcawl were not top down edicts but vernacular displays, in particular by local businesses 'trading on the flag'. So whilst the heating of the nation often emanates from the top, the precise *form* and extent of this heating in a particular place is contingent upon local actors. Just as a locals could literally wrap themselves in the Welsh flag and become 'properly Welsh', through the periodic local heating of Welshness and the deployment of material symbols of the nation, Porthcawl as a place was able to tangibly and physically become 'more Welsh' and less peripheral.

Local Welsh language activists in Porthcawl had worked hard to construct Welsh language culture within Porthcawl, yet despite these efforts, the language remained 'other' within the locality. The otherness of the Welsh language within Porthcawl undermines the notion, central to the 'One Wales' idea of post-devolution cultural homogenization, Anglophone areas are becoming more attuned to the Welsh language. Locals seemed happier supporting the language as an abstract concept ('support' being a central marker of nationhood) than dealing with it locally: many would state 'we should all speak Welsh', and then state that they *personally* had no desire to do so. Moreover, the strenuous attempts of the local activists suggested that all the effort to introduce the Welsh language into this Anglophone place was coming from the bottom, not the top. The invisibility of 'Welsh civil society' in Porthcawl points to the need for a critical re-engagement with the concept of civil society and its impact on Welshness- perhaps using Gramsci's interpretation of the concept.

My analysis of the local production of nationhood draws attention to the necessity of studying the municipal and local scale as a producer of the nation and as a *field of power*. The absence of the Welsh language within local businesses; the non-enforcement of bilingualism within the town council and in other civic bodies; the prominence afforded to 'respectable' 'British' high

ceremonies by the local council; the ignorance, whether intentional or not, of Welsh language bodies and clubs within the town; the absence of Welsh language education within the town. All these factors fell within the control of local gatekeepers and local civic bodies. Undoubtedly, now is the time for ethnographic revisits to both YFG and Welsh Wales to explore the nature of Welshness in these regions. These revisits must pay attention to the role of the local and local political cultures (my thesis could not incorporate a detailed analysis of the role of parties within local life) in establishing the 'feel' of place. It would be worth comparing, for example, the ethno-symbolic geography of Porthcawl with the ethno-symbolic geography of a town in YFG; or to study a classic 'Welsh Wales' town and consider whether local Labourist politics influenced the political culture or 'feel' of the town.

#### *Non-Local forces and the national deixis*

Yet critical study of the unreflexive does not stop at flags or bilingual signs, but should instead illuminate the process of *sedimentation*, the ways in which ideology becomes naturalised or commonsensical in everyday life, how the "national 'we' is constructed" (Billig, 1995:70) and normalized/reified. People know themselves as being national, not because they grow up in an area full of flags, but because of their immersion in bureaucratic state apparatuses and engagement with 'top down' cultural forms – the national 'cultural matrix'- which inculcates an instinctive understanding who 'we' are, i.e. the 'homeland deixis'. The homeland deixis is established through a national political apparatus, a national media and so on, and the penetration of these structuring (cultural and political apparatuses) into everyday life is contingent on *political power*. This of course *transcends the local*. Central to my findings is the observation that in Porthcawl there is little Welsh about everyday life. Most crucially in my view, people in Porthcawl occupy a *British cultural world*, where Welshness only arises sporadically, either during the periodic heating of media surrounding the Six Nations, or in the conspicuous classed representations of Wales which occasionally surface within this British cultural world. The immersion in this cultural world structures people into a commonsensical British *national deixis*.

The nascent 'Welsh state' does not penetrate or structure everyday life: the everyday 'popular competencies' which are so central to inculcating a sense of nationhood are not Welsh. There is no 'colonisation of the lifeworld'. My analysis of 'the Welshness of everyday life' therefore contrasts significantly with Thompson's (2007), who in my view confuses the temporary heating of Welshness and the proliferation of visual condensation symbols with profound structural change: in short, his analysis confuses cosmetic, molecular changes with radical ones. In fact, the reliance on 'hot' visual displays of nationalism reflects the lack of other, official routes for expressions of nationhood, and as such are the preserve of minority nations who lack the political power to structure everyday life, to establish the national *deixis* (Billig, 1995: 44-49). As in McCrone's analysis of Scottishness (2005), the ability to nationalize everyday life through the bureaucratic apparatuses of the state is contingent upon *state power*. To restate, it is "*a matter of governance, not of sentiment*" (2005:74). The 'banal' ways in which the nation is unreflexively absorbed within quotidian enactions, from the media we consume to our *popular competencies* are thus intimately related to the power of the state.

My analysis of the micro-level (the occupation of a British cultural world; the lack of Welsh 'popular competencies'; the narrowness of the national habitus; the non-emergence of new cultural forms and the poverty of Anglo-Welsh culture) *directly* demonstrates the *inability* of the Welsh 'state' to 'nationalize' everyday life. The continued over-reliance on intermittent and vernacular national-popular ceremonies as pillars of Welshness, rather than reflecting the strength of the devolution settlement, in fact reveals its weakness.

### *The interregnum and local place*

To re-use a quote, describing *real* hegemonic change, Gramsci writes: "what was previously secondary and subordinate...becomes the nucleus of a new ideological and theoretical complex. The old collective will dissolve into its contradictory elements since the subordinate ones develop socially" (1971:195). Based on my empirical data we can see that Welshness has not 'become primary', for post-devolution Wales is a 'bastard' state, a malformed entity which has emerged from the process of passive revolution. Everyday life in Porthcawl reflects the *messiness* and 'hybridization' typical of interregnums (Tugal, 2009: 244). All of Wales is not

blanketed by a hegemonic Welshness, as the 'One Wales' argument holds. Instead, everyday life contains residues of 'restoration' *and* 'revolution' and ultimately reflects the complicated nature of the devolution settlement. The uneven devolution of limited political powers and the retention of many by the central state means that Welsh society has become 'more Welsh' in some areas but not in others. There is a strange tension between a clearly pronounced Welsh 'dimension'- which is often very visibly *heated* - and the continued absence of a Welsh national deixis. Welshness is confused and contradictory: simultaneously strong and weak: locals were vocal in their support for the Welsh rugby team, but the national (in particular the *political*) 'we' was *British*.

Yet if the interregnum is a pan-Wales phenomenon, as I believe it is, why is British Wales different? Within Porthcawl, *local* forces (i.e. those emanating and governed/contingent upon by the local) are undoubtedly influential and impacted on how Welsh Porthcawl and its inhabitants *felt*. At the same time, the local in itself- growing up or living in Porthcawl - cannot be the sole or even major determinant of national identity. As Savage and Warde argue, "it is doubtful if many specifically local sources of socialisation can be found given the importance of nationally and internationally organised agencies in education and the media" (1993:180). As I outlined in chapter 2- Porthcawl does not remain 'outside' the national community, inoculated from wider narratives/developments. As I made my frequent trips back and forth between Porthcawl and Bangor, for example, I pondered that people in Porthcawl and Bangor watched the same television, consumed the same hegemonic Anglo-American media; locals in all towns in Wales understand the same national habitus codes, all of which emanate from the macro-level, from the national cultural matrix. So what made the two places different?

The issue must therefore be to consider how local political cultures are sustained and how they impact on locals *alongside* national developments and currents in the national and global media (Savage and Warde: 1993:181). In Porthcawl, locals' negotiation of Welshness reveals the 'messy' interaction between local and national forces, the persistent role of class and place, and ultimately the often contradictory currents of the interregnum.

I believe the school system in Porthcawl serves as a microcosm for how the uneven currents of the interregnum- revolution/restoration, change and continuity- play out ‘on the ground’, and also how the *locality* acts as a further complicating factor within the interregnum. The devolution of education represented perhaps the most significant facet of the nascent civil society (see Phillips, 2005), exemplified by the development and enforcement of Cwricwlwm Cymreig (CC) an example of ‘nation building’ which ostensibly could be taken as an example of the far reaching changes of devolution, central to inculcating the *Welsh* ‘we’ or a sense of belonging (Phillips, 1996: 394). Porthcawl Comprehensive received praise for its enforcement of CC (Estyn, 2007), and teachers are enthusiastic about the initiative. The classrooms are covered in Welsh dragons, daffodils and Welsh words; teachers take the registers in Welsh and undertake other basic commands in Welsh (‘come in’, ‘sit down’, etc). Yet like the rest of everyday life in Porthcawl, however, the school day is merely *punctuated* with Welsh ‘cultural stuff’, rather than saturated by it. These cosmetic changes to the school since devolution have not contributed to a change in the national deixis towards ‘we Welsh’. The scepticism of my empirical findings echoes a recent critical review of the impact of CC (Welsh Assembly Government, 2013), which opines that the initiative thus far has been largely superficial, and has *failed* to result in a real increase in the teaching of Welsh history or culture in schools, which ultimately remain wedded to the teaching of English history and the British national deixis. The report argues that whilst Welsh school life had gained a ‘Welsh dimension’ (i.e., molecular changes), the curriculum in no way inculcated a sense of Welshness.

The school also reflects the complicated role of *place* within the interregnum. For example, it was the deeply rooted local Anglophone culture which impacted on how CC was received: students, with the exception of the Welsh speaking minority, are ambivalent about the top down, molecular changes of devolution because they view them as irrelevant to ‘*here*’, to their local place. Thus whilst the interregnum is, in my view, a pan-Wales phenomenon, it is perhaps more *acute* in British Wales, which is *doubly* excluded because of its local norms and culture which are *more* at odds with top down notions of Welshness than other regions of Wales. It is likely that the moderate changes wrought by devolution become *even weaker* when filtered through the local norms of British Wales, and this is why, if British Wales is moving towards the

rest of Wales culturally, this is at a snail's pace. Place and community have 'ontological priority' (Escobar, 2001) in our lives, and so whilst local social norms by no means *supersede* national forces in moulding people's identities, *the national habitus is refracted by the local to produce a particular articulation of what it means to be national*. My thesis therefore does not deviate from the existing literature on the role of place, and mirrors the work laid out in chapter 2.

### *Prospects for change*

Place and class will continue to influence individuals' understanding of national identity so long as the national habitus remains narrow and hierarchical. Post-devolution, British Wales (and, indeed, myriad other experiences) is *still* not reflected in the 'mirror of the nation'. Whilst this perceived peripherality, as I have stated, does not *preclude* Welshness, the internalisation of this hierarchical national narrative at least makes claiming Welshness, or negotiating a 'different' type of Welshness outside of these two dominant images of the nation, more difficult. If nationalism creates an imagined common bond with co-nationals you've never met before, a classed national habitus and a local middle class culture naturally complicates this process. For locals, claiming a Welsh identity vis a vis a linguistic conception of Welshness or a classed conception of Welshness involved attempting to relate to something which was intangible and distant- 'faking it' in many ways. Female students in Porthcawl Comprehensive illustrated the problems with the classed and gendered representation of Wales and Welshness, interjecting in a discussion about rugby and its relationship to Welshness, claiming that they as females were not included in Welshness, that Welshness 'had nothing for them'. Similarly, over the course of my research, the English born, women, and ethnic minorities all also expressed their belief that as much as they wanted to, they could never be 'properly Welsh' because they could not relate to the persistently narrow ideas of Welshness which prevail in post-devolution Wales. Locals in Porthcawl clearly *want* to claim a Welsh identity, but are constrained by their knowledge that they cannot measure up to the two authentic images of Wales. This ultimately helps explain why some places remain less Welsh, and why some people automatically tick 'equally Welsh and British' on census boxes. As long as they have internalized the idea that they are obviously and innately less Welsh, this is probably how they

are going to feel- it becomes internalized and solidified as an 'objective' category which translates into a descriptive category 'not properly Welsh' regardless of how they themselves feel.

In contemporary Wales, as the life experiences of the majority of the population increasingly move away from these narrow images, there is clearly a need for new, accessible, modern referents of Welshness to emerge. Commonly accepted, 'neutral' national referents would allow peripheral groups within Wales to relate to Wales and Welshness. As Haesly (2005) argues, Welshness is so *contested* at the intellectual level (i.e. the continued othering of rival types of Welshness) that there are seemingly few cultural reference points which can be shared by the *whole* of Wales. He claims that "Wales stretches the imagination process implied in the notion of an imagined community almost to the point of breaking" (2005:256). The reason rugby is so important to many locals in claiming a Welsh identity is because it is seemingly the only marker available to people in Porthcawl which does not also remind them that they aren't 'properly national'; the only marker which doesn't require them to try to 'fake it' by moving towards a classed or linguistic Welshness that has little in common with their everyday lives.

The absence of any civic Welshness 'on the ground' in Porthcawl reinforces a serious issue about the disengagement of the public from the political process in Wales. Yet as with many things in Wales, Graham (2013) notes that political leaders are keen to divorce the issues of Welsh culture and media from power, or more specifically their *powerlessness*. Yet all this- the continued narrowness of the national habitus; the non-'colonization of the lifeworld' by the Welsh 'state- is precisely contingent upon *power* and the weakness of the devolution settlement: Welshness cannot be 'invigorated' and new cultural forms cannot develop because of the non-control of the (cultural) levers of power. Barlow (2005) writes that on the one hand the Assembly has, *in public at least*, set itself the task of *reinvigorating Welshness* and encouraging people to participate in the political process. On the other, control of the media (itself a complicated *mélange* of institutions and apparatuses) has not been devolved (or perhaps more specifically, there has been no devolution of broadcasting *policy* or regulation- Blandford & Jones, 2013) and the overwhelming majority of the media consumed in Wales is



not controlled or produced in Wales, casting serious doubts on the media's ability to represent and reflect Welsh society. This lack of 'communicative space' undermines the notion of a vibrant 'Welsh public discourse', and has serious implications for national identity and cultural development (2005:208-9.see also Williams, 2000; Thomas et al, 2004). Butler (2011) has similarly argued that an 'information deficit' stemming from a lack of media coverage has led to public disengagement with devolution. The Labour politician Leighton Andrews (2012) acknowledges that *no Welsh public sphere has emerged* in post-devolution Wales, and that this is based largely on the lack of a national media and the weakness of post-devolution political society. Moreover, the BBC themselves have recently acknowledged not only the 'information deficit' but also the paucity of Anglo-Welsh *cultural representations* within Wales (Graham, 2014, Waters 2014b). Of course, it is impossible for a 'civic' Welshness based on 'shared values' to emerge if citizens know nothing about devolution.

So where is Wales going, and what is the likelihood of change? Gramsci's work on hegemonic *crises* and the political struggle within to these periods surely offers the best analytical tool for understanding future developments in Wales, post-passive revolution. He argues that the real problem or question posed by the theory of passive revolution "is to see whether in the dialectic of revolution/restoration it is revolution or restoration which predominates; for it is certain that in the movement of history there is never any turning back, and that restorations *in toto* do not exist" (Gramsci: 1971: 219-20). The idea of an interregnum or a 'mutilated dialectic' (Morton, 2012b) is a potential stumbling block for Marxists, since it potentially represents history grinding to a halt or indeed maybe even going backwards (Callinicos, 2010:503). This of course potentially undermines the logic of historical materialism. Gramsci writes that the 'unstable equilibrium' (1971: 222) may last a long time:

"...a crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity) and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them" (1971:178).

This notion of '*curing*' is central to the question at hand. Here Gramsci is saying that within the conditions of passive revolution, incumbent hegemonic forces are continually battling to stem the tide of history and to overcome and neutralise the crises which prompted the passive revolution in the first instance (through the process of transformismo, for example). He continues "will the interregnum...necessarily be resolved in favour of a restoration of the old?" (1971:276) Callinicos (2010) argues that the interregnum *cannot* be indefinite. Passive revolution is a temporary measure, and the organic crisis (which drove passive revolution) is always present within this period of history. He implies that it is inevitable that at some point, change 'bursts through', and blows apart the process of restoration. This brings us back to the issue of *momentum*, and devolution as an inexorable 'forward march of Welshness'. Such predictions seem to infer that 'progress' is inevitable. Of course, following a referendum in 2011 the Welsh Assembly gained law making powers for certain devolved areas. This fulfilled the more cautious predictions made by Thomas (2005) and Wyn Jones (2005) that despite the molecular changes of the original devolution settlement, the Assembly would gradually and inexorably begin to gain more powers.

Gramsci is more pessimistic in his assessment of the interregnum, as he concludes that the complete 'restoration of the old' can be ruled out, "*yet not in an absolute sense*" (1971:276). This pessimism is echoed by Burawoy (2004:19), who claims that it is time to abandon 'any Hegelian philosophy of history', and instead proposes a Marxism 'with no guarantees'. Whilst certain developments may create fertile conditions for change, there is no given destiny- no inexorable march forward- since *political struggle* may permanently retard these developments. In Wales, although optimists may point to the 2011 referendum as evidence of 'moving forward'; the devolution of more significant political powers seems a long way off, and the moving of certain powers to Wales should not be uncritically viewed as evidence of a forward trajectory. As I have been writing this thesis, the 'lockstep' proviso has recently been introduced to debates about fiscal devolution, essentially *neutralising* this as a possibility for the near future (Evans, 2014). Support for independence has ebbed, and Britishness remains latent (see Bradbury & Andrews, 2010; Waters, 2014b). Thus whilst momentum has built in Scotland, Wales remains in a period of stasis, and any momentum towards greater change

seems to have ground to a halt. The incremental devolution of certain powers must therefore be seen as more 'virtual transformation' within an unchanged system.

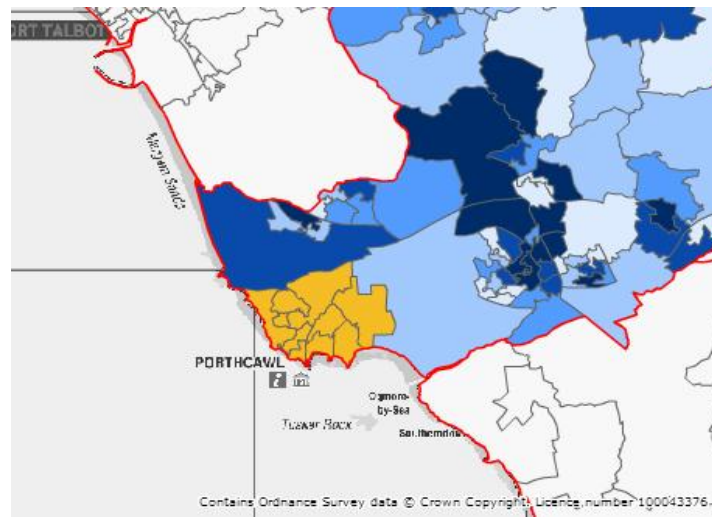
Adam Evans (2014) argues that this perpetual condition of in-between-ness is very much viewed as an acceptable 'end point' by Labour, who are content to reject any further powers which would lead to more political responsibility or accountability. Indeed, the absence of demands from below, the impotence of Plaid Cymru and the low turnouts in Assembly elections means there is essentially no *incentive* for further change. The non-emergence of new cultural forms and the continued narrowness of the national narrative (and Anglo-Welsh culture) must then be seen as part of the process of 'curing' the state, an attempt to perpetuate the condition of in-between-ness.

Gramsci suggests that mass disengagement and cynicism- palpable in Wales- is symptomatic of interregnums: "the death of the old ideologies takes the form of skepticism with regard to all theories" (1971:276). Rather than being a cause for despair, however, Gramsci argues this mass alienation represents favourable conditions for agitation and change. Wales, like the rest of the world, is still of course in the grip of a severe economic crisis. Bauman (2014) suggests that the *whole of Europe* is caught in the midst of an interregnum. Governmental responses of austerity have prompted the emergence of revolutionary *and* reactionary currents across Europe, (e.g. in Spain and Greece) as Gramsci puts it, within the interregnum "a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" (1971:276). In my view, it may well be that the catalyst for change in Wales may come from *outside*, specifically Scotland (Waters, 2014c)

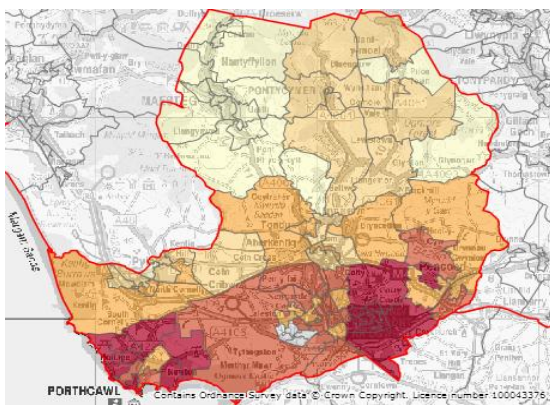
Porthcawl, too, may of course undergo changes. Local political and class cultures can rapidly *change*, perhaps within a generation (Savage and Warde, 1993:180). It is therefore foolish to reify local cultures as static, or to discount the possibility of change in the 'feel' of a place. Although I noted Porthcawl's simultaneous proletarianization and embourgeoisement, I failed to explore whether or not these changes were impacting on the 'character' and indeed the Welshness of the town. Through *ethnographic revisits* to Porthcawl and indeed to other areas of British Wales we can analyse changes and continually deepen our understanding of place,

class and of developments at the national scale. This study therefore hopefully marks the beginning of a long engagement with British Wales as a place.

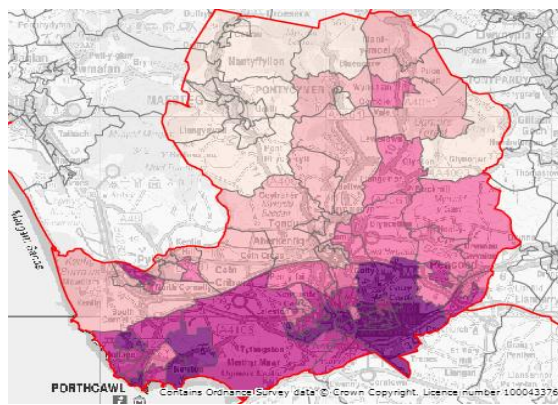
## Appendix 1. Maps illustrating the divided nature of Bridgend Borough



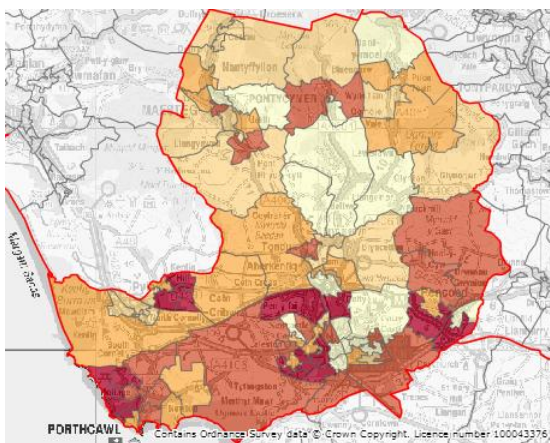
1.1 Porthcawl's wards within Bridgend county



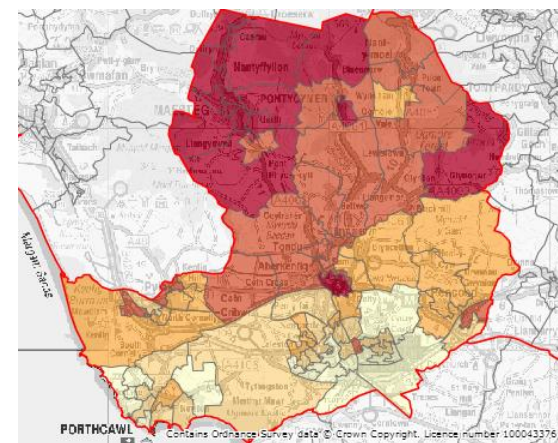
1.2: % of residents born in England



1.3: % of residents with 'No Welsh identity'

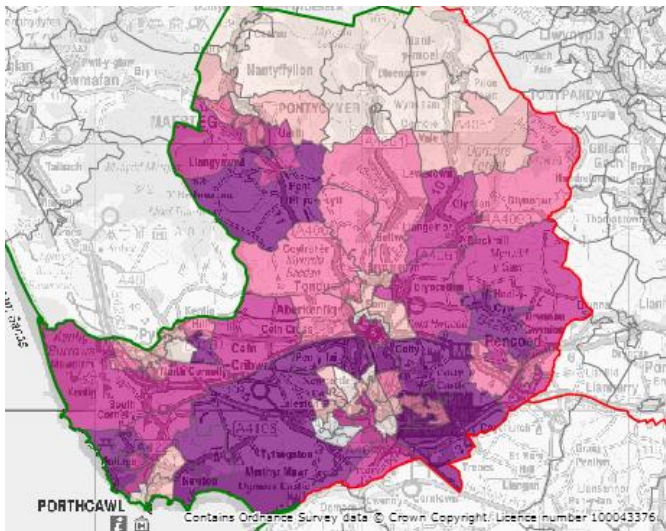


1.4 % Welsh and British identity

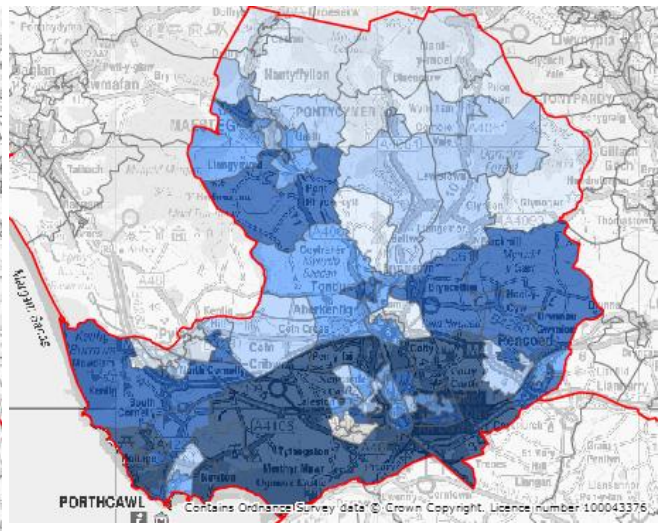


1.5 % 'Welsh only' identifiers

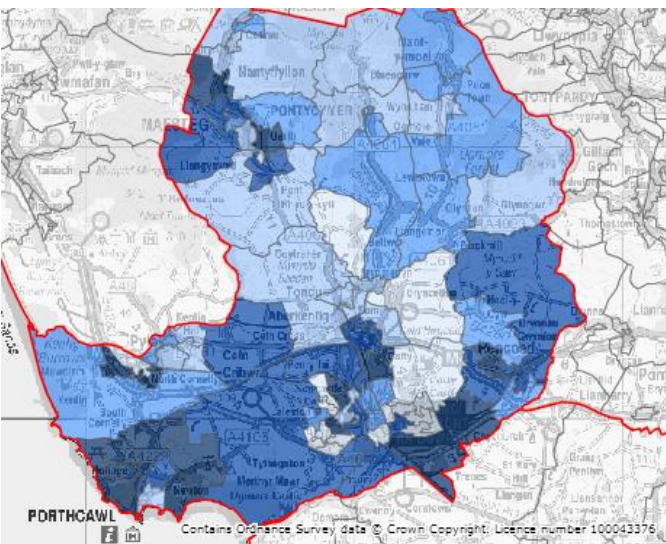




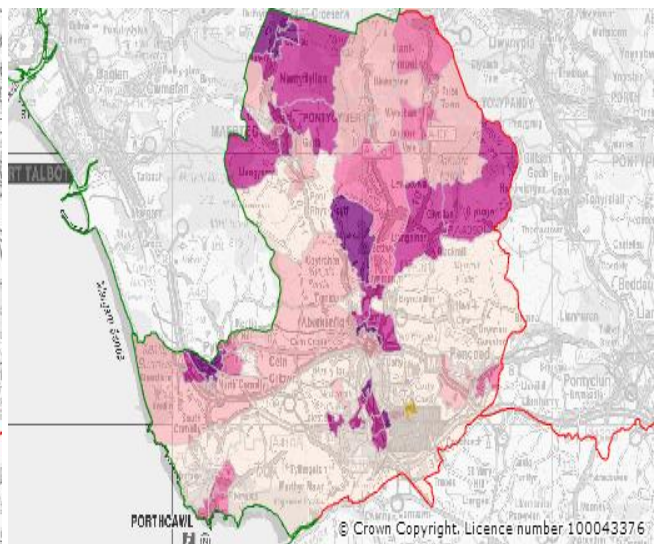
1.6 % detached housing



1.7 % level 4 or above qualifications



1.8 % retired population



1.9 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation  
(overall rankings, 2011)

Appendix 1. The above maps illustrate the divided nature of Bridgend county. Neatly bisected by the M4 motorway, the regions to the south of the motorway are generally far more affluent, with the regions to the North of the county (including Porthcawl's nearest neighbours, Pyle and Cornelly) display relatively high levels of deprivation. As the above maps show, Porthcawl is clearly a relatively affluent area within the borough, although the Eastern ward displays relatively high levels of deprivation. When it comes to 'indicators of Welshness', the M4 again divides the county. This time, the Northern regions are clearly the 'most Welsh', whilst the affluent areas to the south of the M4 emerge as the 'least Welsh'.

## Appendix 2: Selection from interview transcript outlining interview techniques

The following excerpt is a small selection of cuttings from one of my interview transcriptions, which I think captures a number of questioning strategies. The time of the questions is included here so the reader may get a feel of the timeline of the interview. My own brief analysis is included under certain sections of transcribed text in *italic*.

DE                So How long have you lived in Porthcawl?  
TC                00:00:00.000 - 00:00:03.576

Haydn: I've lived in Porthcawl since 1966...I moved to Porthcawl out of choice because I first came to Porthcawl on holiday with my parents in 1947, which was the year the Santampa in fact...it sunk off Sker [well known local maritime disaster] I then was educated in the grammar school in Merthyr and ended up as an apprentice in the petrochemical industry...I continued working in the chemical industry, well, all my life actually, but let's keep it in some sort of chronological order, erm...I got married in 1964 and at that time was working in Llanwern over in Caerleon, my wife was from Port Talbot but I decided that I, er, we would only move back as far as Porthcawl if we moved back West, and therefore I decided, in 1966, my wife (who was a school teacher) and I moved West and took up residence in a newly built house in Rest Bay road, it's Fulmar Road it is now, and, I stayed in Porthcawl ever since, I've had three children, all born in Porthcawl and aahh, I think it's a fantastic place to live, always has been, and I could talk to you all day about the whole sort of experience of a young person growing up and maturing in Porthcawl, the sort of activities we got involved in- as a family, as individuals- the community experience.  
TC 00:00:06 - 00:02:361

DE: Ok so you said you moved down here with a young family, did you say you're originally from Merthyr?  
TC: 00:02:161 - 00:02:201

Haydn: Well I didn't move down here with a young family..we moved... my first child was born in 1968, yes...68! And my other children came along in 1970 and 1976. I'm originally from a little mining village called Treharris, which is at the bottom of Merthyr County borough, and my father...was a collier, my father in fact also was a member of the territorial army and therefore was called up in 1939 and sailed to India in November 1939 and didn't come back to the UK until 1945. I was born in

1940, so I was 5 and a half before he saw me, and that must have been one hell of an experience! [laughter]

TC 00:02:20 - 00:03:37

DE: [laughing] ok, so what was the main reason you moved to Porthcawl, I know you said there were work factors...

TC: 00:03:305 - 00:03:040

Haydn: No no, the main reason I moved to Porthcawl was because of the incredible memories I had of Porthcawl from my early years. As I said I had my first holiday to Porthcawl in 1947, in what was called Herbert's field down in Newton, and then I continued to holiday in Porthcawl right through, with my parents and when I was a teenager when I was 18, with friends, so there was this sort of inherent affection for Porthcawl.

TC 00:03:43.757 - 00:04:32.388

DE: Ok so I know that this is a vague question, but what would you say your favourite things are about Porthcawl, if you had to name them?

TC: 00:04:032 - 00:04:042

Haydn: Well, the...my favourite thing about Porthcawl is the people that live here, the community, because when I moved to Porthcawl I played rugby for the town, and that was a sort of, and incredible situation in those days, I'm talking about 1966- we had an incredible team at the time, and like religion, it's nice to go somewhere where you immediately become part of a community, and joining the rugby club meant that I was immediately part of that community and I enjoyed playing for Porthcawl for 12 and a half years

TC 00:04:49.033 - 00:05:42.806

DE: What position were you?

TC: 05:42:806 - 05:45:036

Haydn: Hooker, you?!

TC: 05:45:036- 05:45:892

DE: Scrum half [laughs]

TC: 05:45:892-

*The above represents a typical introduction to my interviews. After briefly making smalltalk with the respondent in his house (I was given the tour, introduced to his carer), I begun the interview*



*with biographical questions which always allowed the respondents to talk about themselves and their own connection to Porthcawl. Asking people why they moved to Porthcawl generally served to open up the conversation since it naturally necessitated ruminations on career, family and so on. Often, the autobiographical narrative would be very lengthy and detailed, particularly in my older respondents, but these normally threw up interesting vignettes or recollections about Porthcawl. My interviews were characterized by informality, which is evident towards the end of the selection, when the respondent has no problem engaging me personally, asking my position in rugby and so on. Sensitivity on behalf of the interviewer to the habitus and background of the respondent is absolutely crucial to eliciting frank and informative responses. Sweetman (2009:14) points out that Bourdieu advocated the 'matching of respondents with interviewers' in his fieldwork, and would assign respondents who were in tune to particular groups of people. Similarly Burawoy (2009:237) warns of the 'ethnographer out of place' and how much it helps the researcher to share the habitus and experiences of their subject. As I pointed out in my thesis, my experience as a local undoubtedly helped me elicit informative and detailed responses. Moreover, my own cleft habitus (a foot in both the working class and 'posh' camps) allowed me to effectively adapt to all my situations and respondents.*

Haydn            Porthcawl in the 70s expanded beyond recognition, as I say when we moved here, er, you came into the rest bay and nottage areas down West End Avenue, and there was no road through down Fulmar road, it was a dead end. So Porthcawl expanded tremendously, and because of that there were a lot of younger people from all over the UK, all over the world in some cases moving into Porthcawl...so there was a really young, vibrant, active town and community. So the old Porthcawl personality was still there, but you had this influx of people, the town must've doubled in size

TC                00:08:28.561 - 00:08:41.658

DE            What do you mean by 'old Porthcawl personality?'

TC                00:08:41.658 - 00:08:44.558

Haydn            The old Porthcawl personality were the business fraternity, the entrepreneurs, the old Porthcawl personality where there was quite an active business community, quite an active professional community, and quite an active rural group as well, the old casual work ethic you know, because not

everybody was middle class or wealthy, there was another group...and that's why there was always this competition between East and West Porthcawl, because when I moved there, I don't think I paid in any of the derbies, and I have to say for the record that I was a first team hooker, but I never played in the, there used to be East v West derbies, on a boxing day at one stage East Porthcawl used to play West Porthcawl in a rugby derby....you're going to ruin my political career [laughs]...but there was definitely a cultural difference between East and West Porthcawl, and a number of boys I played rugby with would tell you this!

TC 00:09:48.793 - 00:10:50.624

DE What do you mean by 'cultural difference between East and West?

TC 00:10:50.624 - 00:10:53.215

Haydn Between the pseudo professional class and the pseudo working class!

TC 00:10:53.215 - 00:11:10.595

DE Haha! Ok, would you say Porthcawl is in any way different from the surrounding areas?

TC 00:16:38.335 - 00:17:02.685

Haydn Oh yeah, I mean certainly in my 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s, let's say my 50s, certainly that was a predominant attitude, that Porthcawl was a bit snobbish, that yes it was all well of people, I won't say wealthy but well off people and what have you. It's difficult to analyse it now, you know...in the era we're in now and the sophistication of different generations, but I think there's a rivalry though, have you ever played Kenfig Hill? My second game for Porthcawl was against Kenfig Hill in a midweek match, and I'd only just moved to the area, and I'd been playing rugby all my life but that was quite an experience I can tell you with the front row, so yes I think slightly there's still this...Donna for example (carer) is from Maesteg, and there's still this little bit of an attitude yes

TC 00:17:02.685 - 00:18:53.617

DE Would you say Porthcawl is a particularly Welsh place?

TC 00:29:32.988 - 00:29:43.933

Haydn Funny you should touch on that point...I'm going to give you two answers, and if you want good information these things are important. I lived in Caerleon as a newly married man and I used to be flabbergasted when I would go to the local shop and

people would talk about going to South Wales for holidays! I mean, I was flabbergasted, so I'm setting the scene for you: we're in Walles and they're talking about going to South Wales for holidays! Now if you come to Porthcawl, because of the influx there's been over the years from outside Wales, erm, and because of, and I'm going to say it, and because of the inbred attitude in some of the old Porthcawlians that they were middle class, upper class, that their politics reflected that as well, and there was this slight inference, you know, that... 'why do we worry about being Welsh?', but having said that I feel Porthcawl is a Welsh town! Am I making sense? so what I'm saying is that, erm, if you want to talk about the Welsh language and that sort of thing I've got a lot of friends who are totally committed to the Welsh language, and in Porthcawl there's probably about 20% of the population probably speak Welsh, and I voted for the Welsh assembly even when it failed back in 79, but as I say sometimes I just get that slight feeling from some, some people who've lived in Porthcawl for years as well!- that there's a little bit of resentment against some of the imposition then of the Welsh heritage

TC 00:29:43.933 - 00:32:25.736

*The above section represents a typical line of questioning pursued during my interviews. Firstly, asking whether Porthcawl was 'different', whilst ostensibly leading, doesn't specify why I might think that Porthcawl is different: it contains no mention of class or Welshness, and these issues never preceded discussions of place so as to not prejudice the answer. Secondly, asking about the Welshness of Porthcawl as a place, as I discuss in chapter 6, was far better for eliciting reflective answers about Wales and Welshness than asking questions about the respondent's personal identity.*

DE Can you develop on this notion of an 'old Porthcawl' 'resentment' of Wales and Welshness?

TC 00:38:05.798 - 00:38:14.809

Haydn Um, I wouldn't say it's a resentment as such, I'd say it's a....I need the right word here...funny enough only last night something happened, we had a meeting last night which highlighted it! Two people of English extraction, of English extraction, talked about what a waste of money bilingual information was, what a waste of money, what a waste of money having interpreters, blah blah, and so as a bit of devilment I said 'Cameron is talking about people having to learn English to come into Britain, if you're not careful we'll make sure you'll

have to learn Welsh to come into Wales', so what I'm saying is there's an inherent sort of, not a dislike....they're just disdainful of it!

TC 00:38:14.809 - 00:39:39.610

DE You said maybe 20% of people in Porthcawl speak Welsh, it's not very visible though is it?

TC 00:39:39.610 - 00:39:45.728

Haydn No, no but it's there! I'm not a Welsh speaker you see, I didn't even take Welsh in school: German I took! But again, when I was mayor I met so many different groups, so many different people, and you've only got to go to some of the chapels, and I would reckon that if we're not at the average for population of Welsh speakers then we'd only be slightly below it, but it's probably not visible. It wasn't visible in my working life, Welsh wasn't, it wasn't visible in my social life, but in my life as mayor it was quite visible!

TC 00:39:45.728 - 00:40:43.353

DE What if someone said, you have to speak Welsh to be properly Welsh?

TC 00:40:43.353 - 00:40:58.354

Haydn I'd say that's disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful, and then people have also thrown at me because 'oh why haven't you learnt Welsh', but I think I've been so privileged to grow up in Wales and with people from....and like minded people from wherever they're from, and I'm not being political or patronising by saying that, I mean...look, I supported the Welsh language! I was in favour of the Welsh language act! I'm a little apprehensive if we go too many stops further at this moment in time, 'cos I don't want to dent our economic, being attractive to outside groups and what have you

TC 00:40:58.354 - 00:41:59.544

*Here I 'throw in' a direct, provocative question in the midst of a very informal discussion. Hence I would change my line of questioning depending on the circumstance.*

DE Has Welsh become a useful language in modern Wales?

TC 00:41:59.544 - 00:42:05.774

Haydn well that's the difference! In all my life, being a non Welsh speaker has not affected my family life, my domestic life or my career. I wouldn't say that's true now, particularly

if you want to be involved in certain sectors. We used to call it the cracach, you know, and so what I'm saying is there are certain careers now where it's essential, many many careers where it's absolutely essential for, but that's my background, I was a professional engineer in the chemical industry, which was international, so....but what used to amaze some of my colleagues was....I was at Baglan Bay, Llandarcy refinery, do you remember that? Well it was just the other side of the river, it had been there since 1938..if I phoned up Llandarcy to talk to one of the engineers or something, the telephone people would repsond in Welsh! Now in Baglan there were a lot of Welsh people there obviously, and lots of people from all over- no one spoke Welsh in Baglan, but you go over the river to Llandarcy and well! So that's what I'm saying..I'm so pleased to see the Welsh language alive and kicking, I would hate it to become a situation where people with the right skills and talent were barred because they couldn't speak Welsh

TC 00:42:05.774 - 00:44:15.446

DE If society has got more Welsh, have you noticed Porthcawl get more Welsh also?

TC 00:44:15.446 - 00:44:39.181

Haydn No, I think that obviously bilingual signs, I think you've always heard some Welsh spoken by visitors in Porthcawl....how far do you want me to go? My daughter now, that's the beauty of it is that most of our young people in fact have got at least a basic understanding of Welsh and those who want to go further with it, even if it's not their academic background, do so, so in a job scenario where it's of benefit....but certainly that wasn't the case in my generation

TC 00:44:39.181 - 00:45:45.682

*Once more, by asking about place, respondents open up more and provide more information than when they were asked direct questions about themselves as individuals*

DE So how would you describe your own national identity?

TC 00:45:45.682 - 00:45:52.633

Haydn Welsh, oh yeah, yeah! And I mean, if I'm away somewhere....my identity's Welsh!

DE: Ok, so what does being Welsh mean to you? How would you go about defining it if you had to?

TC 00:45:52.633 - 00:46:17.782

Haydn well...it's about family, it's about friends, it's about community, it's about hiraeth, it's about supporting your rugby team, enjoying max boyce, that's what being Welsh means to me, and um, but I don't like nationalism see, I really don't. I don't like any sort of nationalism whether it's English, British or....so that's the way I approach it is that I would hate it if we ever got into a situation or if anyone ever said to me, bloody English shouldn't be here, or anybody, so that's my thoughts on that

TC 00:46:17.782 - 00:47:37.497

*Notice that I have not asked the gentleman a direct question about his own national identity until 45 minutes into the interview. This was a corollary of the informal approach- I had to let respondents relax and unwind before 'diving in'. This approach meant that interviews were often long (this one in particular was around an hour and 15 minutes) and produced voluminous data*

DE Would you say rugby is an important part of Welshness?

TC 00:47:37.497 - 00:47:47.978

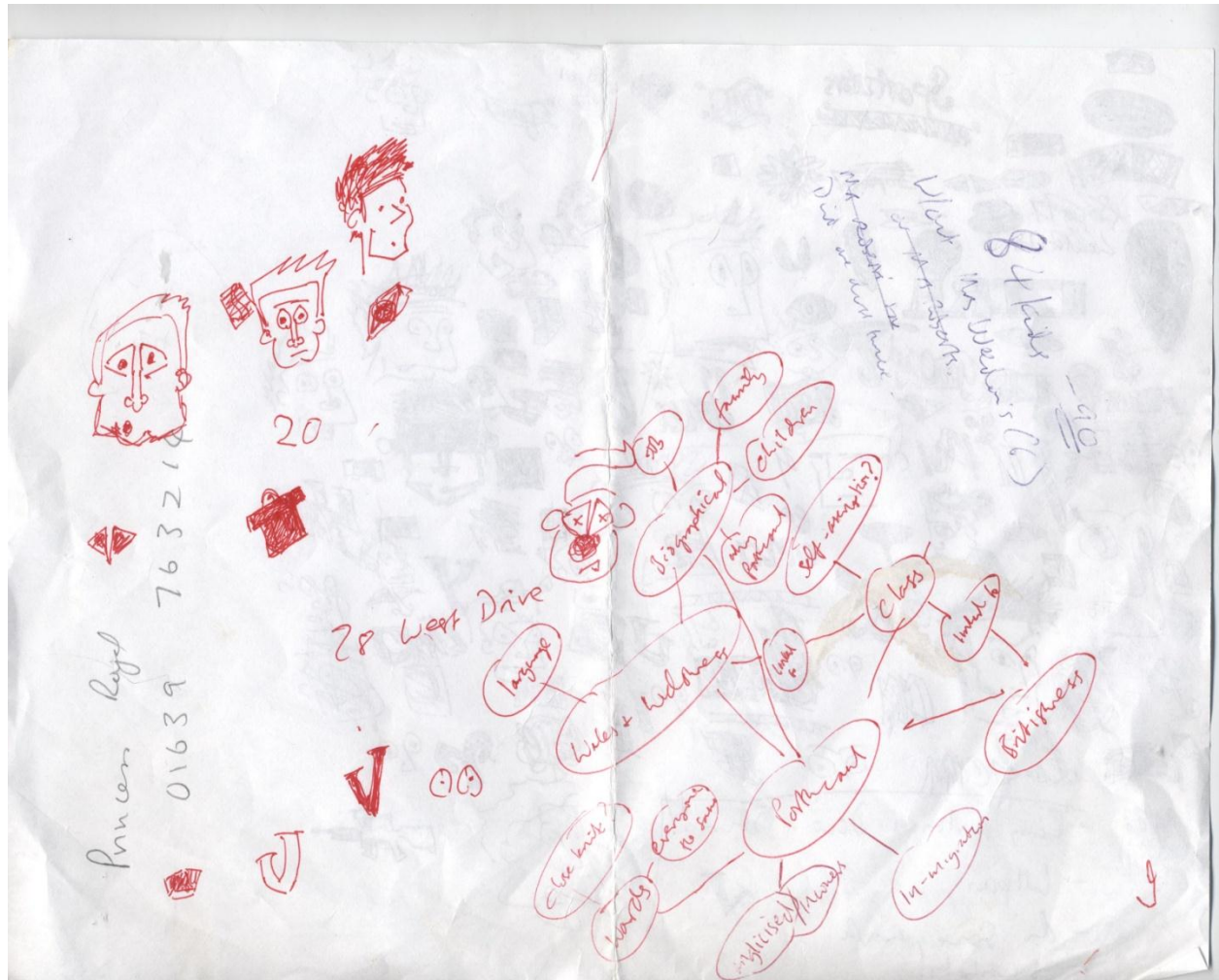
Haydn Um, if you look at my tapes (laughs)...I was there when Llanelli beat the all blacks, and the barbarians....the phill bennett break wasn't it...but so, yes, I think rugby's an important part of the Welsh identity to a certain extent, but there are many other things now, Bryn Terfel! My children, I mean their lifetime activity outside school was lifeguards. Gareth, my youngest, was captain of rest bay lifeguards! I mean Gareth, Hywel and Ceri all worked as paid lifeguards all through university, so I'm not just....well I am, I'm tied to one sport, but again I was in charge of fundraising for the lifeguard station...I think choir's a part of Welsh life, you know, I think that....there could be a list of things I would say. The funny thing is that I get quite emotional about things, the miner's strike for example. The miner's strike was a silly, stupid thing for men to get involved in, but my heart warms to these guys when I see they stayed out of work for 14 months...you've got to remember I'm from a mining community, I don't approve of Arthur Scargill or what have you, but that solidarity, you know, they were living off food parcels then, so

that sort of thing does stir my breast, although I'm glad I  
never worked underground

TC 00:47:47.978 - 00:50:23.950

*This was a question based on my observation of the amount of Welsh rugby memorabilia in the gentleman's house. I developed this question based on my immediate surroundings. In other houses, when councillors had plates of Royal Weddings and so on, I would ask them about the plates. These personal effects facilitated reflective interesting comments and analysis by the respondents.*

### Appendix 3: Sample field notes



### 3.1 Impromptu interview mind map



Dynamic Themes roughly 10-12 kw

Welshness — <sup>- Cellanones?</sup> language? what does being wels  
                    welsh Assembly? men to gov?  
Britishness — ? sport? newspapers + TV?  
                        <sup>"independence - Scotland?"</sup>

Class — Is porthcawl a 'very welsh place?'  
              "             "             poor place?

IS pathway different from conell's, or  
K. G. Hill? No

## family history

Parents job

last question - how do

But where?

$M \mid F?$

leafy hill \*

If so, how?

length of time where do you live in Portsmouth?

last question - how do

~~[Illegible scribbled-out text]~~

⑩ What does being welcome mean to you?

② Please write down 5 things you associate with  
Wales



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Cookies

## Discussion

Q<sup>2</sup>, what does being Welsh mean to you?

\* Language - taught in school?

- Assembly?

- Rugby? Football? Celebrities? music?

\* Brightness?

\* Chess - Is Portsmouth a very warm place?

- ~~that~~ Personnel depart from Connelly etc 7 July >

- 'possibility'? 'the estate'?

- go round the table

**Appendix 3.** In many ways the ‘maddening frustration’ of ethnographic fieldwork (Palmer, 2001:309) was lessened because of my position as an insider. Yet the familiarity and easy access of the insider also threw up unexpected obstacles, as I outlined in chapter 6. In my fieldwork in the school, for example, I was routinely offered opportunities to interview new classes and individuals ‘on the spot’, leaving me unprepared. In figure 3.1, above, the head of the English department had told me he was free to be interviewed, but that it would ‘have to be now’. Perhaps naively, I had only packed and set up for a focus group with younger students, and had not brought my (one on one) interview prompt sheet with me. The above is the prompt sheet I quickly drew up on a piece of scrap paper which happened to be in my bag. It served its purpose well: each topic/issue is clearly drawn in a spider diagram box, the lines show how each topic can be segued into the next. The doodles, of course, were done years before. Figure 3.2 shows my notes scribbled in between interviews with classes. Particularly with school children, one has to be flexible with one’s interview technique, be alert to what questions work, which do not, and so on. The above demonstrates the continuous process of improvement and learning I underwent as a researcher, always refining my interview strategies and so on. Figure 3.2 shows once more the themes I was working with (Welshness, Britishness, class) and my thoughts on how to tease out answers regarding these themes.

## Appendix 4: Samples of surveys used to 'warm up' students prior to discussion

### 4.1

15, female. (12)

Exit this survey

**Porthcawl Comprehensive School Fieldwork**

**1. Where were you born?**  
Bridgend.

**2. How long have you lived in Porthcawl?**

Less than 5 years  
Between 5 and 10 years  
Between 10 and 15 years  
More than 15 years  
All my life

If you moved to Porthcawl from somewhere else, please say where

**3. Where in Porthcawl do you live?**

Rest Bay  
Nottage  
West Central  
East Central  
Newton  
Other/Outside Porthcawl (Please specify)

**4. Please state your parent or guardian's occupation/job and where they are from originally**

	Job	Birthplace/where from
Mother		port talbot
<del>Stepmother</del>		
Father	I.T auditor	port talbot
<del>Stepfather</del>		

Next

Powered by **SurveyMonkey**  
Create your own free online survey now!



## Porthcawl Comprehensive School Fieldwork

Exit this survey

## 5. Please specify your Welsh language ability

	Yes	No	A little
Can you understand spoken Welsh?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can you speak Welsh?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can you read Welsh?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can you write Welsh?			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## 6. Please tick the option that best describes your national identity

- Welsh not British
- More Welsh than British
- Equally Welsh and British
- ☒ More British than Welsh
- British not Welsh
- English
- Other (please specify)

Please briefly explain your answer

I am from Wales, but can't speak fluent Welsh so I am more British.

## 7. In order, please write down the top 5 things you personally associate with Wales and Welsh identity

1.	Rugby
2.	daffodils.
3.	leeks.
4.	Welsh cakes
5.	sheep.

Prev Next

## Porthcawl Comprehensive School Fieldwork

Exit this survey

## 5. Please specify your Welsh language ability

	Yes	No	A little
Can you understand spoken Welsh?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Can you speak Welsh?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Can you read Welsh?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Can you write Welsh?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

## 6. Please tick the option that best describes your national identity

☐ Welsh not British☐ More Welsh than British☐ Equally Welsh and British☐ More British than Welsh☒ British not Welsh☐ English☐ Other (please specify)

Please briefly explain your answer

Because I am ashamed of my country and its government. Its pathetic, and I don't want to be associated with Wales.

## 7. In order, please write down the top 5 things you personally associate with Wales and Welsh identity

1.	Welsh cakes
2.	My house
3.	Pathetic
4.	Sheep.
5.	Rugby

Prev

Next

**Appendix 4.** Whilst these surveys were undoubtedly very basic and crude, they were nonetheless very helpful in the school setting. As the two surveys above demonstrate, they often yielded very interesting information. 4.2 claims that her inability to speak fluent Welsh automatically makes her 'more British than Welsh', even though she is born in Wales and both her parents are Welsh (4.1). The student in 4.3 demonstrates great hostility towards Wales and Welshness, claiming she is 'ashamed of her country and its government' and that Wales is 'pathetic'. Interestingly, she writes 'my house' in section 7 on the survey, once more demonstrating the connection between ideas of 'home' (i.e., the local) and the nation. In all these surveys, the same referents and markers of Welshness cropped up over and over: rugby, sheep, daffodils, dragons and welsh cakes. In many ways these condensation symbols (significantly, these referents were never cultural things (literature, film, tv etc) historical figures etc, but simply 'images') reflect the children's socialization in classrooms adorned with these images.



## Appendix 5: Sample 'pub quiz' technique handed out to students

### 5.1

*The einsteins*

David Carleton ✓ Winston Churchill

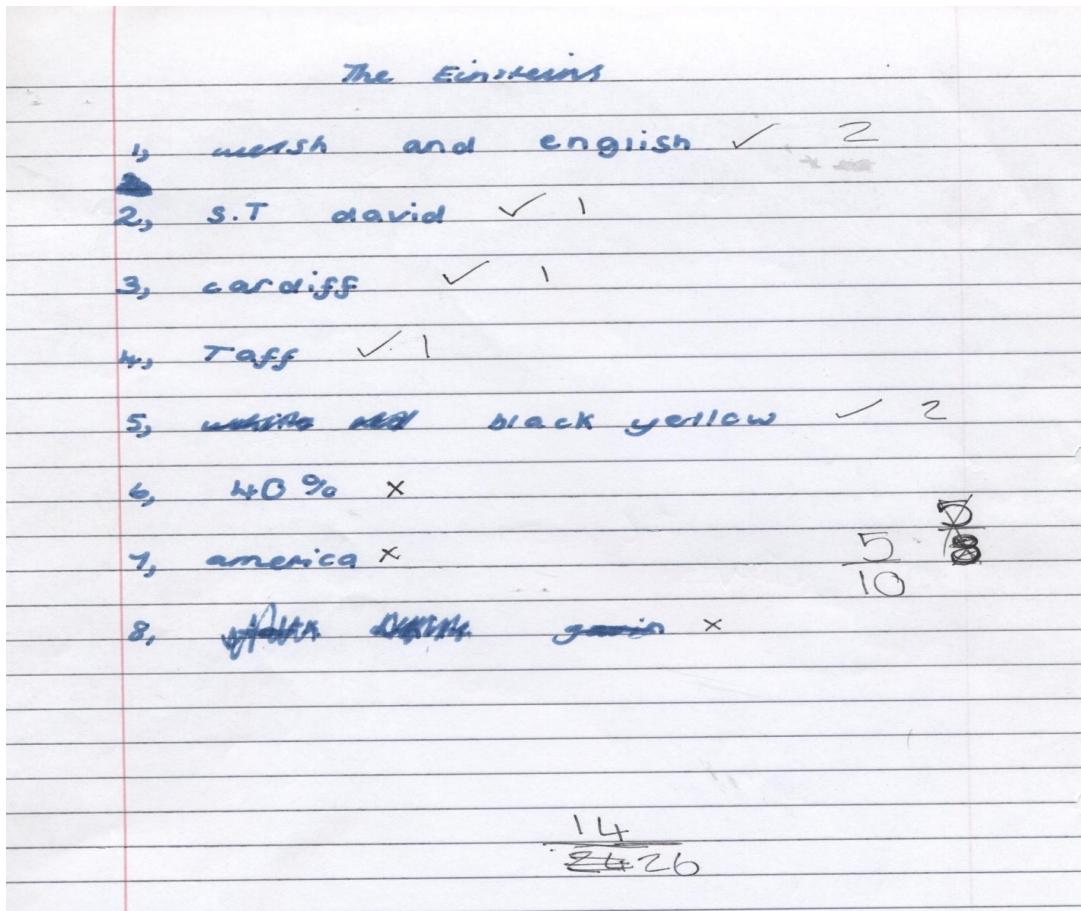
Ginstien x Tom Jones ↑ Queen ↑ Duffy x

Gavin Rossdale Robert Taylor Ryan Giggs -

Craig Bellamy ↑ Shane Williams ↑ Oprah x

$\frac{9}{16}$

## 5.2



**Appendix 5.** The ‘pub quiz’ I used with younger students, which consisted of a ‘picture round’, whereby the teams would name the famous figures (5.1); and a traditional question round (5.2). The questions were: 1. What are the two official languages of Wales? 2. Who is the patron saint of Wales? 3. What is the capital of Wales? 4. What is a traditional slang name for a Welsh person? 5. What are the colours of St David’s flag? 6. What percentage of people in Wales speak Welsh? 7. Where did the Welsh establish a colony? 8. Which rugby player from Porthcawl Comprehensive has recently represented Wales? ‘The Einsteins’ perform respectably in each round. Significantly, no one knew who Carwyn Jones or David Lloyd George was, although all recognized Churchill and David Cameron. Interestingly too, Cerys Matthews, one of the symbols of ‘Cool Cymru’ was also not recognized, reflecting the fading of this wave of Welsh popular culture. Rugby players were clearly the best known Welsh celebrities. This ‘warm up’ exercise therefore also served a deeper purpose in that it probed the students’ connection to contemporary anglo-Welsh culture and their awareness of Welsh history.



## Appendix 6: Local control over the nation-ness of local place

### Notes of Royal Wedding Working Group Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011

#### In Attendance:

Cllr's [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

#### Absent:

Cllr [REDACTED]

Members were reminded that the Royal Wedding will be taking place on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

It was agreed that the Town Council do not proceed with the purchasing of mugs for the school children as it would be too costly.

Members discussed that an official letter should be sent from Porthcawl Town Council to Prince William and Kate Middleton, and also a celebratory card to wish them well. It was also discussed that perhaps Mr Gwyn Petty could be asked to write the script on both the letter and the card.

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: That an official letter and celebratory card be sent from the Town Council to the royal couple Prince William and Kate Middleton.**

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND: That a request be made to Mr Gwyn Petty with regards to writing the script for both the official letter and the card.**

It was re-confirmed that during the evening of the wedding day the Porthcawl Chamber of Trade will be organising a firework display, a brass band, school choirs and a parade of banners on the Eastern Promenade.

It was advised that Porthcawl Chamber of Trade have requested a donation of £200.00 towards the cost of the firework display. Mr [REDACTED] has been advised to submit a letter to Council by Cllr [REDACTED] requesting a financial contribution.

Members were informed that we were unable to have a Church Service at All Saints Church, however Churches Together in Porthcawl will be organising an "open air" Church service either at Coney Beach or Cosy Corner. Cllr [REDACTED] further advised that enquiries would be made with Churches Together as to whether Trinity Church could be utilised for a Church Service as part of the celebratory event.

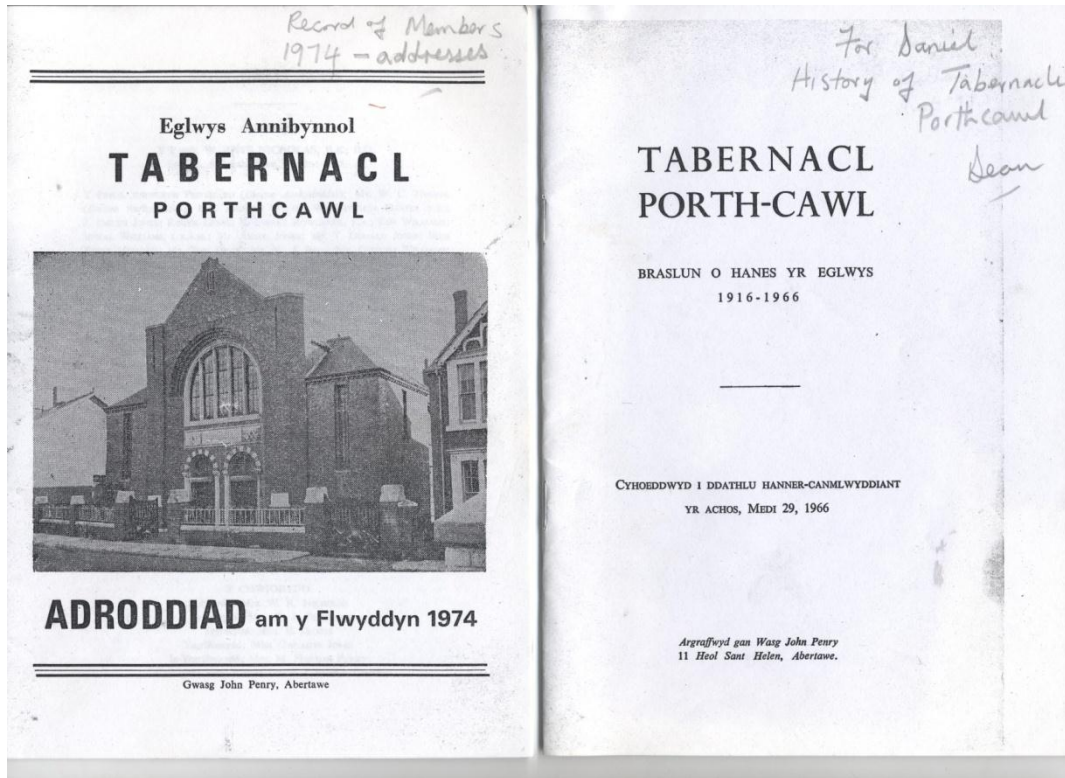
Cllr [REDACTED] suggested that some tea/coffee or wine could perhaps be served at the RNLI station whilst the open air Church Service will be taking place, and advised members that enquiries would be made.

Members were informed that the Porthcawl Chamber of Trade will be organising Union Jack flags for the local shops.

Meeting concluded at 7.45pm.

**Appendix 6:** Some people in Porthcawl claimed that Porthcawl's 'image' as an 'unWelsh' place was down to influential gatekeepers who actively cultivated a sense of respectability and 'Britishness'. Concomitantly, it was felt that Porthcawl's gatekeepers collectively attempted to move away from Welshness, hence no Welsh language school in Porthcawl. Schwegler (2008) argues that the local is the most important scale in the process of inculcating a sense of nationness to locals, and that we should analyze power at the local scale and how it influences the feel of a place. The above are the minutes of Porthcawl Town council's discussion of the Royal Wedding celebrations in 2011. The minutes show the extent of the influence of local gatekeepers over the 'feel' of Porthcawl and their enthusiasm for 'British' ceremonies. Indeed the minutes demonstrate that the 'heating' of Britishness in Porthcawl was facilitated largely by the Porthcawl Chamber of Trade, who organized Union Jack flags to give to local shops. Similarly, Porthcawl town council seemed disproportionately concerned with Porthcawl's connections with the military and were particularly enthused by war commemorations.

## Appendix 7: Historical presence of the Welsh language in a British Wales town



**Appendix 7.** In my discussions with a local Welsh language tutor, her husband, a keen amateur historian, drew my attention to the historical presence of the Welsh language in Porthcawl. I had assumed that the Welsh language had never had a strong presence in Porthcawl (indeed, many people ‘justified’ Porthcawl’s ‘weak Welshness’ by pointing out the historical lack of a Welsh language community). Yet the documents above are an historical overview of the Welsh language community within Porthcawl and its relationship to Porthcawl’s one existing Welsh language chapel. Hamstrung by my inability to speak or translate these booklets, I relied on the tutor for interpretation. She told me that the Welsh language community was not indigenous but represented Welsh speaking workers and their families who settled in Porthcawl during the sixties. The historical presence of a relatively sizeable Welsh speaking community within Porthcawl raises questions again about power at the local scale: why was this aspect of Porthcawl’s history so overlooked? Why had these individuals not influenced the ‘feel’ of the town?

## **Appendix 8: List of respondents**

In keeping with the BSA and Bangor University's code of ethics in research, the respondents in my thesis have all had their names changed to pseudonyms. So as they are not simply disembodied snippets with no context, the following provides some very brief biographical information about certain respondents who appear in the above text.

**April:** Female, early seventies. A 'mover and shaker' in East Porthcawl who organized several social events. Originally from the Valleys, lived in Porthcawl over twenty years.

**Alan:** Male, late fifties. Financial analyst and accountant. Welsh speaker. Porthcawl native

**Bobby:** Male, late fifties. Porthcawl native. Civil servant.

**Byron:** Male, late sixties. Former steelworker, originally from Merthyr, now retired to Trecco Bay.

**Claire:** Female, late twenties. Teacher, from Blackwood.

**Derek:** Male, late fifties. Salesman. Porthcawl native.

**Douglas:** Male, late seventies. Architect. Former town councillor and Mayor. Born in England although lived in Porthcawl all his life.

**Wendy:** Wife of Douglas. Early fifties. Homemaker. Town councillor.

**Eleri:** Female, early twenties. Student. Welsh speaker. Porthcawl native.

**Elinor:** Female, late fifties. Social worker. Former town councillor and Mayor. Porthcawl native.

**Gareth:** Male, mid fifties. Small business owner. Town councillor. Originally from Pyle, lived in Porthcawl for thirty years.

**Graham:** Male, mid fifties. Senior teacher. From Cardiff.

**Haydn:** Male, late seventies. Former engineer. Former town councillor and Mayor. Originally from Merthyr, lived in Porthcawl over forty years.

**Heather:** Female, early fifties. Teacher. Originally from London via Australia, lived in Porthcawl for 25 years.

**Hugh:** Male, late fifties. Prominent local businessman. Town councillor. Porthcawl native.

**Jack:** Male, late fifties. Retired former engineer and trade unionist. Town councillor. Originally from London, lived in Porthcawl

**Joan:** Female, late seventies. Retired homemaker. Porthcawl native.

**John:** Male, late fifties. Retired former steelworker. Originally from Cornelly, lived in Porthcawl over thirty years.

**Kylie & Jessica:** Females, early twenties. Sisters, both hairdressers. Porthcawl natives.

**Karen:** Female, late thirties. Self employed. Porthcawl native

**Karl:** Male, mid fifties. Bar manager. Originally from Newport, lived in Porthcawl for twenty years.

**Keiran:** Male, mid thirties. Security officer. Porthcawl native.

**Kevin:** Male, early forties. Businessman and town councillor. Born in England, lived in Porthcawl the majority of his life.

**Margaret:** Female, early fifties. Self employed. Town councillor and former Mayor. Originally from Blackwood, lived in Porthcawl over thirty years.

**Matt:** Male, early twenties. Sports coach. Porthcawl native.

**Melanie:** Female, early fifties. Teacher. Originally from Barry, lived in Porthcawl over twenty five years.

**Pete:** Male, late sixties. Husband of Melanie. Retired Engineer. Originally from London, lived in Porthcawl over twenty five years.

**Michael:** Male, early fifties. Teacher and Welsh language activist. Originally from the Valleys, lived in Porthcawl over thirty years.

**Neil:** Male, late twenties. Policeman. Porthcawl native.

**Patricia:** Female, mid sixties. Retired shopworker. Porthcawl native.

**Ragine:** Male, mid twenties. Unemployed. Porthcawl native.

**Sam:** Male, early twenties. Factory worker. Porthcawl native.

**Stacey:** Female, early fourties. Small business owner. Porthcawl native.

**Ted:** Male, late fifties. Writer and journalist. Originally from Bridgend, lived in Porthcawl over thirty years.

**Vicky:** Female, mid forties. Teacher and Welsh language tutor. Originally from Bridgend, lived in Porthcawl nearly ten years.

**Dewi:** Male, mid forties. Husband of Vicky. Teacher. Originally from Carmarthen, lived in Porthcawl nearly ten years.

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