



Wales: Culture and identity

Gender and race in Welsh society

SANDRA BETTS

The chapter on gender certainly has a lot to say about the theme difference because one of the things it's trying to do is to look at different groups of people, in this case male and females, men and women and to consider the way in which their life chances and lifestyles are differently shaped by living in Welsh society.

What we see by looking at the evidence is that men and women's lifestyles and life chances are differently shaped in a number of ways. For example in terms of different education, selecting different options and different educational paths and that in turn has particular influence on occupational outcomes, different jobs, different ways of pursuing work and occupational lifestyles.

NEIL EVANS

Race isn't one of the more obvious differences in Wales in some respects because Wales has had a very different pattern of development minority ethnic populations from the rest of Britain or much of the rest of Britain anyway. There wasn't much post Second World War migration of people from the Commonwealth into Wales. The economy was rather too stagnant to attract people in that period. But it did have the great difference that in the period before the Second World War it had one of the biggest minority ethnic populations anywhere in Britain. This means really that race has often been sidelined as an issue in Wales and oddly probably it was discovered by historians in many respects before it became an issue for contemporary analysis. Historians had explored issues like race riots in the past, many tensions in the past and rediscovered a history, which had been lost. But it was only really in the 1990's that it became a major issue for sociologists, political scientists and people interested in policy in Wales.

The largest concentration of minority ethnic populations in Wales is in the old country of South Glamorgan that is in the greater Cardiff area. In that area it achieves the level of being more or less the UK average, that is about four per cent of the population. In the rest of Wales minority ethnic populations are really small indeed and there is also the difference I think in Wales that many different groups make up a relatively small proportion of the population. This creates problems for political mobilisation. Not only are the groups small but they are quite diverse as well.

HUGH MACKAY

What studies on race and gender particularly interest you?

SANDRA BETTS

There are a number of studies that identify and are quite illuminating about the key differences between the life chances of men and women in Wales. But perhaps one of the most recent and most informative was the one published in 2009 called "Who runs Wales?" And that's full of quite interesting data about the way in which it's men that are primarily running the boardrooms and making the big decisions in Wales. To take just one or two small examples: we are all well aware of the fact that probably there are far more women than men in teaching and yet only sixteen per cent of secondary school head teachers are in fact women. So women get into the profession but don't appear to be getting far up the scale of the profession. There is still very much the existence of what people have called the glass ceiling. And those sorts of figures occur throughout the occupational spectrum in terms of who gets to the top and who doesn't. So I think that's a particularly illuminating study.

NEIL EVANS

It's the research of Charlotte Williams which has transformed the study of race in Wales and two slightly different aspects of it I think. One is the initial work she did based on the 1991 census which was the first to ask questions about minority ethnic populations in Britain and therefore quantitative data about the distribution and concentration of minority ethnic populations became available and that was of able to be analysed. But perhaps even more remarkable Charlotte wrote an autobiography "Sugar and Slate", which put the issue of race onto the political and social agenda in Wales in a very important way. It was a book which won a prize and deservedly so and it reflected on her own experience of having a Welsh mother and a Guyanese father and her experiences of growing up in Wales. And produced a very distinctive voice on and a very distinctive perspective on Welsh experience.

HUGH MACKAY

Analysis of statistics and representations of qualitative and quantitative data are a particular study skill of note.

SANDRA BETTS

You will already have had some information about the difference between quantitative and qualitative data and research techniques and a very significant part of quantitative research does involve numbers, involves statistics and that can often be quite frightening or off putting for some students. So one of the things we are trying to do this week is to help you work your way through how to read statistical tables, how to understand and work with and use the data that those tables provide you and we provide hopefully some quite basic stuff about how to work out percentages and things such as that.

Most of the data that you will be working with in this chapter is what is termed official data. It's collected by the Office of National Statistics or by the Welsh Assembly government and it is large scale data, covering the whole population of Wales, of men and women of white and ethnic minority groups. That data is collected in a particular way involving large-scale study interviews, number crunching etc. We won't be asking you to do any of the collection of data. What we will be asking you to do is to look at the results of the data and to work with the numbers in terms of understanding exactly what they are telling us and perhaps as importantly seeing whether you can work out things such as proportions, ratios, percentages that will give you a deeper understanding of particular issues that are raised in the chapter. One of the advantages of numbers and of statistical data such as you will find in this particular chapter is that sort of data can give us useful information about how many people are involved in one particular course of action or another course of action.

NEIL EVANS

Having statistical evidence of the distribution of minority ethnic groups in Wales very much transform their study, perhaps particularly in relation to rural areas because although the concentrations of minority ethnic population in places like Cardiff were fairly obviously, visible to the eye, what also came out was it created the problem of what happened to minority ethnic people when they were very small parts of communities as they are in rural Wales.

Having the statistical evidence prompted people to ask qualitative questions about the experiences of people in such situations. And interesting studies have been done on the experiences of minority ethnic people in the rural areas of Wales as well as in the more obvious urban locations.

SANDRA BETTS

Yes and that relates as well to the statistical data with respect to gender because what that can show us is how many men, how many women, are engaged in particular occupations or particular educational pathways or are involved in public and political life and that is of course very useful in terms of understanding the different experiences of men and women in Wales. But what it can't tell us is why and there we need to turn our attention to more qualitative data.