



The language of change? Characterizations of in-group social position, threat, and the deployment of 'distinctive' group attributes

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A considerable body of research has shown that group members establish and emphasize characteristics or attributes that define their in-group in relation to comparison out-groups. We extend this research by exploring the *range* of ways in which members of the same social category (Welsh people) deploy a particular attribute (the Welsh language) as a flexible identity management resource. Through a thematic analysis of data from interviews and two public speeches, we examine how the deployment of the Welsh language is bound up with characterizations of the in-group's wider intergroup position (in terms of power relations and their legitimacy and stability), and one's position within the in-group. We focus in particular on the rhetorical and strategic value of such characterizations for policing in-group boundaries on the one hand, and for the in-group's intergroup position on the other. We conclude by emphasizing the need to (1) locate analyses of the uses and importance of group-defining attributes within the social setting that gives them meaning and (2) to appreciate such characterizations as attempts to influence, rather than simply reflect that setting.

Group members' orientations towards members of their own and other groups have been a mainstay of social psychological research. Two important, recurring themes in this research are that being part of a social group involves (1) a sense of the attributes and characteristics that define the in-group and (2) an understanding of the in-group's relationship with particular out-groups. However, these elements have typically been examined separately and in terms of generic process, focusing on how in-group attributes are used to meet distinctiveness needs, on the one hand (e.g. Jetten &

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Spears, 2004), and how group members react to the in-group's intergroup position, on the other (e.g. Ellemers, 1993). The aim of the present research is to explore the close connection between these fundamental aspects of group membership (Spears, Jetten, & Doosje, 2001). Focusing on how the Welsh language is deployed by self-defined Welsh people, we build upon existing research on the functions of in-group bias (e.g. Spears, Jetten, & Scheepers, 2002), and on political rhetoric as a strategy of influence (e.g. Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Specifically, we explore the *range* of ways in which in-group attributes can be deployed by members of the same social category, and how these different uses are bound up with – and given impetus by – characterizations of the in-group's social position.

In-group attributes and in-group bias

Research on distinctiveness needs and their relation to intergroup behaviour has demonstrated that using in-group attributes to differentiate between in-group and out-group can fulfil a number of intergroup functions (Jetten & Spears, 2004; Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004; Spears *et al.*, 2002). For example, in-group members may use particular attributes or characteristics as a means by which to differentiate between the in-group and relevant out-groups when the distinctiveness of in-group identity is not clear-cut (Tajfel, 1974). This can happen at the group formation stage (e.g. Spears, Jetten, Arend, Van Norren, & Postmes, in preparation), or as a way of shoring up or protecting the distinctiveness of an existing in-group (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996, 1997, 2001).

While establishing and maintaining a social identity is often an end in itself, group members can also deploy particular characteristics or attributes in more instrumental ways, with the aim of achieving particular group goals (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2002, 2003, 2006; Spears *et al.*, 2001, 2002). In such cases, a group identity and its defining attributes are deployed as a *means* to an end – for example, as the basis from which minority groups can campaign against unequal power relations with a majority out-group (Reicher, 2004; Spears *et al.*, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). An important point here is that while an instrumental motive (prompted by a group goal) might provoke differentiation, this is only true if an in-group identity has already been established (Scheepers *et al.*, 2002). In other words, setting and achieving group goals requires a group identity, which can in turn require differentiation using group-defining characteristics.

The connection between-group goals and group-defining characteristics also highlights the importance of the broader intergroup setting in defining identity management strategies and how in-group attributes are deployed. On the one hand, there is evidence that intergroup threat plays an important role in shaping identity and instrumental concerns (e.g. Scheepers *et al.*, 2003). On the other hand, research in the social identity tradition highlights the importance of social structural variables (such as the perceived legitimacy and stability of intergroup status differences) in shaping identity management strategies (Ellemers, Van-Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Reicher & Haslam, 2006; Turner & Brown, 1978). These concerns are especially pertinent in ethno-linguistic minority groups, for whom the centrality of the in-group language means that identity management strategies can become centred on achieving and/or maintaining ethno-linguistic vitality. In other words, as a defining in-group attribute, in-group language becomes a basis for, and *raison d'être* of the in-group's identity management strategies (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977).

In-group attributes as identity management resources

A key implication of this previous work – and the guiding assumption of the present research – is that group members can use the in-group's defining characteristics and attributes as flexible identity management resources, directing them towards the in-group's identity needs and instrumental goals. This is especially so for attributes, such as in-group language, that are widely seen as fundamental to in-group identity (Giles *et al.*, 1977). However, previous work has (with good reason) focused on how in-group bias varies in form and function in only a limited range of intergroup contexts. For example, Scheepers *et al.* (2006) examined how members of minimal groups deployed Tajfel allocation matrices (the only means of defining the in-group in the minimal group setting; see Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971) as a function of intergroup status, the stability of that status, and visibility to an in-group or out-group audience. As Scheepers *et al.* (2006) suggest, there is a need to explore how in-group attributes are deployed as a function of other variables, such as perceived illegitimacy of the in-group's status and the security of in-group identity. Moreover, there is a need to explore the link between social structure/context and how in-group attributes are deployed by members of pre-existing, rather than minimal groups. A key aim of the present research is to address these issues.

We also aim to build upon the research outlined above in another way. Specifically, this earlier work has typically assumed a degree of consensus about the importance, meaning, and function of attributes for in-group members. However, in pre-existing groups there is often considerable variation in terms of (a) which attributes or characteristics are seen as in-group-defining and (b) the meaning and value ascribed to particular attributes (Condor, 1996; Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Reynolds, 1998; Haslam, Turner, Oakes, Reynolds *et al.*, 1998). Moreover, the value and meaning of these attributes are often actively debated by in-group members. This reflects the point that who 'we' are and what defines 'us' are not just cognitions or intra-psychic calculations; rather, they are also constructed, posited, and argued over through rhetoric and discourse (Billig, 1985, 1996; Edwards, 1991). This is a crucial issue because of the *consequences* of defining the in-group and its attributes in particular ways, and is a feature of research on social identity construction as a basis for legitimating particular forms of intergroup relations (e.g. Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and as a strategy of influence (e.g. Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Reicher, Hopkins, & Condor, 1997). This latter body of work has shown how would-be group leaders attempt to define the content and boundaries of in-group identity in strategic ways, often with the goal of mobilizing category members towards particular identity projects (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). An important implication here is that rather than being unproblematic 'givens', in-group goals, interests, membership and its very essence are actively contested by group members.

One element of such contestation is that in-group members can try to define the interests and intergroup position of the in-group as a way of giving impetus to particular forms of collective (in)action. In an example that has some similarity to the context explored in the present research, Reicher and Hopkins (2001, Chapter 4) present evidence that one can attempt to mobilize support for the Union between Scotland and England by characterizing it as the only way of looking after the interests of Scotland, perhaps by providing economic security and stability. Alternatively, an attempt to mobilize opposition to the Union could involve characterizing it as working against the interests of Scotland, perhaps by perpetuating domination and exploitation by England. Crucially, these very different characterizations of the in-group's intergroup

position and interests do not reflect simple variation in levels of affiliation or commitment to the in-group. Instead, they come from politicians or political activists who each (a) emphasize their own membership of the in-group (i.e. proclaim their own 'Scottishness') and (b) claim to represent the in-group's best interests.

Another element of intragroup contestation relates to how even 'objective' in-group attributes can be used to define the essence of the in-group in very different ways, often as a way of managing in-group boundaries by defining who is or is not a 'true' in-group member. This applies not only to the importance of a particular attribute, but also to its meaning. For example, setting ancestry as the defining characteristic of Scottishness can be used to (a) question the Scottishness of others who claim to represent Scottish interests, (b) challenge the validity of alternative, more inclusive definitions of Scottishness (e.g. based on civic involvement), and (c) present particular political projects (e.g. Scottish independence) as unworkable because of the failure of most people in Scotland to meet this criterion. Alternatively, setting 'tolerance' as a defining characteristic can be used to promote neighbourliness and alliance with the English out-group, or to differentiate and distance the in-group from the less 'tolerant' out-group (see Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, Chapter 7).

Aims and strategy of the present research

The overarching aim of the present research is to connect the insights from these bodies of research by examining how identity-defining attributes can be deployed in quite different ways by in-group members (both in terms of importance, and in terms of why and how they are important), and how these are given impetus by characterizations of the in-group's intergroup position. Drawing upon the framework of Reicher and Hopkins (1996a, 1996b, 2001), we present a qualitative thematic analysis of two public speeches and 17 conversational interviews, focusing on how the Welsh language is deployed as an identity-defining attribute by self-defined Welsh people. Language is a fundamental feature of in-group identity for many groups (and has been studied as such), but has not to our knowledge featured directly in analyses of strategic category construction. In doing so, we aim to develop the more general point that in-group attributes can be deployed flexibly by group members. In particular, we explore how the deployment of the Welsh language varies with characterizations of surrounding social relations, including the legitimacy and stability of Wales's relationship with England and the UK, and of the nature of identity threat that accompanies this position.

The place of the Welsh language in national identity in Wales is a potent issue (Davies, 1994). Although only approximately 20% of the population of Wales can speak Welsh, it is commonly positioned as a defining dimension of Welsh identity for both Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh speaking Welsh people alike (Welsh Language Board, 2003). A broad acceptance of the language's importance can clearly have important consequences for non-Welsh speakers, such as making them feel less Welsh (Bourhis, Giles, & Tajfel, 1973) and less culturally consistent (Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1977). However, it is also possible to redefine the Welsh language as a *symbolic* resource (Coupland, Bishop, & Garrett, 2003), allowing non-Welsh speakers to incorporate it into a 'full' sense of Welshness. Moreover, it is possible to define Welsh identity using dimensions other than the language (Coupland, Bishop, Williams, Evans, & Garrett, 2005). The way in which the main Welsh nationalist party, Plaid Cymru, has consistently placed the Welsh language at the heart of its campaigns also testifies to the language's relevance (and utility) to intergroup concerns, both as a focus of out-group threat and as a basis for resistance (see also Bowie, 1993).

For those who claim 'Welshness', there is clearly much variation in – and argument over – the significance of the Welsh language. However, we aim to do more than simply reiterate that such variation exists. Instead, we explore how this variation is located within-group members' characterizations of their and others' social positions. As we have already indicated, this includes characterizations of intergroup power relations, and of the nature of intergroup threat that flows from these. It also includes characterizations of intragroup position, both as a justification for particular orientations towards the language, and as an outcome of how the language is used to manage group boundaries and hierarchies. Finally, the analysis also focuses on how characterizations of social position and of the Welsh language are used to generate *imperatives* for others who claim in-group membership. In this way, we do not assume that these characterizations merely *reflect* understandings of social relations. Rather, we explore their role as *entrepreneurial* products by examining the ways in which they can implicitly or explicitly create impetus towards alternative social relations.

Method and analytic strategy

Data came from two sources. The first consisted of two public speeches made at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, on 25th November 2005. These were given by Rhodri Morgan AM, the First Minister of the Welsh Assembly Government; and Iolo Williams, a television broadcaster from Powys in Wales. These speeches were intended to inaugurate the first Wales Identity Day, and to introduce a programme of Welsh identity-related exhibits at the Museum. Although both speeches were in English, both Rhodri Morgan and Iolo Williams can speak Welsh.

The selection of these speeches was not intended to encapsulate the full range of identity positions available to people in Wales, or to necessarily guarantee a contrast of extremes in these positions. Instead, the value of these speeches was expected to arise precisely from the apparent *similarity* of the speakers' positions in objective terms. For one thing, they were speaking at the same event, to the same proximal audience. Moreover, they both spoke from the position of having the Welsh language. The setting was therefore a fitting one in which to explore how variation in characterizations of Welsh identity, language, and intergroup position can be understood as strategic, entrepreneurial efforts to influence context, rather than simply as a reflection of context (e.g. in terms of audience or one's own prototypicality as a Welsh speaker).

The second source of data consisted of 17 semi-structured conversational interviews with adults from Wales. These adults participated one at a time, and in each case spoke with the first author. These interviews were conducted in a number of different locations in Wales, and the interviewees themselves represented a wide range of identity and political positions. Engaging with these particular interviewees was intended to foster access to a broad range of possible identity positions within Wales.

Interview schedule and procedure

The interviews were guided by a schedule. Although the intention in these interviews was to cover the range of themes in this schedule, the overriding concern during the interviews themselves was that they followed a conversational flow. For this reason, no reference to the schedule was made during the interviews. Moreover, although themes were ordered in a particular sequence in the schedule, this did not prescribe how they were to be addressed in the interviews themselves. In particular, it was often the case

that themes in the latter part of the schedule were brought up spontaneously by interviewees early in the interview. In such cases, the interviewer did not consciously shift the conversation away from the topic for the sake of keeping to the order in the schedule. Rather, the topic was explored as it arose, and intervening themes and questions were brought up by the interviewer at a later point only if the interviewee did not turn to them him- or herself. Thus, the guiding principle for the conduct of the interviews was that the flow of conversation should guide the order in which the themes were addressed, rather than the other way around. The conversational format meant that no *a priori* restriction was placed on interview length, and the interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 1 hour and 4 minutes. Interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed.

Thematic analysis

All transcribed data were submitted to a thematic analysis. The themes used to inform the analysis were determined by theoretical concerns. The intention to explore the associations between these themes meant that the organization, form and content of these themes, and associations were not pre-determined.

The primary themes around which the data were organized were (1) characterizations of Welsh national identity and its defining characteristics, (2) orientations towards the Welsh language, including its role and importance in Welsh national identity, and (3) characterizations of the relationship between Wales and England, including social-structural relations and the nature of similarity and difference between Welsh and English people and identities. Subsidiary themes included characterizations of threats to or strength of Welsh national identity, and of the interviewee's own position in relation to national groupings in Wales.

The analysis initially involved organizing data around the three primary themes. These themes were not assumed to be mutually exclusive, and extracts that were relevant to more than one theme were coded as such. This was followed by the identification of subsidiary themes within each of the primary themes. Because subsidiary themes such as characterizations of identity threat were expected to emerge in relation to any or all of the primary themes, their identification generated points of connection and overlap between the primary themes.

Finally, an initial analysis of the interview data revealed that the Welsh language ability of the interviewee (i.e. whether they could speak Welsh or not) was a subjectively important issue that was associated with quite different orientations towards the primary and subsidiary themes. The results and discussion of the interviews are therefore organized by the self-reported Welsh language ability of interviewees (i.e. Welsh speakers, and non-Welsh speakers/Welsh learners). Illustrative extracts are reported along with the interviewee's sex and any political party membership.

Results

Analysis of the Morgan and Williams speeches

Morgan's characterization of Welsh identity is of richness and depth, and of implied strength. The opening assertion that 'We are so fortunate that Wales is so rich in heritage' was followed by reference to cultural attributes including Welsh language literature; Welsh individuals such as Dylan Thomas and Richard Burton who are associated with English language culture; industrial heritage; and the Welsh landscape.

These cultural attributes implicitly reference linguistic and regional differences within Wales, and their potential to facilitate different and potentially opposed constructions of Welsh identity based, for example, on the Welsh language or on the industrial heritage of South Wales.

It is always surprising the different views that people have of Wales and what makes them Welsh. That is something we should celebrate. These views and perceptions create a rich and vibrant tapestry which when woven together captures the very essence of Wales and what it means to be Welsh. But no matter what the differences, we all have a national heritage that binds us together and make us proud of this country.

The characterization of these attributes as different but equally valid bases for a Welsh identity is deployed here not only to construct a unified Welsh identity based on a diversity of experiences and attributes, but also to suggest that Welsh identity derives strength and security from this. The essence of 'Welshness' therefore derives from a combination of attributes, all of which are valuable, but none of which are essential.

Wales Identity Day will help us celebrate and debate all aspects of our heritage and identity in Wales. The Heritage Lottery Fund have devised the day so that we can trade ideas about where we are heading as a country and as a collection of communities.

Consequently, the action impetus in this construction of Welshness is on the *articulation* and *celebration* of different attributes as facets of a rich identity, rather than on deploying any of them as a means of managing a threatened identity.

In contrast to Morgan, Williams identified his own Welshness with the possession of specific attributes, including the ability to speak Welsh.

It's up to the younger generation to take it into the future. Welsh is my first language, something that I'm really proud of, it makes me who I am and like rugby and wildlife, I'm keen to keep it alive for future generations.

This characterization of his own sense of Welshness is in turn developed into a definition of what constitutes Welshness *per se*. Moreover, this Welshness is something that is threatened by a lack of active engagement with the attributes that constitute it.

My concern for the future of Wales is that our heritage may become diluted if we don't get young people interested in what makes them who they are. I was lucky enough to grow up with the ethos that my heritage matters but it is up to us to spur younger generations into this way of thinking (. . .) our language is the mother tongue of Wales and needs to be used daily in order to keep it alive.

The Welsh language in particular is deployed here as an essential marker of Welshness, but also as a means by which the implied threat to Welshness may be resisted. The characterization of the language as both essential and - like Welshness itself - as threatened is in turn used to generate an impetus towards using Welsh as an everyday mode of communication. The logic here is that a claim to Welshness requires a commitment to the Welsh language - particularly to its everyday use - and that a threat to Welsh is a threat to Welshness. The failure to use Welsh in everyday life therefore threatens Welshness, while its use in turn alleviates that threat.

The Morgan and Williams speeches thus offer constructions of Welshness that differ in their characterizations of the security or vulnerability of Welsh identity. These positions of security or threat are the basis from which potential identity-defining attributes, and the Welsh language in particular, are deployed. On the one hand, Morgan's characterization of Welsh identity as secure and constituted of many sufficient

but non-essential attributes implies that no single attribute can be held up as identity-defining. In this way, it clearly serves the particular strategic needs of a figurehead politician who seeks to appeal to as wide a constituency as possible in Wales. On the other hand, the characterization of Welshness in Williams' speech is of a threatened identity, the essence of which derives from specific necessary attributes. Moreover, these attributes require active engagement by those who would consider themselves Welsh, with the implication that a failure to do so dilutes the identity and marks out those who do not show interest in what makes them 'who they are'.

Interviews: Welsh speakers

The Morgan and Williams speeches thus illustrate a basic connection between characterizations of the broader intergroup context (particularly in terms of identity threat/security) and the way in which identity-relevant dimensions are deployed. The aim of the interviews was to further explore this connection, focusing on the association between characterizations of the relationship between Wales and England, and the way in which the Welsh language is deployed as an identity management resource. Beginning with Welsh-speaking participants, characterizations of the Wales-England relationship without exception emphasized the relatively low-power position of Wales. However, these characterizations varied in terms of the legitimacy and/or stability of this low-power status, and also in terms of whether Welshness could be defined along dimensions other than the Welsh language.

Characterizations of legitimate low power

On the one hand, the Wales-England relationship could be characterized as relatively legitimate:

On the whole England is a benign neighbour – nobody can ever accuse England under the current circumstances of being a malignant influence on Wales, it would be very unfair to think otherwise (I1, male)

While I1 stressed the importance of the Welsh language in his own sense of Welshness, he in turn expressed resentment towards the politicization of the Welsh language, and particularly towards an over-emphasis on the language when it comes to defining Welshness:

In many ways the language issue in Wales has, uh, subsumed, is that the right word? Uh, replaced other forms of Welsh identity (. . .) I often feel very much an outsider in Wales because I see myself very scientifically orientated, um, I felt that the Welsh culture is very much orientated more towards the, um, language side. (I1, male)

In this case, Welsh is characterized as a cultural, rather than political resource. Moreover, without a political impetus for defining Welshness in terms of the Welsh language, it is one among several such cultural resources. The conflation of Welsh culture with the Welsh language under these conditions is therefore linked by this Welsh speaker with a sense of marginalization within the national category, because of the underplayed role of other dimensions (scientific achievement in this case).

Characterizations of illegitimate low power: Identity threat and security

This may be contrasted with the more typical characterization of the Wales-England relationship as historically and/or contemporarily unfair or illegitimate. Within such

characterizations, there was in turn variation as to whether this relationship was stable/unchangeable, or unstable/changeable. Focusing first on characterizations of the Wales–England relationship as illegitimate and stable, the issue of Welsh visibility or distinctiveness became most apparent, particularly in relation to England and Englishness. The following extracts from two interviewees, I4 and I5, contain similar characterizations of the Wales–England relationship:

Historically it's antagonistic (. . .) primarily from England to, towards Wales because they had the best deal, like, and they had the most to gain from kind of eroding any kind of, cultural identity but also political identity. But, (. . .) we just accept that kind of, um, we have a lesser status, I think, um, not in the sense of we don't want to do anything about it, but in the sense that these things happened, and, you know, there's very little we can do about it. (I4, male)

We're just like the forgotten ones, we're, we're almost ignored or not taken seriously or whatever, um, and yeah I've, that frustrates me and I must confess to having a bit of a chip on my shoulder about it (. . .) we're really, we're really hidden behind England, I think that's the major, kind of, um, relationship we have to England, and from a Welshman's point of view it really is far from ideal. (I5, male)

On the one hand, I4's characterization emphasizes the possibility of defining Welshness along dimensions other than the Welsh language:

One of the first things I would say is that Wales would be, uh, primarily a kind of socialist country, from my perspective anyway, whereas England would be not necessarily (. . .), secondly I would say that, um, being Welsh has some, some connotations related to, uh, resistance of a, an imposed culture (. . .) there's more of a subtle resistance in being Welsh and also a more pragmatic approach to being Welsh. (I4, male)

Welshness here is contrasted to England and Englishness not only in terms of political and social values, but also in terms of resistance to the imposition on Wales of English values. Thus, the tendency to resist identity threats in particular ways is itself deployed as a basis for differentiation. In turn, the availability of distinctive identity dimensions is used to negate the need to deploy the Welsh language as an essential identity-defining attribute. In this way, speaking Welsh is characterized as a matter of individual conscience, rather than a collective imperative:

I don't think it's a necessary thing, in any way, shape or form, it doesn't confer Welshness and neither does it kind of, um, stop you being Welsh if you don't speak Welsh. I think it's just again a matter of personal preference, (. . .) just a matter of personal taste. (I4, male)

In contrast, I5's characterization of Wales' stable and illegitimate low status/power is also used to imply an erosion of identity that leaves the Welsh language as the only available means by which to protect or assert Welsh distinctiveness:

If you cut out the language, the language makes a heck of a difference because Anglo-Welsh culture or whatever it's called really isn't that distinctive. When you look at Welsh culture, Welsh, Welsh language culture, you've got a whole lot of things (. . .) the problem is when you get rid of the religion, the industry and stuff like that, and the language, there's not that much that sort of defines us as a people. (I5, male)

As with the Williams speech, this characterization is used to generate an imperative on anyone who claims Welshness to learn and use the Welsh language:

People who feel very Welsh, who are proud of being Welsh, I think they should, um, I think they should learn the language (. . .) it's such an important part of their identity (. . .) it's important that they speak Welsh, that they learn Welsh in order to keep their birthright alive. (I5, male)

In contrast to I4, I5 therefore deploys the Welsh language as an essential identity-defining attribute that is fundamental not just to Welsh resistance, but to Welsh *existence*. Deploying it as the fundamental marker of Welshness in turn places a conformity pressure on would-be Welsh people to engage with the language in a particular way. Characterizations of stable, illegitimate low status/power can therefore be used to deploy particular attributes in quite different ways, and with different action impetuses, depending on the associated characterizations of threat to in-group distinctiveness.

Characterizations of illegitimate low power: Possibilities for change

Finally, illegitimate low status/power could also be characterized as *unstable* or changeable:

We're no fans of the English, you know (. . .) I'm not a big fan of the English, never have been, and probably never will be because of what they've done to Wales (. . .) but the way things are going now (. . .) we don't fear the English any more. (I9, male, Plaid Cymru)

The characterization offered by I9 in particular emphasizes change as an ongoing process involving not only the strengthening and consolidation of Welsh identity, but also the realization of political equality and ultimately separation from the UK. The broader project of Welsh identity is therefore explicitly bound up with a specific vision of the current and future political status of Wales. It is within this framework that I9 deploys the Welsh language:

That's what's, what's brought about the big renaissance, say from 1950 onwards . . . the Welsh language, and people like Saunders Lewis kicked off, the students got hold of it, and it's, it became a political football at the time . . . you cannot divorce politics as well (. . .)

This is what I call the silent revolution (. . .) you cannot, uh, divorce the language and compartment it, can't divorce the culture, you know, um, it's all part of the Welsh whole you see (. . .) they can exist on their own, but when they come in, together, that's when the Welsh identity is really good (. . .) So you put all the economies, the politics, the cultural and the language (. . .) Before you're very vulnerable to England walking over us. They don't walk over us any more. (I9, male, Plaid Cymru)

For I9, a complete Welsh identity – the ‘Welsh whole’ – is thus only fully realized through a combination of cultural and political dimensions. As part of this construction, the Welsh language is deployed not only as a marker of cultural distinctiveness, but also as a means of political mobilization and consciousness-raising. Its value is therefore in its potential to direct in-group members towards particular political goals, as well as the extent to which it bestows distinctiveness on the in-group. In turn, the entrepreneurial aspect of this construction becomes most evident in the associated prescription for the position of non-Welsh speakers in the national category:

I don't mind it, because I think we need to take them on board, because you can't, you know, alienate, it's a bonus that you speak the language, I wouldn't think less of anybody because they don't speak the language. (I9, male, Plaid Cymru)

The cultural and political importance of the language is here balanced against the reality that the majority of Welsh people cannot speak the language. Defining the national category in terms of language ability could therefore potentially undermine the mobilization potential of the category. Indeed, this construction couches the inclusion of non-Welsh speakers in the national category in overtly strategic

terms. In particular, the rationale that 'we need to take them on board' still presumes a Welsh-speaking 'we', a non-Welsh speaking 'them', and a specific political imperative for their inclusion in the national movement. While the deployment of the Welsh language as a means of collective mobilization goes hand-in-hand with a particular characterization of the Wales-England relationship, it is thus also constrained by other structural realities within Wales that may impede the goal of national mobilization. This may in turn be contrasted with I5's emphasis on the identity-preservation role of Welsh. In particular, the lack of potential for political and structural change and the associated need to secure the in-group's distinctiveness and cultural existence means that non-Welsh speakers risk being placed outside the national category.

Interviews: Non-Welsh speakers

While Welsh speakers' deployment of the Welsh language clearly varied, they nevertheless did so from the position of having this attribute themselves. Their self-evident membership of the Welsh national category contrasts with non-Welsh speakers, whose orientations towards Welsh were without exception bound up with their own expressed need to negotiate a position within the national category. While characterizations of the Wales-England relationship were still evident in their constructions of Welshness, their deployment of the Welsh language was more closely linked to the *intra*-national social position of Welsh speakers and non-Welsh speakers.

On the one hand, it was possible to accept characterizations of the Welsh language and its daily use as essential to Welsh identity, along with its implication that one is therefore non-prototypical or less Welsh as a result:

I have friends who are from, um, I think it's Aberaeron, but basically on that, on that kind of coast, and they're all first language Welsh and they struggle to, to read in English, um, and so as I say they to me are the real Welsh (. . .) I'm not threatened when somebody calls me, tells me I'm not really Welsh because I guess I agree with them (I15, male)

Later, I15 used this characterization to explain why he had recently enrolled in an intensive course in the Welsh language:

I guess that same 'I'm not proper Welsh' sense, uh, was a bit of a hangover (. . .) In my mind, the ability to speak the language, and to become an active part of the community in the country, um, that's what it means to be Welsh (I15, male)

Here, this deployment of the Welsh language may imply incompleteness in non-Welsh speakers, but crucially it also offers a means of *becoming* more Welsh by providing an opportunity for active engagement in the national community. Moreover, this community – and membership of it – is *defined in terms of* active engagement, such that one's membership becomes contingent upon it:

I mean to be born in a place, um, you're not makin a choice there (. . .) my own view is that if you consider yourself Welsh you would show it in some form of action (. . .) I don't consider the Valleys and the South East particularly Welsh (. . .) I don't believe that speaking the language of another country, i.e. English, is showing your identity. Having said that, you're going to send me scuttling back to the Welsh School now because I don't speak it well enough to qualify. (I15, male)

Together, the deployment of the Welsh language as the defining characteristic and means of entry into the national community is used to marginalize stereotypically 'Welsh' regions such as the Valleys area of South Wales, and to generate the action impetus in oneself and others to learn the language.

Deploying the Welsh language as an essential identity-defining attribute can nevertheless have a quite different basis and set of implications. For I13, a non-Welsh speaker from South Wales, the sense that Welsh-speakers may consider her less Welsh was initially resisted through a characterization of her own Welshness as merely different from, rather than lesser than, that of Welsh speakers from North Wales. However, this was later qualified by an acknowledgement that her own lack of Welsh could be interpreted as incomplete Welshness:

I suppose I do get kind of offended. But then I can understand their point cos I don't, I haven't learnt Welsh properly, I don't speak fluent Welsh so it is different. So I would sort of instantly go 'That's not fair', but, yeah, I can, I can understand what they mean. (I13, female)

I13 therefore expresses a tension between the acceptance of the language's criterial importance and an apparent desire to deny any implied lack of Welshness on her part. In the context of this dilemma, the language is still defined as a vital aspect of Welsh distinctiveness, but is deployed as a *symbolic* resource rather than as an essential component of everyday life:

I don't want Welsh to die out or anything (. . .) because you do want people to still be speaking, you don't want it to, and you want it in the official things, bilingual documents as well (. . .) I suppose it's important to keep the symbolic, you know, I mean, the symbolic factor, so to keep that intact would be most important. (I13, female)

Here, it is sufficient that Welsh is officially valued for it to function as a distinctive attribute. Importantly, it also follows from this construction that there is no necessary pressure on non-Welsh speakers to learn Welsh. Rather, it is sufficient that *someone somewhere* speaks it for it to have life as a distinctively Welsh attribute. By (re)defining Welsh as a symbolic resource in this way, it is thus possible to construct an identity position that alleviates the tension between accepting the language as identity-defining, on the one hand, and the potentially negative implication of this for one's own Welshness, on the other.

Finally, constructing one's own position within the national category could for non-Welsh speakers involve directly contesting the role of the Welsh language in Welshness:

Does that mean, you know, that as a non-Welsh speaker that I'm not Welsh? Well that's, you know, ridiculous, I've lived in Wales all my life, you know, I've two Welsh parents, and, you know, work in Wales, you know, but just because I don't speak Welsh that doesn't make me Welsh well that's just ridiculous (. . .). (I8, male, Labour)

Here, I8 defines Welshness by emphasizing attributes that imply, like I15, particular forms of engagement with the national category (e.g. residence, work). However, in contrast to I15, the project here is to downplay the importance of engagement with the language specifically, and to generate alternatives that allow full membership to non-Welsh speakers through engagement with the social issues that define Welsh experience:

It does annoy me that sometimes people put too much emphasis on that because if you look at Wales as a society, I mean there are huge social problems in Wales, there are still, you know, great pockets of deprivation in this country. . . and that's really important, you know, that's more important than the language I'm afraid. (I8, male, Labour)

Discussion

Building upon the analysis of the Williams and Morgan speeches, the analysis of Welsh speakers' contributions provide more nuanced evidence of the ways in which group

members can rhetorically deploy identity-relevant attributes, and how these are bound up with different characterizations of the in-group's wider intergroup position. In the present case, characterizations of the (il)legitimacy and (in)stability of Wales' low status/power in relation to England are used to provide impetus for deploying the Welsh language in quite different ways, and with varying implications for the position of others – non-Welsh speakers especially – within the national category.

An important point here is that rhetoric aimed at policing in-group boundaries by strategically deploying in-group attributes is intimately linked to the in-group's intergroup position. While this sits comfortably with other research on how group members strategically tolerate an in-group leader's deviance from in-group values as a function of expected intergroup success (Morton, Postmes, & Jetten, 2007), the present analysis also suggests an additional strategic layer to this dynamic. Specifically, the intergroup setting that shapes in-group standards is not just *perceived* by in-group members; rather, it is actively *articulated* as a way of generating the impetus in others to accept and ultimately enforce particular in-group standards and membership criteria (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

Ethno-linguistic vitality

This point is also specifically relevant to the notion of ethno-linguistic vitality (Giles *et al.*, 1977). While most research on ethno-linguistic vitality (particularly in a Welsh context) has focused on its underlying structural and demographic basis and how its perception is strengthened or compromised (e.g. Coupland *et al.*, 2005), the approach in the present research suggests that characterizations of vitality not only *reflect* beliefs about language strength, but are also designed to *influence* it. For example, characterizing the in-group language as vibrant may be intended to *bring about* as well as simply celebrate particular forms of engagement with it. Alternatively, characterizing it as arcane or even as dying out can become part of the process of realizing its demise. Again, these alternatives do not represent the full range of positions available to in-group members. Rather, the implication here is the more general point that in-group members are agents in, rather than merely perceivers of, their in-group and its defining attributes. In the context of research on ethno-linguistic distinctiveness and vitality, this strategic aspect to characterizations of vitality thus represents a potentially important, but under-researched aspect of the dynamic between language, identity, and intergroup relations.

Negotiating in-group membership

As with Welsh speakers, non-Welsh speakers' deployment of the Welsh language was bound up with characterizations of their broader social position. However, unlike Welsh speakers, non-Welsh speakers did so from the position of having to negotiate their own position within the group, by virtue of their not having the language. The strategies implied here ranged from an acceptance of the language's criterial position, through a redefinition of the language's role, to direct contestation of its importance. While all of these serve to position the respective speakers close to the heart of the in-group, they also, like the Welsh-speakers' characterizations discussed above, have differing implications for the position of others within the in-group. Although not a feature of the present analysis, it is conceivable that these differing strategies for 'peripheral' in-group members are therefore also rooted in broader projects regarding the (political) future of

the group. For example, characterizing the out-group's domination as essentially cultural and linguistic may require engagement with the language from oneself and others. However, characterizing the out-group's domination as political and/or economic may require alternative forms of engagement that eschew the potentially divisive language.

While these issues are clearly ripe for further research, the present findings nevertheless suggest that the strategies available to non-prototypical group members consist of more than a choice between assimilation with or distancing from the in-group (Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimmie, 2003). Instead, locating oneself at the heart of the in-group is often part and parcel of recreating and redefining the nature of the in-group itself (Stott, Adang, Livingstone, & Schreiber, 2007; Stott, Hutchison, & Drury, 2001). As is the case here, this can involve actively shaping the importance and meaning of particular in-group attributes, rather than simply assimilating them.

Conclusions

Our main aim in this research has been to explore how the different ways in which in-group attributes are deployed by group members are bound up with characterizations of an in-group's social position (and one's own position within the in-group). While the qualitative analysis employed here was particularly suited to this goal, it also precludes conclusive answers about other aspects of these processes. In particular, it does not allow for analyses of (1) how common particular characterizations are, (2) the conditions under which differing characterizations are accepted by in-group members, or (3) the relationship between characterizations, perceptions, and material social realities.

However, the limits of the present approach in addressing these related issues should be balanced against its strengths in addressing the aims of the present research. Specifically, alternative methods and analytic strategies would in turn have been less suitable for exploring the *range* of identity positions available to members of ostensibly the same social category. This is a vital aspect of the relationship between intergroup position and the strategic management of in-group identity, and should go hand in hand with, rather than sit in opposition to, alternative research strategies. This is particularly so when considering how the present approach could be extended to the analysis of identity positions among members of relatively *high* power groups, for whom the *denial* of the in-group's privileged position – and indeed, of the *relevance* of in-group identity *per se* – adds to the range of identity management strategies (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002).

It is appropriate to close, then, by reiterating our central point – namely, that it is crucial to relocate analyses of the uses and importance of group-defining attributes within the social setting that gives them meaning. While an attribute such as in-group language offers a range of identity management possibilities for low-power groups, how it is actually used to change social relations depends on how those social relations are understood and characterized. Ultimately, then, the ability to unite behind a shared sense of *who* we are as a group may require the achievement of consensus about *where* we are as a group.

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