

Institution: Cardiff University
Unit of Assessment: UoA 21 Politics and International Studies
Title of case study: Public Opinion and Welsh Devolution
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Politics staff at Cardiff have conducted detailed research on public attitudes towards devolution in Wales. By directly informing the conclusions of the All Wales Convention, and the behaviour of key actors in the 2011 Welsh referendum, the research has significantly influenced the Welsh devolution settlement. The research has contributed substantially to the on-going work of the Silk Commission. Regular and effective public dissemination of key research findings has enabled the research to inform political debate in Wales. The research has also contributed to the development of survey capacity in Wales, and thereby facilitated the conduct of more regular Welsh political polling.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Since the late-1990s, substantial research has been conducted into public attitudes and political behaviour in Wales. Originally based at Aberystwyth University's Institute of Welsh Politics, after the arrival in Cardiff of Richard Wyn Jones in February 2009 (Director of the Wales Governance Centre, February 2009 – current) the work – survey design, data analysis and interpretation, and dissemination – was shared jointly between the two Universities; since Roger Scully's arrival in Cardiff in March 2012 (Professor of Political Science, March 2012 – current) the work has been wholly Cardiff-based.</p> <p>Supported by several ESRC grants^{3.1, 3.2}, this (mainly survey-based) work has involved conducting studies of all major referendums and elections in Wales; several studies have also been conducted between these major political events. This work constitutes the first sustained body of detailed evidence ever gathered about political attitudes and behaviour in Wales. The work has also been innovative in other respects. Notably, the 2011 Welsh Referendum and Election studies were the first survey-based studies of referendums and devolved elections in the UK to incorporate 'rolling' samples through the campaign period, thus providing detailed evidence of changes in public attitudes across the campaign.</p> <p>In addition to exploring voting behaviour in elections and referendums, this work has gathered substantial evidence regarding public attitudes towards the governance of Wales, including on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes towards the principle of devolution; • Attitudes towards the performance of devolved government; • Attitudes towards the devolution of specific policy areas; and • Changes in these and other attitudes over time. <p>Among the key findings of this work have been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That opposition to devolution declined substantially subsequent to the 1997 referendum, with this decline particularly marked amongst those demographic groups (people with a more British, rather than Welsh, national identity; and those not able to speak Welsh), and in those geographic areas of Wales (mainly those closer to the English border) that most strongly opposed devolution in 1997. • The absence of a strong association between evaluations of the policy performance of the Welsh Assembly and underlying public attitudes to devolution: suggesting that among much of the population a 'diffuse support' for devolution had developed, not conditional on 'specific support' for the immediate performance of devolved government. • Significant public support having developed for devolution to be extended, both in extent (with the powers of the Welsh Assembly being enhanced) and scope (with significant support evident for more policy areas to become devolved). <p>These findings are outlined in Wyn Jones and Scully (2012, ch.3)^{3.3}.</p> <p>This work has also developed an important comparative dimension. Both Wyn Jones and Daniel Wincott (Co-Chair of the Wales Governance Centre, 2008 – current) have been centrally involved in the 'Citizenship after the Nation-State' project^{3.4}, funded by the European Science Foundation</p>

Impact case study (REF3b_UoA21_Casestudy2)

and National Assembly for Wales, which has explored public attitudes in parallel across a substantial number of regions, including Wales. This work showed Wales to score comparatively highly in levels of regional identity and support for regional autonomy, although its present level of autonomy was perceived as relatively weak. In common with many other regions, however, Wales experiences a 'devolution paradox'^{3,5}: a substantial desire for local autonomy co-existing with a strong public preference for common state-wide standards in public service provision.

3. References to the research

Research Grants

1. Awarded to: **Scully, R.** (PI) and **Wyn Jones, R.** (Co-Investigator) *The 2011 Welsh Referendum Study* (Economic and Social Research Council Grant RES-000-22-4496; 01/11/10 - 31/10/11; sum awarded £81,043.16)
2. Awarded to: **Scully, R.** (PI) and **Wyn Jones, R.** (Co-Investigator) *The 2011 Welsh Election Study* (Economic and Social Research Council Grant RES-062-23-2625; 01/02/11 - 01/11/11; sum awarded £89,203.79)

Publications

3. **Wyn Jones, R.** and **Scully, R.** (2012) *Wales Says Yes: Devolution and the 2011 Welsh Referendum*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press. ISBN: 9780708324581 [Can be supplied by the University on request. Listed in REF2 of the Submission]
4. Henderson, A., Jeffery, C. and **Wincott, D.** (eds) (2013) *Citizenship after the Nation State*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan [Can be supplied by the University on request]
http://www.institute-of-governance.org/major_projects/citizen_after_the_nation_state
5. Henderson, A., Jeffery, C., **Wincott, D.** and **Wyn Jones, R.** (2013) Reflections on the 'Devolution Paradox': a comparative examination of multi-level citizenship. *Regional Studies* 47(3), pp. 303-322 [Listed in REF2 of the Submission]
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2013.768764>

4. Details of the impact

Cardiff research on public attitudes in Wales has had four substantial impacts.

First, by directly informing both the conclusions of the All Wales Convention, and the behaviour of key actors in the 2011 Welsh devolution referendum, the research has significantly influenced the Welsh devolution settlement. The All Wales Convention was established by the Welsh Government in 2008 to make recommendations regarding a referendum on moving to Part 4 of the 2006 Government of Wales Act (i.e. granting the Welsh Assembly primary law-making powers). The impact of the research occurred at several points in the Convention's work:

- Key research findings, detailing changes in public attitudes since the 1990s, were presented to the Convention early in its work (in 2009). This provided the Convention with a baseline understanding of attitudes to devolution in Wales.
- Wyn Jones acted as a consultant to the Convention, providing detailed guidance on the content of further public attitudes research (two surveys and several focus groups) commissioned by the Convention from GfKNOP;
- Wyn Jones provided advice to the Convention Chair, at the latter's request, when he was drafting its Final Report.

The Convention's November 2009 final report^{5.1} observed "substantial support for devolution as it stands, and clear signs of an appetite for more" (p.98), and supported holding a referendum. The Convention Chair, Sir Emyr Jones Parry has stated that "Certainly the conclusions of the All Wales Convention drew on results produced by Professor Wyn Jones. The clear view that a referendum was winnable led directly to the recommendation to hold one... The referendum result bore this out and endorsed the conclusions advocated earlier by Professor Wyn Jones."^{5.2}

The research also then directly informed the decision of the Welsh Government to proceed towards holding the referendum. As the then Deputy First Minister has confirmed, "It was necessary for the two parties within the coalition to be satisfied that the state of public opinion in Wales was sufficiently strong in favour of law making powers to enable us to trigger the provisions of the GOWA 2006. The evidence provided by the Governance Centre was clear, in that the

support for further devolution had grown substantially since the Assembly was established in 1999, and that a clear majority for a Yes vote was likely if a referendum were to be held. Evidence of this kind, supported by the evidence obtained by the all party Convention encouraged the coalition parties to hold a referendum in March 2011. The result, with 63.5% voting Yes, confirmed that the evidence we relied on was correct”.^{5.3} The research also provided the central evidence base for the campaign strategy of the successful Yes campaign team in the 2011 referendum: as the Chair of the steering committee for the Yes for Wales campaign group has confirmed, “I can vouch for the extent to which this evidence played directly into our campaign planning”;^{5.4} the Yes Campaign Director observes: “Having played a key role in the two Welsh devolution campaigns, as National Organiser in 1997 and Campaign Director in 2011, I can directly compare experiences of the volume of information and understanding of political trend apparent in both. A key difference was the greater breadth of publicly available data and understanding available to both sides in the 2011 campaign compared to 1997, and this key difference was directly related to the high value and unique work undertaken by Dr Richard Wyn Jones and Dr Roger Scully.” The Yes victory in the March 2011 referendum substantially enhanced the Assembly’s powers, significantly changing Wales’ devolution settlement.

Second, the research has already influenced the on-going work of the Silk Commission, established in 2011 by the UK government to review Welsh devolution. Research findings (concerning public attitudes towards devolution of taxation) were presented in early 2012 to the Commission. By clarifying for the Commission what was known, and what unknown, about relevant public attitudes, this work shaped subsequent social research conducted by the Commission, and it is cited in Chapter 8 of the Silk Commission’s first report (published November 2012)^{5.5}, which recommended devolving substantial taxation powers to the Welsh Assembly. Broader findings – concerning public support for devolution more generally – were extensively cited and quoted in Welsh Government evidence submitted to the Commission in February 2013^{5.6} (see pp.4-5); the then Minister for Education and Skills has confirmed that the Welsh Government “cited this evidence as underpinning the case for reform” in developing the Government’s argument for both an extension in both the scope of devolution and a fundamental change in its form (from a ‘conferred’ to a ‘reserved’ powers model).^{5.4}

Third, the research has contributed substantially towards informing political debate in Wales. The research team has actively disseminated major findings via:

- A series of public seminars in Cardiff (June 2009, October 2009, May 2010, June 2011, October 2011, May 2012); these have attracted substantial audiences, including AMs, journalists, and representatives of major civil society organisations;
- Other public seminars, at the Institute of Government in London (December 2011) and Aberystwyth (June 2010, June 2011, October 2011), which also attracted substantial (i.e. c.30-60) non-academic audiences.
- Numerous broadcast media appearances by research team members (across BBC-Wales, ITV-Wales and S4C television; Radio 4, Radio 5Live, Radio Wales and Radio Cymru).

These activities have directly informed political and social elites about evidence on public attitudes. They have also contributed to public debate more widely: by informing key political journalists, and through extensive media reporting and discussion of the findings.^{5.7} “In the run-up to the 2011 devolution referendum in Wales [the research] was absolutely crucial in informing the understanding of public attitudes” according to the Chief Reporter of the *Western Mail*, who has further observed of Scully and Wyn Jones that “Their research has been indispensable, enriching understanding of the public’s growing acceptance of the National Assembly as an institution and of its appetite for more powers”.^{5.8}

Fourth, the research has facilitated the enhancement of social survey capacity in Wales, and thereby also led directly to the more regular conducting of political polling in Wales. Scully and Wyn Jones worked closely with the survey agency YouGov^{5.9} to help YouGov establish and demonstrate a Wales-specific survey capacity. The content of YouGov’s first ever public survey in Wales (summer 2009) was designed by Scully and Wyn Jones, drawing heavily on their previous work. Survey findings were then disseminated at a widely-attended Cardiff public seminar. This seminar led directly to ITV-Wales commissioning YouGov to conduct regular polling through May 2011’s Welsh Assembly election; somewhat more infrequent polling has continued subsequently.

As YouGov's Research Manager responsible for Wales has confirmed, the input of Scully and Wyn Jones was "integral in allowing YouGov to expand our operations in Wales. Their input helped us to design our sampling and weighting schemes when we decided to make a concerted effort to start regular polling in Wales. Following this work, YouGov has had considerable success accurately predicting vote share in the 2010 General Election and 2011 Welsh Assembly Elections and well as the 2011 Welsh referendum. Based on these successes, YouGov has been able to build momentum in Wales and regularly works with broadcast media clients to provide up to date polling on political topics, something which has long been under utilised in Welsh politics. YouGov has also been able to gain credibility within the broadcast and academic communities by citing our work with Cardiff University, which has helped us to expand our reach and gain valuable introductions with new clients. Without working with Richard and Roger, it is unlikely that YouGov would have been able to have as much success working in Wales and encouraging the wider use of survey data in Wales more broadly." By providing for more regular public polling than hitherto (during the entire period between the 2003 and 2007 Welsh Assembly elections, only three voting intention polls were published) the public in Wales were substantially better informed about voting preferences prior to the 2011 referendum and Assembly election.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. All Wales Convention (2009) *Final Report and Executive Summary*
 Provides direct evidence of the impact of the research on the report produced by this body. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/awc/publications/091118thereporten.pdf> (see especially Chapter 5).
2. Factual Statement, Chair of the All-Wales Convention, confirming that the conclusions of the All Wales convention drew on results produced by Wyn Jones.
3. Factual Statement, former Deputy First Minister of Wales and former Leader of Plaid Cymru, confirming that the decision of the Welsh Government to proceed towards holding a referendum was informed by the research.
4. Factual Statement, Chair of the Yes for Wales steering committee and former Minister for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government; confirming that the Yes for Wales campaign strategy was informed by the research; and confirming that the Welsh Government evidence submitted to part 2 of the Silk Commission was underpinned by the research.
5. Commission on Devolution in Wales (the Silk Commission), *Empowerment and Responsibility: Financial Powers to Strengthen Wales*. November 2012. Confirms the impact of the research on the conclusions and recommendations of the Commission. Available at: <http://commissionondevolutioninwales.independent.gov.uk/files/2013/01/English-WEB-main-report1.pdf> (see especially Chapter 8).
6. Welsh Government (2013) *Evidence Submitted by the Welsh Government to the Commission on Devolution in Wales*. Confirms the impact of the research on the evidence submitted by the Welsh Government. Available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/130215silkevidence.pdf> (see especially pp.4-5).
7. Blog of Betsan Powys (BBC Wales Political Editor): 'Polls Apart?' (2009). An example of the influence of the research on political journalists and on wider public awareness and debate in Wales. Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/betsanpowys/2009/10/polls_apart.html
8. Factual Statement, Chief Reporter at the Western Mail, confirming that research conducted by the WGC was crucial in informing journalists' understandings of public attitudes in Wales.
9. Factual Statement, Research Manager at YouGov, confirming that Scully and Wyn Jones, and their research, have been integral to the development of YouGov's capacity to conduct surveys in Wales.

[All documents and web pages saved as PDF copies on 09/07/13 and are available upon request from HEI]