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AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO LGBTQ+ LIVED EXPERIENCES IN  
CONTEMPORARY WREXHAM

Master's Thesis

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## **Introduction**

This thesis sets out to explore the emergence and lifestyles of the LGBTQ+ community in contemporary Wrexham, Wales, within the context of folkloristics, its history as a sports town and its current position as an emerging hotspot of pop culture. The structure of the thesis will include seven chapters; *Theoretical Framework*, *Context*, *Welcome to Wrexham: Fame, Celebrity and Pop Culture*, *Fieldwork: Methodology and Potential Challenges*, *Queer Wrexham: Internet Surveys*, *Queer Wrexham Participant Observation* and *Queer Wrexham: Interviews*. This will then be followed by a conclusion to summarise my findings. The appendices attached to the end of the document will detail the results of the online surveys, which are covered in detail in the chapter, *Queer Wrexham: Internet Surveys*.

This phenomenon could be considered a worthwhile topic to be explored, as by exploring the LGBTQ+ community on a small scale (such as the city of Wrexham), a broader understanding can be fostered of lived experiences of marginalised groups, which I hope can contribute towards representation and inclusivity. The intersection of folkloristics, pop culture and queer community through the lens of sports and lived experiences in the Welsh town can offer a unique blend of ideas and perhaps contribute a fresh perspective on these issues to academic discourse.

Wrexham, with its sports legacy, has recently risen to prominence due to the Disney docuseries, *Welcome to Wrexham* (Season 1: 2022, Season 2: 2023, Season 3: 2024). I aim to explore the repercussions of this on the local queer community in Wrexham, with an overall aim to uncover the lived reality of the community in light of this international exposure and cultural renaissance. I ultimately would like to discern if these changes have (or will) bring about positive changes (such as increased visibility, tolerance and opportunities for a public platform) for the LGBTQ+ community through research, participant observation, online surveys and interviews. The online surveys used in this study contain eight questions and were conducted from the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> of November 2023 (with a total of eight respondents). The interviews were conducted on the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2024. I participated in my participant observation and on the 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January. All data was collected within the town of Wrexham.

I wish to explore the relevance of the high profile of football to the LGBTQ+ lived experience, coming from an understanding of the history of homophobia in British football. In doing so, I also aim to shed light on how increasing individualism may affect the visibility

and openness of the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham. The juxtaposition of a more queer-friendly Britain (Matousek 2020) and the prolific role of football as a potentially homophobic sports institution serves as a focus of this study. (BBC Sport 2009).

I should add, that I myself am a member of the LGBTQ+ community from Wrexham, making for somewhat of an emic study. It came to my attention that this particular community has not had prior exposure in academia that I could find, and so I aim to increase the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham and public understanding. The pop-culture renaissance of Wrexham seemed like an ideal opportunity to cover this topic, and as somebody from the community myself, I thought who better to tell these stories? Another point of note is that I have not lived full-time in Wrexham for over ten years, and so there is bound to be much that has changed, and in many ways, I also am an 'outsider' of sorts. I am hoping this experience away will help also to contribute to a fresh perspective, and help diminish any biases I may have.

## Chapter 1

### Theoretical Framework

In this text, I will approach the LGBTQ+ community of Wrexham from a folkloristic angle. To quote Dundes (1980, 6-7), he claims that in addition to the geographic-cultural folk group, “even more obvious as folk groups are those of an ethnic, racial, religious, or occupational character. Each ethnic group has its own folklore”. He also claims that “The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor.” and “as new groups emerge, new folklore is created. Thus we have the folklore of surfers, motorcyclists, and computer programmers,” The term ‘LGBTQ+’ was not yet being widely used when Dundes wrote *Interpreting Folklore*, however it can be thought of as an emerging ‘new group’ who are united by a common factor. It is of course, a large and diverse group, which may easily be divided further into many sub-groups (which could present some challenges). I will try to address these challenges by acknowledging potential areas of divergence in my fieldwork.

In terms of the other theoretical frameworks used in this thesis, there are a lot of themes and terms which are open to interpretation in terms of their meaning, including those which are integral to my aims. The most obvious of these is perhaps the definition of the LGBTQ+ community itself. To understand this term, I thought it best to start with the simpler acronym, *LGBT*, which stands for ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender’ (Cambridge Dictionary 2024).

These subcategories themselves could be argued to form separate ‘folk groups’ of their own. For example, the word *gay* was originally an adjective associated with “cheerfulness and pleasure”, but came to be used to refer to homosexuals as early as the 1930’s (although it is thought that is not until the 1960s that homosexual men themselves began to prefer the term) (Hobson 2001, 188). Despite this preference, there are suggestions that the origins of *gay* as a word for a homosexual man may come from prostitution, as publications from the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century refer to brothels as a “gay house” (The Sentinel 1885, 145). Perhaps it is a result of such usage that over in the United States, a *gay boy* then referred to a young man or boy working in prostitution for male clients (Muzzy 2005, 7). It is important to note that as the United Kingdom and United States share the same language, it is not implausible that certain terminologies could make their way across the Atlantic.

Another term derived from this period is that of *Lesbian*, referring to a homosexual woman or girl (Zimmerman 2000, 453). According to Zimmerman, “The use of a term to denominate a particular kind of woman, one whose sexual desire is directed toward other women originated in the late nineteenth century with the formulation of types of sexual deviance, especially homosexuality.” Such a definition seems to coincide with the time of the aforementioned *gay brothels* and suggests a societal pivot towards acknowledging (even if reviling) homosexual people, and thus categorising them.

This ‘otherness’ is not unique to sexual minorities, and can be seen regarding many groups at this time (coinciding with the colonial era). Dimitrijevska-Jankulovska & Denkovska (2023, 50) mentions “the formation of the colonial subject”, and uses the term “oriental” as an example of people from eastern countries. Dimitrijevska-Jankulovska & Denkovska also claim that “Taking into account that there was a meeting of completely opposite parties, they contrast and compare each other, which leads to defining one’s own identity in such a way as to emphasize those characteristics that are absent in the Other”, which serves to benefit the “occidental”. The acknowledging of homosexuality from a distance also seems to benefit the predominant majority of western society in the same way (here we can perhaps replace the term ‘occidental’ for the ‘heteronormative society’), as this acknowledgement does not seem to necessarily come with acceptance, and so serves to culturally separate sexual minorities from society.

From this, a group can be formed from such colonial othering, which can then be treated as a distinct cultural group within society (or in other terms, a ‘folk group’).

Thirdly, the B of LGBT refers to *bisexual*, with bisexuality being defined as the sexual attraction to both males and females (Bailey et al. 2016). Like the word *gay*, the word has also undergone a change in meaning, or can mean several different things. The anatomist, Robert Bentley Todd used the term bisexual in 1859 when referring to a body possessing both male and female characteristics (a condition which is now referred to as intersex). This meaning later changed in the twentieth century to refer to an androgynous-presenting person. It was only in the 1910s where the word is documented as referring to sexual orientation. This timing again coincides roughly with the usage of *gay* and *lesbian* as terms to categorise sexual minorities (Stonewall 2022).

Finally the T of LGBT, refers to the transgender community. The common definition of someone who is *Transgender* is somebody who identifies as a gender that does not coincide with the sex they were assigned at birth (American Psychological Association 2018). During the 1990s the acronym *LGB* was often used to refer to sexual minorities, and acceptance for transgender people and their inclusion in it seemed to take longer to materialise, with *LGBT* not becoming widespread in global discourse until the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Blakemore 2021).

*LGBT* later gave way to *LGBTQ*, *LGBTQ+* and other derivatives. The Q of *LGBTQ+* appears to be a later addition, meaning *queer*. The term *Queer* is itself a highly loaded term, as it has documented use of being used as a homophobic slur since the 1910s. It has since seen itself undergoing a reclamation of sorts amongst the community, and has been re-appropriated by some *LGBTQ+* people, perhaps as a term of empowerment. There are others who claim the Q of this acronym stands for *questioning*, as in questioning one's sexuality or gender identity (Blakemore 2021).

Finally there is a plus sign (+), which “holds space for the expanding and new understanding of different parts of the very diverse gender and sexual identities” (Princeton Gender + Sexuality Research Center n.d). It is noticeable that as time goes on, there seems to be efforts made to make the acronym more and more inclusive, with other versions of the acronym existing such as *LGBTQIA*, referring to asexuals and intersex people (Merriam-Webster 2019).

For the purpose of my thesis however, I have chosen to use the acronym *LGBTQ+*, as I feel the Q+ automatically includes all smaller minority groups, and the length of *LGBTQIA* means it is less convenient to be used frequently. I maintain the use of *LGBTQ+* instead of a word such as *queer* as *LGBTQ+* has historical and societal connotations which are relevant to the study, and it cannot so easily be misconstrued as a slur. Due to the myriad of potential terminologies, I was aware that the choice I made regarding how I refer to the community could affect how people responded to me and the results of my fieldwork.

Other prominent terms which I explore in my thesis are also difficult to define, such as *identity* and *community*. Zhang (2020, 218-221) introduces the idea of “*folkloric identity*” as an alternative to “*ethnic identity*”, as he argues the latter of which is still used in folklore despite the term *ethnic* being a race-based notion founded in racist constructs of human race and ethnicity. The issue is not clear-cut however, as *ethnic* is not always described in the



way that Zhang describes. As a societal construct, it can just as easily be defined by other markers, such as cultural heritage, history and language, and an ethnic *solidarity* of such peoples could be more crucial to a shared ethnicity than racial or genetic markers. (Salter & Harpending 2013, 256-260) For example, there need not be a reason why two individuals of visibly different racial/genetic background could identify as the same ethnic group, so *ethnic identity* as a term does not necessarily need to be considered obsolete.

*Folkloric identity* is also a term that does not come without its issues, especially when we consider the earliest written ideas and definitions of folklore as referring to those who were rural, illiterate and/or poor (Dundes 1980, 8). Such an idea is clearly an ‘othering’ idea and is not particularly flattering to the subjects in question. Sims & Stevens (2005, 11) mention notions of folklore as “something that is simply ‘old,’ ‘old-fashioned,’ ‘exotic,’ ‘rural,’ ‘peasant,’ ‘uneducated,’ ‘untrue,’ or ‘dying out’” as ideas challenged by contemporary folklorists, especially in the United States. It is clear to me how such old notions of folklore could be considered highly problematic in a country with a colonial foundation such as the US. The initial definition of folklore as defined by Dundes could almost be considered a tool of colonial oppression when thought of in this context.

Despite this, I feel the definition and notions of folklore are constantly evolving, and do not necessarily need to be tied to old, obsolete, prejudiced ideas of the past and so for the sake of my study, I will be using *identity* in a way that refers to Zhang’s idea of *folkloric identity*. Although *ethnic identity* is not always referring to ‘race-based notions’, the common associations of ‘ethnic’ with race still seem to be very prevalent to me, and they are not associations which I feel benefit the focus of my study or are extremely relevant to my target group.

Zhang also claims that “While challenging the notion of “ethnic identity,” the concept of folkloric identity points to the very nature of folklore practice that enables the making of new groups, new identities, and new cultures, while respecting the dynamics of intra-group diversity” (221). This is especially relevant for a community thought of as more contemporary such as the LGBTQ+ community, which also possesses high-levels of intra-group diversity and intersectionality. Zhang further elaborates that “In contrast, the concept of folkloric identity calls for the examination of folklore practice by investigating the development of a tradition without first delineating the practitioners along racial or ethnic lines” (223). In other words, the ‘marker’ of the group (whether it be ethnicity, or being part

of a sexual/gender minority) is not the important aspect of defining the group identity, but rather common practices and traditions that may accompany this. It is from such an angle that I wish to approach the concept of identity in this text.

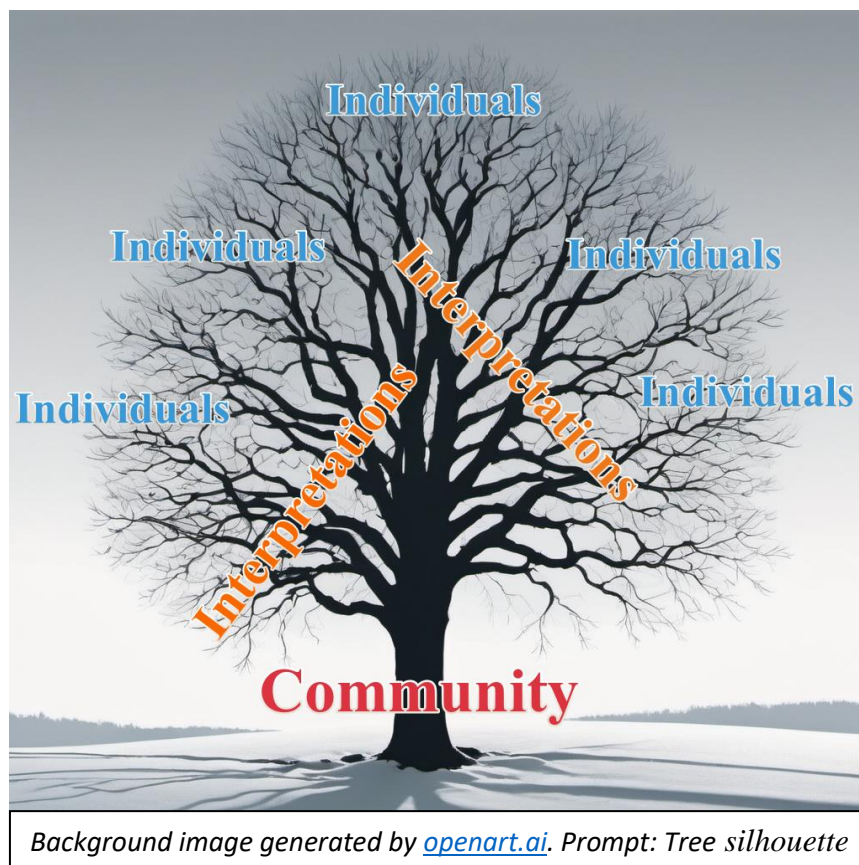
Another concept which I will frequently allude to is that of *community*. When talking about groups of LGBTQ+ people, it seems that this group is most often referred to in such a way, as the *LGBTQ+ Community*. The word community also can be perceived in several different ways. Whilst in the western world, *community* is often used interchangeably with *neighbourhood* (i.e. location-based), it is unclear if the LGBTQ+ community of Wrexham in particular could fall under such a categorisation, as they are spread out across the city and perhaps too numerous and diverse to be counted as one *community* in a practical sense. This led me to wonder; is it frequent contact and communication amongst those in close proximity that define a community? If so, how do terms such as the *LGBTQ+ community* enter the public consciousness when it is apparent they do not refer to a group of people of this nature? Can the LGBTQ+ community really be considered a community at all (especially when spoken about in a global context)? This definition of community isn't the only common definition, as *community*, like *folk group*, can seemingly be used to define any group of people. Due to this all-encompassing idea of community, participating in community can often be thought of as a personal choice and, in modern society, *community* often represents a group of people which is ever-changing (James et al, 2012, 9-13). This, to me, seems more applicable to a community like the LGBTQ+ community. Is this a perfect categorisation? Of course, no. Especially when the individuals which comprise a community of this nature may not even be unanimously agreed upon by those within the community.

The ambiguity of *community* combined with the prolific contemporary usage of the term *LGBTQ+* is evocative of Anderson's concept of *imagined communities*. Although Anderson is talking about nations when he mentions "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1991, 6-7) where members of the community need not know anything about each other or even meet each other (in contrast to what is typically imagined as a *community*), it is apparent that this concept can also be applied to that of the LGBTQ+ community, as it is quite simply impossible for all members of the community to meet and know one another due to its sheer size and diversity. Whilst those of a nation may feel camaraderie with one another in geopolitical events, wars or the Olympic Games, the LGBTQ+ community may experience a similar phenomenon with

globally widespread events such as Gay Pride parades. In a world becoming increasingly online and digitized, it seems as if a such *imagined communities* may become ever more common as people connect with large online groups with whom they feel a solidarity at the expense of small, traditional rural groups of the past. Due to this societal shift, I wish to expand the definition of *community* in this work to also include the idea of an *imagined community*.

It is important to note that Anderson coined this term in 1991, which was before the global explosion of high-speed internet and social media, and it seems the boundaries between *imagined community* and simply *community* may be destined to become ever more blurred.

James et al. (14) goes on further to define community as “a group or network of persons who are connected (objectively) to each other by relatively durable social relations that extend beyond immediate genealogical ties and who mutually define that relationship (subjectively) as important to their social identity and social practice.” As the LGBTQ+ community is certainly a connected network that goes beyond genealogical ties, this does seem to hold relevance, however whether or not all individuals within this community benefit from this grouping, and whether this grouping is important to social identity and



practice is less clear. Each individual may well feel differently about these issues, and as such may challenge even these more broad definitions of community.

To address this conundrum, I have chosen to convey my idea of *community* as a tree (shown above), with the trunk being the idea, or the core concept of the community (in this case being LGBTQ+) and each branch being an interpretation of what this *community* means. The smaller branches represent the individuals themselves, some of whom may not agree or perceive that those of the other (more distant) branches are part of the community (or perhaps do not even identify with the community themselves), but for the sake of my research they are united as a ‘community’ by the trunk of the tree – the idea that unites them and may result in common struggles and experiences in the contemporary world.

The large over-lap of the terms *community* and *folk group* is ever-apparent, and my references to the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham refer to the community both in terms of the above definition, and as a folk group. When talking about folklore and the experiences of this group, I want to focus on the overall lived experience of individuals in the community.

Another term which is relevant to this study (and crops up often when researching sexual and gender minorities) is that of *representation*. In the past, we can find examples of representation being used within the context of gender especially. According to Butler (1990, 1), “*representation* serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women.” She also claimed at the time that the category of “woman” was understood in neither “stable or abiding terms” and suggests little agreement regarding the consensus regarding what constitutes “the category of women.” This definition of representation is important and beneficial for my research, due to the obvious parallels and overlaps of gender and queer theory.

Butler (3) highlights these similarities even more apparently when she discusses how *women* is problematic as a signifier, as “gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities.” Due to this it can’t really be separated and treated as a separate monolithic concept.

It is striking to me, that not only is the discourse surrounding the definition and intersectionality of gender extremely relevant to the core definitions of the transgender

community, but that many of the arguments Butler presents could also be argued for the LGBTQ+ community as a whole.

Another concern is whether or not these categorizations and definitions such as *women* or *LGBTQ+* exist only because of a shared, universal, heteronormative worldview. Butler (5) asks “to what extent does the category of women achieve stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix?” As previously discussed, if the grouping of the LGBTQ+ community can be thought of a post-colonial *othering*, where the beneficiaries are those with the most power in society, then women and the LGBTQ+ community can be thought of in similar terms as groups outside of this, grouped together despite nuances and intersectionality that may exist, for the benefit of the dominant majority.

A potential issue of this *othering* being so prevalent in the categorisation of marginalised groups (even by those who advocate for such groups) could be a lack of *representation* and/or *visibility* for those who perhaps do not fit neatly into such pre-determined boxes. For example, we have seen how the LGBTQ+ acronym has become longer as it has attempted to include those who previously may have felt unrepresented, just as an intersex or non-binary person may feel unrepresented by the signifier of *women*, despite maybe also suffering under patriarchal or heteronormative societal conventions in many of the same ways as a woman. To summarise this thought, it could be said that the *othering* of large marginalised groups serves to erase intersectionality.

Of particular significance when discussing *visibility* is the urban origins of LGBTQ+ community research. Such research has a tendency to be carried out in large cities rather than smaller urban areas (or rural areas) such as Wrexham, which could be in part due to migration of LGBTQ+ people to larger urban areas. As a result of this it seems LGBTQ+ people in small cities may lack the visibility of their counterparts in large urban areas with ‘gaybourhoods’, where more research is undertaken and the community bonds between LGBTQ+ people are less apparent (Forstie 2020, 153-168)

To summarise, it is perhaps impossible to be 100% inclusive in all language, as the human experience is so diverse and varied, but it is possible to adapt language and thought processes to be, not just as inclusive as possible, but mindful of these limitations as we use this terminology.

The intersectionality of those within the LGBTQ+ community is something which I feel I must be careful to take into account when talking about this community, especially when talking about Wrexham, which is predominantly working-class and has suffered a long period of economic decline (Ward 2023). To explore this intersectionality between class and being LGBTQ+ in Wrexham, it is crucial that the concept of *class* or *working-class* is defined in some way. According to Biressi & Nunn (2013, 1), “we understand social class as being formed through material conditions and economic (in)securities and as being shaped by early disadvantage or natal privileges and the uneven distribution of life chances and opportunities which these conditions create. But we also choose to recognise class as an ongoing social process experienced across our lifetime trajectories.” This suggests that *class* is not purely defined by socio-economic status, but also by the subsequent cultures that emerge based on these divisions. Whilst potentially it may be possible (if perhaps very difficult) for a working-class person to achieve high wealth or income, it seems a lot less likely that their cultural behaviours formed from childhood would change very much, and so *class culture* becomes permeated and reinforced throughout society (Although, I feel it should be noted that if this working-class, wealthy person was to have a child who grew up in a middle or upper class society, they may not be as likely to embody typical elements of working class culture). Other research has shown social status to be highly influenced by social class (Chan & Goldthorpe 2004, 383-401). This suggests that discrimination or *othering* perhaps resulting from being perceived as lower-class could continue to be experienced by an individual even if they become wealthy or successful.

This is important for my research, as when talking about the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham, it is likely that a significantly large proportion of the community also has the struggles of being working-class within the framework of UK culture. This could be another potential source of discrimination and/or othering, and a good example of why acknowledgement of intersectionality is important, as even LGBTQ+-related experiences could also be greatly affected by issues of class (and maybe it is not always so clear which is which).

An example of how the LGBTQ+ movement could perhaps penalise or exclude those of a working-class background could be the perceived commercialisation of pride movements such as gay pride parades. Jaba (2022) comments in Chapter Z Magazine, “It’s inevitable that at London Pride you’ll see logos for Barclays, HSBC, Starbucks, Nando’s – all the big

names are there,” and “The goal of a Pride campaign ultimately is to sell something so money is made.” Similar sentiments can be found in *The Guardian*, where Tatchell (2019) writes “Pride is now capitalism with a pink hue. It has become monetised: we pay to march, the city authorities extort vast charges from the Pride organisers and we are encouraged to buy rainbow-branded merchandise to express our sexual and gender identity. Much of the LGBT+ is part of the neoliberal establishment.”

When large platforms of LGBTQ+ representation are events that require paid admission, it could serve as a deterrent for working-class or low-income members of the community. The message that this could potentially portray is that self-acceptance and public visibility may only be luxuries afforded to those who can afford them financially. By focusing this study on Wrexham, I hope to improve representation for Welsh working-class LGBTQ+ people and perhaps shine light on how this ‘neoliberal’ commercialisation of pride may not necessarily benefit some of the most disenfranchised amongst the LGBTQ+ community.

Whilst *class* is an obvious focus of intersectionality given the nature and history of Wrexham, it is but one of potentially never-ending aspects of it. The LGBTQ+ community by its very nature has the potential to be infinitely diverse. Other factors of intersectionality such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and physical and mental handicaps could all potentially affect the LGBTQ+ related experiences people in the community may have. Whilst it is impossible to address everything, I would like to acknowledge these factors if I feel they are relevant to my fieldwork, but in my personal experience *class* and *class culture* are intangible concepts experienced by almost everyone who grows up (or is familiar with) the UK, and so it seems more likely to me that this will be a recurrent theme (as opposed to other aspects of intersectionality).

Whilst the intersectionality of class and sexual and gender identity are the most apparent for this study, it is clear they are not the only ones that exist (and could therefore affect the results of my fieldwork). According to Christoffersen (2021, 5), “In the UK, as elsewhere, while race, class, gender and gender identity, disability status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, migration status, and faith continue to be important markers of inequality, and in many ways increasingly so, these inequalities have predominantly been addressed separately. The idea of ‘intersectionality’ is to focus on the ways that they operate simultaneously and shape one another.” Considering this, it is apparent I cannot separate

individuals of the LGBTQ+ community from their other ‘markers of inequality’ – not just class, but also a myriad of other ‘markers’.

Christoffersen (5) then gives an example of how a lack of intersectionality can harm marginalised groups, even if the intention is in fact the opposite; “This failure to consider intersectionality is still widespread in the UK. For example, because the domestic violence awareness movement has tended to focus on heterosexual relationships (particularly cisgender male perpetrators and cisgender female victim-survivors), members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) community have been largely excluded”. As a result of this, I do not wish to contribute more to such a problem, and so I intend to highlight examples of intersectionality that become apparent in my fieldwork, so as not to erase the experiences and lived realities of these marginalised peoples. A question that arises from this is whether or not true inclusivity can exist without intersectionality. If pride parades become a symbol of a neoliberal establishment commodifying queerness at the expense of intersectionality, can they really be considered inclusive spaces?

Of course, it may be impossible to constantly address all forms of intersectionality when undertaking ethnographic fieldwork (most of us could easily be considered to fall into many different ‘groups’ and individual struggles of each person have infinite variables), and it has come to my attention that certain markers of inequality are not necessarily visible, and so potentially impossible to address. This is clear in regards to many of the LGBTQ+ community who are easily identifiable as LGBTQ+, but could also apply to religious convictions and mental health disadvantages. As such, I cannot attempt to aim for perfection in this aspect, but feel I can avoid damage to marginalised individuals with awareness and acknowledgement of these co-existent struggles that may exist.

Another concept relevant to my research is that of the meaning of *celebrity*. British historian, Greg Jenner defines a celebrity as a “unique persona made widely known to the public via media coverage, and whose life is publicly consumed as dramatic entertainment, and whose commercial brand is profitable for those who exploit their popularity, and perhaps also for themselves.” (2020, 12) A perhaps important takeaway from this is the emphasis on the commercial viability of a celebrity, especially when viewed through the lens of *class culture*. We can deduce that a very famous celebrity will most often possess vast income and/or wealth, which differentiates them from the majority of their fans, and perhaps especially from their fans of a working-class background. As a result a *celebrity* could be seen to have



a position of privilege, not just in terms of economic freedom, but also in that they could be seen to exist outside of *class culture* (as if they were reviled by the working class, it would logically be impossible for them to maintain their popularity).

An example of such public figures can easily be found with the British Royal Family. The Royal Family possess a net worth of 21.3 billion pounds, (or 24.9 billion euros) (Srinivasan 2023), and serve as an example of immense wealth inherited for several generations (thus solidly upper class). Despite the obvious inequality that this may symbolise, many members of the Royal Family remain very popular amongst the UK populace. According to surveys, a majority had a favourable opinion of the Prince and Princess of Wales, and over half had a favourable impression of King Charles as of January 2024 (Ipsos 2024).

Research from the BBC suggests that support for the Monarchy in Wales is more or less in-line with the UK average (BBC, 2023). The relationship between Wales and the Royal Family would appear to be complex, especially given the ubiquitous presence of the title ‘Prince of Wales’ (the title given to the male heir to the throne), which dates back to the twelfth century. This a time where Wales was made up of several lordships and principalities of both Welsh and Anglo-Norman origins (Charles 2015, 108) (Price 2010, 74). This title became associated with the English Royal family following the English invasion of Wales about one hundred years later (David 2019, 26-28). This association with long-standing tradition may contribute to the popularity and acceptance of the Monarchy in Wales today, despite the apparent history of Welsh subjugation that goes alongside it. This is relevant to my study, especially in regards to concepts of *class* and *identity* (whether that be Welsh identity, or identifying as a member of the working class). The monarchy itself could simply be seen a symbol of English and upper-class hegemony over places like Wrexham, and *celebrity*, whilst existing outside of it, can also be used to reinforce this hegemony. Individuals like Ryan Reynolds hold a great deal of wealth (and potentially therefore, power), yet also possess popularity.

Due to this longstanding popularity and the traditional nature of the British Monarchy, comparing them to contemporary celebrities could seem controversial, however Dion (2018) wrote for Essec Business School, concerning a royal wedding at the time that “The Royal wedding is indeed expected to boost the UK economy by nearly £1.1bn, according to experts. Over £70 million has been spent on memorabilia: mugs, t-shirts, cakes, flags and... condoms.” This is strangely familiar to previous descriptions of the commodification of gay

pride parades. Based on this it can be said that the royal family indeed meet the criteria outlined by Jenna, as their lives are both publicly consumed and highly profitable. This *celebrification* of the monarchy could perhaps be seen as inevitable outcome of free-market, capitalist western society, and also serves as an example of how people can be used as a means of profit. I suspect this also to be an integral theme to my research concerning Wrexham and its newfound celebrity endorsement.

I was tempted to speak less about the monarchy in this section, as at first glance it seemed to be not so relevant to my research and goals, however upon hearing news of King Charles visiting Wrexham and the Turf (the local sports pub associated with the football team), and then seeing the subsequent flood of social media posts and videos associated with it, I decided otherwise. The palpable excitement and enthusiasm over this official acknowledgement of Wrexham suggested to me that that wealthy ‘celebrities’ such as King Charles held a great deal of power and influence over people, leading to the question of if Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney will benefit from this same sort of idolisation in the community, and whether or not there is an element of blind devotion in the same way (as it could be argued that centuries long devotion to the royals in Wales may not always be in their best interests when seen through the light of colonialism and subjugation especially). I also felt like an understanding of the Royal Family as a prevalent force in the cultural fabric of the UK is integral to understanding class culture in the country, as it would be difficult to imagine the UK as a republic, whilst still somehow maintaining the same ideas and customs it has concerning class.

I have attempted to keep my theoretical framework not just unbiased where possible, but *authentic*. By this, I mean it is my intention to present the data as honestly and truthfully as possible, without my own beliefs and opinions skewing the data to fit my own narrative. I will then use this data with my research to draw conclusions about the contemporary LGBTQ+ in Wrexham.

Despite this, I am aware that it is impossible for me to write completely free from biases and/or my own personal worldview, especially given my own background and relationship with Wrexham and my personal affiliation with the LGBTQ+ community. Considering this, I hope I can instead use these factors to provide additional insight and understanding.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Context**

Wrexham is a Welsh city of 44,785 people (Office for National Statistics, 2021), but forms the centre of a much larger county borough of around 136,000 people (WCBC, 2021). Wrexham was previously known as a town but was awarded city status in 2022 (The Gazette, 2022). City status in the UK is not necessarily defined by population, but is granted by the monarch and can also be associated with having a cathedral, a university or a particular form of government (Sandford 2022). Wrexham is the largest settlement in North Wales, so it's likely that its population has played a role in this change.

Despite its more moderate profile today, Wrexham was highly industrialised during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, with 38 collieries producing 2.5 million tonnes of coal annually, which helped fuel various steel and ironworks in the area, with Bersham Ironworks in Wrexham being a leading ironworks in Europe (WCBC 2022). Despite this, the coal industry throughout Wales saw a rapid decline following the Second World War (Davies 1990, 533). The impact on living standards caused by this decline was further compounded by Thatcherite policies of the 1980s which targeted social welfare (Campbell 2011, 529) and trade unions (Jakopovich 2011, 429-444). By the early 1990s, only one deep pit remained functional in the whole of Wales, which finally closed in 2008 (BBC News, 2009).

If we can view Wrexham through this lens of being a deindustrialised Welsh border town, it is yet again clear how a group such as the LGBTQ+ community may face additional challenges on top of the ones brought about by being a stigmatised group (a facet of intersectionality).

Christopher Lawson argues that “deindustrialisation often forced working class and marginalised Britons to adopt cultural traits, such as individualism and entrepreneurialism, which would come to be associated with Thatcherite neoliberalism” (2020, 13).

The cultural and economic divide can still be felt today, as according to the British Social Attitudes report from the National Centre for Social Research (2023) there is no real change in the percentages of people who identify as working or middle class in the UK, and 77% of people expressed that social class affects ones opportunities “a great deal” or “quite a lot”. This also gives some insight into the prevalence of a ‘class culture’ within the UK, and the roles it may play in group identity.

For the sake of this study, it is important to note the historical link between the working-class citizenry disenfranchised by Thatcher in Wales, and the queer community. Most notably in 1984, when the *Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners* alliance was formed by Communist Party activist, Mark Ashton and his friends (Kelliher 2014, 240-262). This historical moment in Welsh history was further immortalised in Welsh pop culture by the 2014 film, *Pride*, which premiered at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival (Roddick 2014) and was released in cinemas throughout the UK on the 12th September, 2014 (Calhoun 2014). It is important to note that the *Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners* was not strictly a Welsh initiative, as there were eleven LGSM groups throughout the UK (Fisher 2014), but perhaps the reason this story was immortalised in Wales could be due to the most successful of these groups (from London) ‘twinning’ themselves with several Miners Support Groups in Wales. (Hall-Carpenter Archives 1989).

Another focus of this work will be the present-day LGBTQ+ experience in Wrexham as a sports town. Wrexham AFC (Wrexham Athletic Football Club) was founded in 1864 (Liam 2012) and is the oldest football club in Wales and the third-oldest in the world (Jones 2012).

As someone who grew up in Wrexham, the presence of Wrexham AFC in daily life was unavoidable, and the team was spoken about regularly on school playgrounds and classrooms; in pubs, shops and people’s living rooms. I was already aware of the prominence of Wrexham AFC in the minds of the people of Wrexham before undertaking this project, but it was not obviously apparent how this came to be, as the discourse around the team has been mostly negative, as it was mocked for its poor performances and funding dramas, and compared unfavourably to its more prestigious past self.

Wrexham AFC, perhaps mirroring the town itself, saw decades of financial problems, underfunding and poor performance, leading to it being placed in financial administration<sup>1</sup> in 2004 (Winrow, 2005). This downwards trend has recently been reversed by the shock purchase of the club by A-List Hollywood actors, Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney (Team 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Insolvency Act 1986, this is defined as when a company enters a legal process which aims to achieve a statutory objective of an administration, such as rescuing a business that is insolvent due to financial problems. The administrator puts in place a ‘statutory moratorium’ to free a company from creditor enforcement actions. (Dunton 2019)

Despite being in Wales, Wrexham plays in the English Football League, perhaps due to the relative obscurity of the Welsh Football League. As the EFL is such a large and international league, the sums of money involved are very high and according to Harris et al. (2009), players in the EFL become financial ‘assets’ for their football clubs. As a result, there are social barriers for footballers wishing to ‘come out’ as LGBTQ+ or embracing the LGBTQ+ community, as it may damage the brand of the team. This could potentially contribute to a culture of homophobia within the sport.

Compared to UK pop culture as a whole, where many openly gay figures have emerged in politics and entertainment since the 1960s, it can be observed that men’s football has not experienced the same level of openness, and this has provided the conditions for homophobia to remain unaddressed in football (Chapman 2010). The prevalence of homophobia during this time is further evidenced by the 1998 suicide of Justin Fashanu; Britain’s first openly gay footballer (BBC News 1999). Additionally, in a 2009 survey, most fans agreed not enough was being done to tackle homophobia by the Football Association (BBC Sport 2009).

This suggests that society itself has become more progressive on the issue of LGBTQ+ rights over time when compared to the Football Association. This is reflected in rapid legislative changes in the UK since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century regarding LGBTQ+ rights. Section 28, which was brought into effect by Margaret Thatcher in 1988 banned the promotion of ‘pretended family relationships’, which referred to LGBTQ+ families. This was repealed in 2003. In 2004, both the Civil Partnership Act (providing the first legal recognition for same-sex couples in the UK) and the Gender Recognition Act (which provided full legal recognition of the gender of Trans people) came into effect, with same-sex marriages becoming legal in England and Wales in 2013 (Dryden 2020).

As briefly stated in the introduction, my reasons for choosing Wrexham as an area of focus were personal and founded in the idea of bringing stories and realities from this community to the world. The focus on sports and celebrity perhaps seems less obvious to an outsider, but my reasons for this focus are also personal. Growing up in a working-class council estate in Wrexham, and attending local schools as a queer youth, I already stood out, but this was compounded more by disinterest (and inability it would seem) in playing and watching football; perhaps a minor indiscretion in other towns, but almost a social faux pas in a town like Wrexham, where football is so integral to the identity of the town.

As a young adult, witnessing Wrexham's town centre become devoid of shops and businesses due to the 2008 recession, and struggling to adapt to the new economy, I had no choice but to rent the cheapest room in the Turf (a room which was clearly used more as a storage room than an actual place for human habitation), the historic pub associated with the football team and the stadium, and became acquainted with the personalities that frequented it, many of whom are featured in *Welcome to Wrexham* and other new forms of folklore associated it, such as songs from the *Declan Swans*, a local band who provided the theme song for the docuseries, and now are becoming well-known locally for their witty songs describing the patrons of the turf (their popularity was later made apparent during my fieldwork). The Declan Swans, for me, were an example of how this new attention was revitalising local culture, and so it seemed that not only was this a good time to talk about my town as an aspiring folklorist, but also that it was impossible to talk about Wrexham without football taking a central position (none of the recent changes in the town could exist without Wrexham's devotion to the sport).

Aside from sport, the other constant cultural presence in my formative years was that of Wrexham's drinking culture. Whilst an appreciation for social (and binge drinking) is fairly widespread in the UK (Griffiths 2023), this is especially notable in Wrexham given the brewery of Wrexham Lager; its large chimney being an unmissable feature amongst Wrexham's skyline.

Founded in 1881 by German immigrants, The Wrexham Lager Beer Company Limited was "added to a list of new undertakings" that same year in a newspaper called the Llangollen Advertiser (Jones, 1881). Llangollen is a picturesque village about 18 kilometres away from Wrexham, and so it perhaps makes sense that there would be a need for such news to be published here (as Wrexham would have no doubt been the nearest major settlement). The success of Wrexham Lager is reflected in the fact it was one of the beverages served on the *RMS Titanic* (BBC News 2013).

Despite the historic success of the brewery and its fame as "Britain's oldest lager", production ended in the year 2000 due to economic concerns. At this point it was under the domain of Carlsberg-Tetley (who had closed the original brewery) and being brewed in Leeds, in the north of England. (BBC News 2002) This is something I remember well whilst growing up in Wrexham, and I have recollection of concern not just about Wrexham Lager, but also about the potential destruction of the historic brewery and its iconic chimney.

The discontinuation of the brewing of Wrexham lager is in many ways symbolic of Wrexham's decline, although it was thankfully revived in 2011, not just returning to Wrexham, but also restoring the beer's recipe from the 1970s (which is stronger than the more recent recipe used since the Carlsberg-Tetley takeover) (BBC News 2011).

To me, Wrexham had long embodied my pre-conceived notions of a typical working-class town; a culture defined by football and social drinking. The relationship between these two facets of cultural identity is apparent when watching *Welcome to Wrexham* but also when participating in community life in Wrexham itself. The community of fans of Wrexham AFC (and their friends and families) frequently convening in *The Turf*, the historic pub adjacent to Y Cae Ras (meaning 'The Racecourse' in Welsh – the name of Wrexham's football stadium) seem to serve as just as much of an integral feature to the sports culture of Wrexham as the actual games themselves – a cornerstone of a larger community, bonding through both watching the games and drinking at the bar. It seems to me that it may be just as impossible to separate the football mania of Wrexham from its drinking habits as it would be to separate Wrexham from its football heritage. This is especially important to me as somebody seeking to undertake fieldwork in Wrexham, and I fully expected a lot of my fieldwork to be taking place in bars, pubs and clubs as a result of this. It is important to note that this is another potential source of exclusivity and/or marginalisation, as many people may not be able to consume alcohol (such as for religious or health reasons), and perhaps less able to participate in this large aspect of community life (whether it be in the LGBTQ+ community or in general).

Another point of consideration is the 2016 Brexit referendum, in which Wrexham voted by a large majority to leave the European Union (Bagnall 2016). The effect of Brexit on LGBTQ+ communities is largely lacking from public discourse, despite a majority of those in favour of leaving the European Union being opposed to same-sex marriage and LGBT-friendly sex education in school. There has also been a documented rise in hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people in the UK since the referendum (Lindsay 2021, 1-2). Although this may suggest that Wrexham is perhaps less LGBTQ-friendly than perhaps some other places in the UK, it is important to remember that neither those who voted leave nor the LGBTQ+ community are in any way monolithic, and therefore intersectionality (and overlap) between the two groups is bound to exist. There have also been publicised concerns that the large English population of Wales was responsible for 'tipping' the vote towards leave, which

may have had a more pronounced effect in border towns such as Wrexham (Perraudin 2019), which brings up issues of sovereignty and potentially colonialism, as the sentiments of these ‘extra’ people who could have swung the vote (and who may possess anti-LGBT worldviews) may not necessarily be reflective of those originally from Wrexham (or Welsh ‘leave’ voting areas in general).

It is also worth noting that the rise in hate-crimes documented in the UK may not necessarily be only due to Brexit, as the beginning of this increase appears to predate the referendum. Data from all 45 police forces from across the UK in fact reveal that hate crimes against LGBTQ+ people almost trebled between 2014 and 2020 which they said “could reflect a greater confidence in reporting such crimes.” The LGBTQ+ charities in the UK themselves however, refuted this reasoning based on the rise they had seen, claiming such reports could be the ‘tip of the iceberg’. (Hunte 2020)

Wrexham’s status as a border town also presents unique challenges. As the UK is one sovereign state, the Wales-England border can be classified as a ‘soft border’, where people and property can pass freely without legal or bureaucratic hindrance. Despite this it remains an artificial boundary of Wales and England and their respective differences in culture, economics and politics. Potential challenges of such ‘border-dwellers’ like those in Wrexham include the exposure to hostile attitudes from those across the border due to perceived differences (or inferiority) and a lack of facilities, perhaps due to not clearly falling under one administration (Olubukola 2019, 203-209). The potential ‘othering’ of this border-dweller identity from both those further into the Welsh cultural heartland and from England is another example of a potential layer of intersectionality that can be considered.

North Wales also boasts a low rate of homophobic hate-crimes compared to other parts of the UK (and especially England). For example, London is documented as experiencing the most hate-crimes of any police force area (Statista Research Department 2023). Whilst this could be partly due to population, a 2015 UK-wide survey found that participants from London were almost five times more likely to reject support for a gay child than participants from the rest of the UK, whilst areas such as the North of England and Scotland (traditionally working class areas, perhaps with socio-economic and cultural similarities to areas like Wrexham) were the most likely. Participants in these regions were also half as likely to reject a transgender child as those from the capital (Duffy 2015). A lot may have changed since 2015, but the findings did challenge



my preconceived notions that a large world-city such as London (which may attract more LGTQ+ people) would be likely to possess more tolerance than small 'borderland' or working-class cultures like Wrexham.

## Chapter 3

### Welcome to Wrexham: Fame, Celebrity and Pop Culture

The Disney docuseries *Welcome to Wrexham* debuted in 2022, and follows the journey of celebrities, Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney as they attempt to revive Wrexham AFC (Reynolds, R et al. 2022). The series also shines a light on Rob and Ryan's hopes to bring positive changes to the local people of Wrexham (Palmer 2022). Watching the show, it was surreal for me to see people and places I knew on the show, including many scenes set in The Turf; the landlord of which has now become somewhat of a minor international celebrity (at the very least by North Walian standards).

Disney confirmed in November 2023 that *Welcome to Wrexham* is to air another series in spring 2024 (Press Disney UK 2023), and the celebrity status of Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney will no doubt bring international attention to the town. Potential ways this could benefit the LGBTQ+ community include the obvious, such as financial investments and the potential boosting of the local economy through tourism, but as highlighted in the introduction, I would like to explore if this could bring increased visibility and opportunities for a greater public platform for the community (and potentially other marginalised groups).

As Wrexham takes its place in the global tapestry of celebrity and pop culture, it is important to note the well-established relationship between Pop Culture and Queer Culture in the western world. It has been observed that mainstream culture is affected by marginalised communities, and in regards to the LGBTQ+ community, this has especially been the case for the entertainment industry since the 1980s (Mugabe 2023). The reasons why this could be are not obvious, but historical discrimination could have acted as a barrier for the LGBTQ+ community finding work in many fields, thus drawing them to arts and entertainment. As seen with *Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners*, the 'othering' of the LGBTQ+ community also has parallels with that of the British Working class, so it could seem obvious that the LGBTQ+ community would also form its own cultural identity and means of artistic expression.

The evolution of the relationship between Queer Culture and Pop Culture since the 20<sup>th</sup> Century can be seen most often through obviously 'queer-coded' personalities, with sexual and gender diversity being implied, even when not openly stated (Duarte 2022). This evolution can be observed with the progression of such characters being simply villains in the 1930's to the explosion of 'gay icons' such as Madonna, Cher and Lady Gaga. These

celebrities embrace the ‘camp’ and ‘fierce’ and explicitly support gay rights and the LGBTQ+ community (Forenza 2017, 342). The rise and popularity of such celebrities shows not only softening public attitudes, but also the growing influence and diversity of queer-coded iconography in mainstream entertainment.

Despite very little in the way of queer representation in Disney’s *Welcome to Wrexham*, again probably due to the global enormity of the Football Association (and Disney), and a refusal to risk alienating potential viewers, the show still exists within this queer-influenced realm of western pop culture and celebrity. Despite this, Disney has faced criticism in the past for continuing to perpetuate the negative portrayal of ‘homophobic tendencies’ via the use of queer-coded villains (Brown 2021, 12-13).

With regards to *Welcome to Wrexham*, it is also important to note that Rob McElhenney himself was raised in a LGBTQ+ family, having been raised by a two lesbian mothers (Reynolds 2021). Rob McElhenney has spoken openly and positively about this experience, and this is a potential source of positive representation and visibility for Wrexham’s LGBTQ+ community.

In regards to the city of Wrexham itself, the effects of its newfound fame are very recent and so the outcome remains to be seen. The phenomena of ‘city brands’ is well documented, and “In order for a city to be a good brand, it must possess defining and distinctive characteristics that can be readily identified. These are functional as well as non-functional qualities. These include city appearance, people’s experience of the city, people’s belief in the city, what the city stands for, and what kind of people inhabit the city.” (Winfield-Pfefferkorn 2005, 2). In this respect *Welcome to Wrexham* can be seen as a tool of such ‘branding’, as the docuseries portrays Wrexham as a city that has shown resilience and working-class camaraderie in the face of economic misfortunes. Winfield-Pfefferkorn (24-26) lists several sources of added value towards the branding process of a city, including “*People’s Experience of the City*”, which is something I hope my fieldwork sheds light upon; “*Perception: How is the population perceived?*” which in this case, as inhabitants of a small working-class sports city on the Welsh border, may be perceived to fit into such stereotypes pertaining to sports enthusiasts and UK class culture; “*Belief in the City. Does it stand for something?*” Perhaps in the case of Wrexham this could be its historic sports club which is represented in the docuseries as emblematic of the city; “*Appearance: What does the city look like?*” which in not a major feature of the docuseries, despite some notable architecture in the city centre.

Perhaps these distinctive buildings could be a potential source of future branding in the future. Some examples of these buildings are shown below:



Wrexham Parish Church (By David Powell -  
Photo by David Powell, CC BY-SA 3.0)



Wrexham Waterworld (Wrexham.com  
2019), believed to possess the only  
hyperbolic paraboloid roof in Wales  
(Twentieth Century Society 2022).

## Chapter 4

### Fieldwork: Methodology and Potential Challenges

To collect ethnographic data for this thesis, I have decided to employ three main methods of qualitative data collection: Anonymous internet surveys, in-person interviews and participant observation. The reason I have decided to combine these three is because I felt like each method could offer a different aspect to LGBTQ+ life and people may be willing to share different information depending on the data used. For example, if a person is 'closeted' or less confident speaking about their sexuality or gender, then an anonymous internet survey may make them feel more comfortable with sharing information compared to an interview. Likewise, participant observation may also be less effective if some people are not living openly about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The first method I will employ is internet surveys. My main reason behind this is that it was a way of gathering data whilst not being in the UK (which I planned to do later), and I thought the more impersonal nature of it could make some people feel more comfortable with sharing their experiences. I had to carefully consider the questions I wanted to ask in terms of my aims, as I wanted to retrieve as much relevant information as possible. On the other hand, I was conscious not to make the internet survey too long, as I thought opening a survey to be greeted by a very lengthy and/or time-consuming document could dissuade people from participating, especially when we consider Wrexham is a working-class town, where many people no doubt lead busy working lives.

The second method I will use in my field is the use of interviews. Interviews stand out in their unique ability to make use of conversation and speech. Brinkmann (2013, 2) puts forward that "From the earliest days of our lives, we are able to enter into proto-conversations with caregivers in ways that involve subtle forms of turn-taking and emotional communication," and therefore our "relationships with others—and also with ourselves—are thus conversational. In order to understand ourselves, we must use a language that was first acquired conversationally, and we try out our interpretations in dialogue with others and the world." The second-nature of speech to most people could be said to provide a certain level of *authenticity*. As the main source of communication used between people, it could be argued that there is no more efficient way of obtaining information than by asking directly. This of course is still not flawless, as people are under no obligation to answer

honestly or seriously (although there is perhaps no way to ensure complete honesty and authenticity in any method of data collection, such is the nature of ethnographic fieldwork).

In terms of the method that I aim to follow for my interviews, I aim to refer to what Brinkmann (8) quotes from Mayo (1933, 65), who was known for implementing one of the largest interview-based studies known at the time in Chicago. Mayo emphasises the importance of giving undivided attention, listening instead of talking, never arguing or giving advice, listening to what the subjects wants/does not want to say, plotting out and summarising the patterns presented and of course, remembering ethical concerns of confidentiality.

The third method I will employ will be *participant observation*. This is defined by Dewalt et al. (1998, 260-1) as a “method in which an observer takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of the people being studied as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their culture”, where the “participant observer seeks opportunities to spend time with and carry out activities with members of communities in which he or she is working.” From this they deduce that whilst the goal is to learn from the observation, the observer themselves becomes part of what is being observed, and that having such a direct engagement in the lives of the people allows them to better understand their perspectives. The ability to understand the group being observed is perhaps something that will come more easily to me due to my personal upbringing in Wrexham as an LGBTQ+ person. On the other hand, being so familiar with this group may make it more difficult for me to notice some interesting peculiarities that would be more apparent to somebody coming from an etic standpoint.

The necessity of an outsider’s perspective during fieldwork such as participant observation is challenged by anthropologist, Narayan (1993, 676) who claims “Even as insiders or partial insiders, in some contexts we are drawn closer, in others we are thrust apart,” and “we all belong to several communities simultaneously”. This highlights that it is not as straightforward as being an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’. There are layers of intersectionality within every group that differentiate those within it. For example, I have not lived in Wrexham for over ten years (despite visiting regularly for holidays), and my experience as somebody who has worked, lived and studied abroad could also set me apart as an outsider. This is especially relevant when we consider my absence during notable cultural events such

as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which could have a drastic effect on the worldview of many people.

Using participant observation meant that I could draw upon my own thoughts, feelings and experiences within the community, and make use of my own biases and personal history with Wrexham and the LGBTQ+ community. Whilst I wanted my other fieldwork to be unbiased and present the most 'authentic' research, I felt that using my personal experiences and history alongside it could also add a more personal touch, and would allow me to combine my own history concerning the town and community with the rest of the data.

There were also other reasons that I felt it was important that I included a lot of in-person fieldwork alongside the internet surveys; I feared that when answering online, people may have a lot of time to consider their answer, whereas an in-person interview may be more 'unfiltered' and may provide a better idea of how people in the community convey themselves. There are also non-verbal aspects of communication which may provide meaning which would be lost in an internet survey. The need to pick up on the practices of the community as a 'folk group' is what convinced me that participant observation would be a useful addition to my fieldwork, as it may show the group setting in a more natural environment.

The fieldwork processes have of course been made a lot easier and more accessible by being a member of this community. It was by pure coincidence that, during the summer, I was added to the Wrexham Rainbow Alliance, an official LGBTQ+ Facebook group, which has grown to a size of 236 members as of writing this, and seems to be one of the main online hubs for the community (many LGBTQ+ people not active on Facebook also seem to attend events through contacts on this group). This has been an invaluable tool in getting connections and finding research participants. In true small town fashion, the group is run by my best friend's fiancé's sister (who could be considered my 'contact') and her close friend. My contact was willing to help and participate in my research in any way she could, and very much consented to any requests I made of her. It is from her that I have sought permission to engage the online community in my fieldwork. The group itself is fairly informal and I have not come across any challenges or barriers in terms of being allowed to post about my fieldwork in the group (or group chat) or seeking participants.

From the beginning, a potential challenge of carrying out this research was time. Many people possess busy working lives, and as much of the time I had available to carry out this research was the Christmas period, this also meant that many had familial commitments. Another concern of mine was the weather, which is notoriously wet and windy in the winter, which could make people less willing to meet up and participate in their spare time.

In terms of the online surveys, my main concern was privacy, which is why I opted to keep the participants anonymous. I was also concerned about the possibility of a sampling bias, as the demographics of the people who see the survey may not be a good reflection of the LGBTQ+ community at large. There is also no guarantee they will answer truthfully (e.g. they may prioritise answers that paint themselves more favourably over their true opinions), which I feel is compounded by the respondents being able to spend a long time to consider their answers. There is also no guarantee that respondents will take the survey seriously, although all of the answers I received did seem to alleviate this concern; there were some answers that were very short, where perhaps more information would have been more useful.



## Chapter 5

### Queer Wrexham: Internet Surveys

For the anonymous internet survey, I used a Google form which could be shared easily via a link, On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, I posted the form on both the Wrexham Rainbow Alliance group page and chat. I received eight responses across a two week period, with each respondent answering the following eight questions:

1. How do you view the general acceptance and visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham?
2. Wrexham has a history of being a sports town. In your opinion, has this had an effect on your experience as a member of the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham?
3. Wrexham has recently gained celebrity attention through the Disney documentary ‘Welcome to Wrexham’ and celebrity investment in the Wrexham Football Club. In your opinion, has this affected LGBTQ+ life or society in Wrexham? If so, how?
4. Do you believe the newfound fame of Wrexham will benefit or influence your life in the future, as a member of Wrexham’s LGBTQ+ community?
5. What challenges and/or opportunities do you think exist for LGBTQ+ individuals in Wrexham, and what advice would you give to an LGBTQ+ person moving to Wrexham?
6. What is your experience on LGBTQ+ social life in Wrexham (events, groups, etc.)?
7. In your opinion, what can be done to improve LGBTQ+ life in Wrexham?
8. In your opinion, can the recent sports fame of Wrexham be used to benefit the LGBTQ+ community? As a member of the community, do you feel involved and included in the changes happening in the town?

Due to the vast amount of data, I have decided to show the data in tables in my appendices, but will discuss my findings here in relation to my research aims. Although, I had aimed to keep the answers true to how they were typed in, I eventually decided to correct a few minor spelling or punctuation errors for the sake of improved clarity.

### **5.1 “How do you view the general acceptance and visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham?”**

For the first question, all but two of the respondents generally communicated that they felt accepted in Wrexham. One also noted that although they had not been on the receiving end of homophobia, they knew others that had. The overall trend in terms of LGBTQ+ acceptance is not obvious. It seems that peoples’ experiences and perceptions of how the LGBTQ+ are perceived vary wildly. This could be due to the wide and diverse nature of the community, or even other factors such as socio-economic backgrounds or occupations. I hoped the other questions (alongside my other forms of fieldwork) would help to shed more light on how some of these other factors may play a role on the LGBTQ+ lived experience in Wrexham.

In terms of the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community, the general impression was more negative than it was for acceptance. One respondent pointed out that this could be due to the small size of Wrexham; another suggested that visibility could be increased through events. Given the growing profile of Wrexham, it seems that a lot of work could still be done by the town in this area.

### **5.2 “Wrexham has a history of being a sports town. In your opinion, has this had an effect on your experience as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?”**

For the second question, all but one respondent claimed that Wrexham being a sports town had no effect on their experience as an LGBTQ+ person. It seemed that the majority of respondents had taken the word ‘effect’ to refer to a negative effect, which I thought was interesting, as I had not implied that this need be the case in the question. I theorised that this could be due to an awareness people have of the reputation of sports such as football for homophobia. This highlights another potential downside of the internet survey as a method, as it does not allow any opportunity to discuss or negotiate such interpretations.

Despite this history of homophobia in football, it seemed that respondents mostly didn’t feel like this was an issue in the sports communities in Wrexham. Two respondents mentioned women’s sport, including the Lionesses, the women’s football team of Wrexham, who have also seen an increase in publicity since *Welcome to Wrexham* and the Hollywood takeover (Feringa 2023). This is perhaps an example of how the Wrexham AFC takeover and the docuseries may be starting to spill over into other areas. The growing platform of the

Lionesses could also be due to mainstream sports sometimes serving as a safe zone for lesbians, who can form inclusive, alternative spaces and communities within it (Soler-Prat et al., 173), although this can also lead to negative stereotypes conflating women's sport and lesbians (170-171).

It should also be noted that it is difficult to prove what motives Rob McElhenney and Ryan Reynolds had for purchasing Wrexham AFC. Rob McElhenney was allegedly inspired by a similar 1973 sports docuseries, *Sunderland 'Til I Die* before buying the club (Daigle 2022), which suggests that the potential to create a show may have been a factor in the decision (although the show itself depicts the purchase as being more altruistic in its intentions).

These results also show again how different sub-groups of the LGBTQ+ community may have different experiences, with lesbians perhaps having a different relationship to sports than gay men or trans people. Another issue with this data that has become apparent are short one-word answers which have little information that can be used. As noted previously, this is one of the drawbacks of internet surveys which may be easier to avoid in the in-person interviews.

### **5.3 “Wrexham has recently gained celebrity attention through the Disney documentary ‘Welcome to Wrexham’ and celebrity investment in the Wrexham Football Club. In your opinion, has this affected LGBTQ+ life or society in Wrexham? If so, how?”**

The respondents here seem to highlight that there is no obvious link between the LGBTQ+ community and *Welcome to Wrexham*, although it should be noted two respondents referred to Rob McElhenney's family upbringing as a potential source of increased visibility for the community, and one mentioned an LGBTQ+ person who appeared on the show with their girlfriend. It should be noted however that another respondent contradicted this, implying there was no LGBTQ 'story' on the show. This contradiction could be due to the episode in question briefly featuring an LGBTQ+ relationship that was not really alluded to in the episode, and perhaps was not that noticeable to many viewers. It's also highly possible a respondent may have known this individual, 'Rosie Hughes' personally, which may give them additional knowledge or insight, or make them more likely to pick up on LGBTQ+ themes surrounding her appearance on the show.

Other respondents also refer to pride shirts being worn by the team, and the increased possibility of a Wrexham pride if the town becomes more prolific. Despite the overall consensus that there is no link between the LGBTQ+ community and the recent celebrity takeover, further inspection of the responses reveal that perhaps with a more internationally known Wrexham, there could be a lot of potential for increased visibility for the community, and that the show itself can aid in this way through means of greater representation (which could also be very significant in a sport with a reputation for homophobia, where there is so little LGBTQ+ presence.)

#### **5.4 “Do you believe the newfound fame of Wrexham will benefit or influence your life in the future, as a member of Wrexham’s LGBTQ+ community?”**

The only benefits that were foreseen by respondents in the survey were economic in nature, and there didn’t seem to be much hope or optimism that there would be a beneficial impact to the LGBTQ+ community, other than the impacts that would affect the people of Wrexham as a whole. One respondent alluded to football as being a “‘straight’ person’s game”, suggesting again that there is awareness surrounding football’s history of not embracing LGBTQ+ people. The general lack of optimism expressed here seems at odds with earlier replies which suggested the potential for increased LGBTQ+ visibility in Wrexham. This suggests that it is expected that these positive changes will come from the growing international profile of Wrexham due the show, rather than from the sport itself.

#### **5.5 “What challenges and/or opportunities do you think exist for LGBTQ+ individuals in Wrexham, and what advice would you give to an LGBTQ+ person moving to Wrexham?”**

In the area of challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community, the theme of a lack of visibility is repeated. Two respondents did mention the Facebook group as a potential good sign for individuals in the community, but this could be also due to the fact that this survey was shared via the Wrexham Rainbow Alliance Facebook group. There is no clear consensus regarding whether or not LGBTQ+ people have a lack of opportunities, but there are a few negative comments regarding the town of Wrexham in general, and it does not seem to be perceived as especially progressive, despite some feelings of hope and optimism about the future.

## **5.6 “What is your experience on LGBTQ+ social life in Wrexham (events, groups, etc.)?”**

Regarding the LGBTQ+ social life in Wrexham, it seems to be progressively becoming more online, with the Wrexham Rainbow Alliance mentioned alongside ‘various social media groups’. There is a repeated sentiment expressed amongst the respondents that there is not much in the way of LGBTQ+ events and venues. One respondent mentions Arnold’s, which I was familiar with, as it was a popular bar during my late teens. Arnold’s attracted a large LGBTQ+ clientele, and was famous for its very ‘queer-coded’, campy drag performances. Arnold’s is now long closed, and the building now houses an Indian restaurant, which suggests that the LGBTQ+ community may in fact have lost inclusive spaces over recent years, although this may likely be due to economic factors rather than societal attitudes.

## **5.7 “In your opinion, what can be done to improve LGBTQ+ life in Wrexham?”**

Regarding what can be done to improve LGBTQ+ life in Wrexham, the responses again emphasise visibility, events and venues. This community seems to be lacking safe spaces where they can convene, but the consensus is overwhelming and there is a strong desire for more community-driven events. It seems that the small, yet ever-growing Wrexham Rainbow Alliance was created out of this desire and is a trailblazer in that there were no other organisations and groups that seem to have the same scope or influence who are as pro-active regarding these issues at the time of the survey (as of May 2024, other similar Facebook groups aimed at the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham seem to have emerged). It seems that there is a cause-and-effect conundrum between visibility and events/spaces. Whereas public LGBTQ+ events would no doubt make the community more publicly visible, it also seems that public awareness is a contributing factor in the prevalence of LGBTQ+ events and spaces. An example of this is given by Coetzee (2023), who claims that “pride events have served to bring visibility to LGBTQIA+ people and advance their acceptance.” He elaborates on this further with “it provides a broader community with exposure to queer people, while pushing the boundaries of acceptance.” Whilst it may seem that LGBTQ+ parades and protests may potentially lose their relevance as society becomes more accepting (and LGBTQ+ people experience less prejudice and discrimination), Coetzee argues against this, whose research reaches the verdict “that queer people still experience unique struggles; however, prejudice is now disproportionately experienced by queer people of colour, those with disabilities, and trans people.” This is especially relevant to my own research interests, as it describes the nuances of *intersectionality*, which is bound to always be present when

discussing large and diverse groups such as the LGBTQ+ community (even in small urban areas like Wrexham – the definition of LGBTQ+ remains quite broad in meaning).

**5.8 “In your opinion, can the recent sports fame of Wrexham be used to benefit the LGBTQ+ community? As a member of the community, do you feel involved and included in the changes happening in the town?”**

For this question there were only seven answers, as one of the respondents seemed to have left their answer blank. This may have been deliberate or accidental, but is another example of one of the potential issues with online surveys. With the exception of one very long response, who can't see any connection between the LGBTQ+ community and the recent developments around Wrexham AFC, the other respondents all expressed a belief that this new platform could be used to benefit the community, and the Lionesses were again mentioned as an example. Respondent 3 mentioned that 'a lot of us don't feel included in changes to Wrexham', perhaps making a reference to the heteronormative and non-inclusive reputation of football in regards to the LGBTQ+ community, but the general outlook is positive. There seems to be a consensus that the changes that will come to the town with this new exposure will bring benefits to the community as well.

The survey results indicate a lived reality where community spaces are dwindling, in favour for online spaces, and that despite a general tolerance for LGBTQ+ people, many still feel a lack of visibility and events, and that despite mainstream football's homophobic past, there is still hope that the fame and prestige it will bring Wrexham could help bring about changes. With Hollywood and the entertainment industry being already a more inclusive domain than football in terms of the LGBTQ+ community, and the queer family of Rob McElhenney himself, it seems that perhaps this optimism is not completely misplaced, but the commercial needs of Disney could perhaps hinder true representation in the mainstream, and the true intentions of those working on *Welcome to Wrexham* regarding the town itself and its marginalised people remain to be seen.

## Chapter 6

### Queer Wrexham: Participant Observation

From December to January, I returned to Wrexham to carry out both interviews and participant observation. In this section I will outline my experiences during my participant observations within the LGBTQ+ community. This will not contain exhaustive interviews, but will instead give ‘flavour’ and aim to shed light on the community via the people I had contacted.

My in-person experience with LGBTQ+ groups in Wrexham generally has revolved around nightlife in the past. Wrexham does not have any LGBTQ+-specific venues, but did have well-known local LGBTQ+ ‘hotspots’ in the past, such as Arnolds, of which many LGBTQ+ people I spoke to in relaxed, group settings lamented about how the building is now an Indian restaurant instead. There are also ‘legendary’ LGBTQ+ figures, which seem to be known by pretty much every Wrexhamite, such as ‘Big June’, a transwoman famed for her large stature and distinctive beehive hairdo, who is sadly thought to have passed away, but who seems to be generally spoken about as a well-revered and respected figure.

Through LGBTQ+ friends, I spent time observing a larger LGBTQ+ community during these long nights out (most commonly with between 3-6 people), usually on Saturdays. It seemed that most were too busy during the week with work commitments to convene with any regularity. Other bars which seemed popular amongst the LGBTQ+ community were

*Chequers*, a grimy, cocktail bar in a picturesque Tudor-style timber building, which was rumoured to once have been a café, and *New York, New York*, a karaoke bar which is open very late every day of the week. Despite being the most popular hangouts, none



Chequers Wine & Cocktail Bar (Estepona, 2022. Google Maps)

were spoken about in particularly positive light. Chequers was reviled for its sticky floors, high prices and to quote one lesbian whom I spoke to, “*a hand drying machine that’s been*

*hanging off the wall of the toilets ever since I started going out.*” She has been going out regularly ‘to town’ for about twelve years. New York, New York was slated for having aggressive, discriminatory and fickle bouncers.

From these descriptions of community spaces, it is not difficult to understand why some could feel a need for more specific LGBTQ+ venues where they can feel safe to be themselves, and do not feel discriminated against by bouncers or high prices.

There is one ‘LGBTQ+-friendly’ daytime space which was spoken about often on the *Wrexham Rainbow Alliance* Facebook chat called *TableTaps*, which is not a bar but a Board Game Club (although they do serve alcohol), and a small LGBTQ+ pride flag is visible on the exterior. Upon going there however, I realised the interest in board games was too niche, especially within an already limited research group, whereas drinking and going to bars seems to be, generally, a much more common and widespread cultural activity, especially in Wrexham.

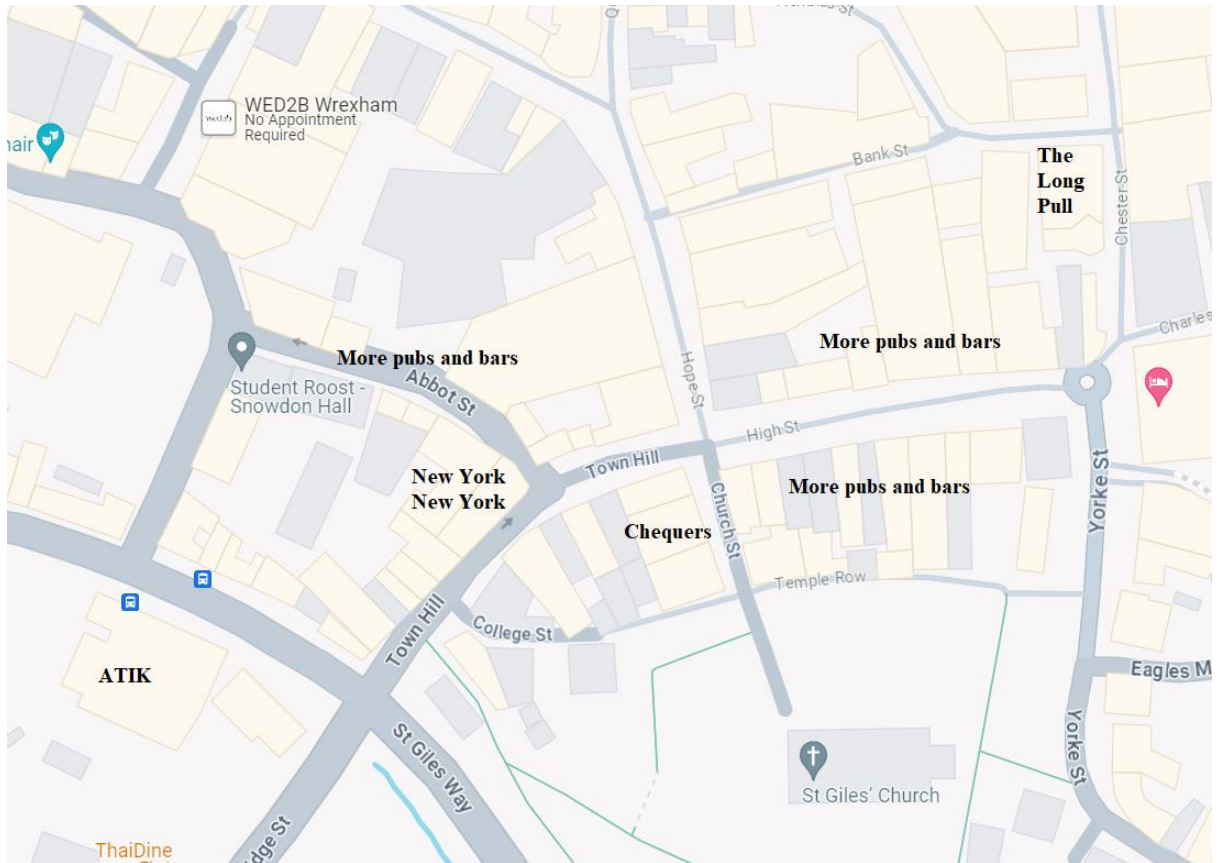


ATIK nightclub (MyUserNameWasTaken 2018. Tripadvisor)

From observing LGBTQ+ groups in a public setting, I noticed that there were no displays of affection such as kissing, or holding hands, which was something that could be witnessed fairly often in bars and clubs in the evening amongst heterosexual groups. There is only one real nightclub in Wrexham, ATIK, which rumour had it was apparently being put under

financial administration. Upon going there and experiencing how half the club was out-of-bounds and how there seemed to be no central heating in the venue, I deduced that there was probably some truth to the rumours. This nightclub very much seemed to be treated as a ‘last resort’. It felt like our group was constantly searching for ‘a space’, when there wasn’t really one they could go to. There are plenty of ordinary pubs in Wrexham, including *The Long Pull*, an infamously rowdy pub allegedly owned by lesbians, but they were generally avoided by the LGBTQ+ people I was with, as some either didn’t feel safe, or simply didn’t enjoy going to those places. I have attached a map below to help understand and visualise the layout of Wrexham’s nightlife and the aforementioned locales.





Map of Wrexham's main nightlife area (as of January 2024).

## Chapter 7

### Queer Wrexham: Interviews

In the next section I will discuss my findings concerning the in-person interviews I had conducted on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2024. I interviewed these LGBTQ+ people of Wrexham in person, recording with my mobile phone, and transcribing on to my computer. Although all consented to the data being used for academic and research purposes, I decided to refer to the participants simply as their initials, in order to avoid extra potential debates and concerns about ethics. I had successfully interviewed a gay man and two lesbians (one of whom had confided in me beforehand that they had previously believed themselves to be ‘straight’), which I thought made for a diverse group. I really wanted to interview a transgender participant, but due to the size and sparsity of the LGBTQ+ community I did not succeed in finding one. One participant offered to put me in contact with a transgender acquaintance, however she was not willing to talk. All interviewees were born and raised in the Wrexham area.

#### 7.1 Interview: 40 year-old gay man

Firstly, I interviewed a 40 year-old gay man, living in Marchwiel, Wrexham, who I will refer to as N for the purpose of this text. N doesn’t work but receives Personal Independence Payments on account of physical disabilities that make working difficult. I had previously known N, as he studied in the local community college at the same time as me (in the late 00s and early 10s), and said he would sometimes see me walking around campus. He didn’t think being gay had affected his childhood as “*Nobody really came out as a child in those days, right?*” and said “*remember, it wasn’t legal in those days*”, which he later clarified as “*section 28 days*”. Section 28 being the legislative designation for several UK laws from 1988 to 2003, prohibiting the “promotion of homosexuality” (Stonewall 2019).

During the interview with N, some answers he gave seemed a little contradictory. Although he thought that it would have been difficult to be ‘open’ in school, in another part of the interview, when asked if it was harder to be himself at the time, he quite sternly answered “*No*”.

N goes on to explain that he knew he was gay at age eleven but had no desire to ‘come out’. He explained this in more detail with the following statement:

*“I didn’t feel like it was...Because they didn’t say...Because you didn’t know what gay was, because it wasn’t in the media, and it wasn’t in the education... Even though I’d had a boyfriend at that age, I just thought it was something between friends, so it didn’t seem abnormal.”*

This suggests that the lack of awareness, visibility and exposure to LGBTQ+ identities had affected his own perception of his sexuality. Although he claims it ‘didn’t seem abnormal’, he also had already said how he couldn’t be ‘open’ about it in school, which suggests he must have at least suspected it wasn’t entirely ‘normal’ or ‘accepted’ amongst his peers. N suggests that he didn’t really know he was ‘gay’ due to society at the time, even if he had somewhat figured out his sexual preferences (and their potential repercussions).

When I asked him to compare his childhood to the present day, N stated *“I think there’d be more pressure to come out and just pick an identity because there’s so much information out there,”* and went on to name ‘social media’ as an example.

Once, I had a good understanding of N’s backstory, I asked more about his impressions of Wrexham’s LGBTQ+ community. He referred to his own past experiences:

*“I was in the...I used to hang out with all like emo kids and rock kids, right? And nobody gave a shit. Everybody would make out with everybody else on a night out... And nobody said anything, so that was almost like a ‘queer scene’... ... I think within the sort of rock community, we would all would know who was gay and nobody cared, and it wasn’t mentioned, and you could make out, but you wouldn’t make out in like a chav club<sup>2</sup>.”*

N doesn’t refer to a specific LGBTQ+ community, but instead refers to an ‘LGBTQ+ friendly’ community he had found. This suggests that he hadn’t experienced much of a unified LGBTQ+ movement or scene in Wrexham, nor did he want for one, something which he makes clearer in a subsequent answer:

*“I think ideally, we don’t want a community.... ... You shouldn’t need it. It’s like if you look at what’s happening in Manchester. None of the young people tend to go to the gay bar*

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Chav’ is a derogatory, informal term for a working-class person thought to have loud, brash behaviour and thought to try to present themselves in designer clothes (whether real or imitation) (Oxford Dictionary 2013). By the mid 00’s, it had become a well-known stereotype, referring to antisocial, uncultured youth sporting flashy jewellery and sports clothes. The stereotype for ‘chavvy’ girls also includes wearing clothes which expose the midriff (Crystal 2013).

*anymore. They'll go to the straight bars or not at all. I think everything's become so normalised."*

There is an argument here that the existence of an 'LGBTQ+ community' perhaps is a sign that the community is still being marginalised, and true acceptance means integration, which perhaps would eliminate the need for a community. Whilst this is certainly an interesting argument, it seems at odds with the lived reality I've experienced first-hand and through my participant observation, where the need for these communities perhaps stems not just from a perceived lack of social acceptance, but also a sense of social belonging.

N continued by claiming that *"a lot of community spaces especially have been hijacked by the trans community... .. And now if you identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, people who don't know a lot about that jump in with this Trans stuff. They think it's all the same, right?"*

By saying this, N is implying that increased visibility of the trans community is damaging to public opinion and acceptance of lesbian, gay and bisexual people. This kind of rhetoric was surprising to me, as if many in the LGB community were to hold these views on the trans community, it could easily contribute to trans people feeling unsafe and even unwelcome in LGBTQ+ spaces, even when disregarding ordinary public spaces. He later reinforced his point claiming *"gender and sexuality are different"* and argued that they (gay and transgender people) should be treated as two separate communities.

N was also highly cynical about the potential of *Welcome to Wrexham* in improving the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the town, and didn't think much would change for inhabitants of Wrexham in general. He elaborated on this point:

*"I think, um, people will come for the football and leave. They'll come, they'll realise there's nowhere to stay, there's nowhere to park, there's nowhere to shop. There's no culture. There's nothing. They'll come for the football and leave and there won't be a positive impact on business culture, lifestyle or anything that people are expecting."*

He also mentioned that football 'yobs' could make visitors feel unsafe in the town, and potentially deter LGBTQ+ people.

## **7.2 Interview: 29 year-old lesbian woman**

The second person I interviewed was a 29 year-old lesbian living in Bradley, a residential area of Wrexham not far from the town centre. For the sake of this essay, she will be referred

to as H. H is in a relationship and works in the Job Centre (a lot of people I know in Wrexham seem to work in the Job Centre), and has to frequently deal with people who come in to claim benefits or pensions. She claimed this could be quite a gruelling and emotionally difficult job as it sometimes meant she was required to refuse to give payments to people in need who had perhaps not met all the requirements (which she doesn't like doing).

H didn't know she was a lesbian until she was an adult, and so she didn't feel it affected her childhood as she *"didn't think about that as a child"* and *"it was not something that was discussed."*

Like with N, H also didn't think it is necessarily easier for LGBTQ+ youth today, which surprised me:

*"So I think it would be harder for children today, growing up. If they knew they were, say, trans or non-binary or gay from an early age... .. I think society has changed, and I think schools are more of an issue now than they were."*

When I asked why, H claimed that she believes that schools are less tolerant now than they once were. She later contradicted this somewhat by claiming being LGBTQ+ is "accepted", before conceding that more could be done in terms of building an LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham. Some of H's sentiments on community were similar to those of N, as she claimed that although there wasn't a real LGBTQ+ 'scene' in Wrexham, *"I also don't feel that it's a problem."* Despite this, she also suggested that her feelings may be simply due to her own preferences, and not reflective of the desires of the community at large: *"I think if people want that sense of community... .. Then it could be more done for them. I mean it's not something that necessarily bothers me personally and...but I think for people who want that community and...there probably could be more of that but I don't think it's not accepted."*

H also responded positively and enthusiastically when asked about the recent fame and exposure of Wrexham and how it could bring more positive changes and exposure for queer people, pointing out that Rob McElhenney *"has gay mums"*, and that it improves visibility:

*"I don't think that he would want to be, you know, involved with a place that wasn't accepting... .. LGB, you know, TQ, with him having gay parents. He wouldn't want to be associated with a place that wasn't accepting of that."*

I finished by asking if this positive influence will also extend to attracting more LGBTQ+ people to Wrexham, and she concluded that it would:

*“I think so, yeah. And I think it will make it, even though I don’t feel it’s not accepted, I think it will make people feel more and more accepted and more comfortable and confident.”*

H’s interview is representative of somebody who is not active in the LGBTQ+ community, but still believes that more could be done for those that do, and is positive about the new changes coming to the town and the potential for increased visibility, exposure and the opportunities that it could bring. This also seems more in line with many of the answers I received from the online surveys.

### **7.3 Interview: 31 year-old lesbian woman**

The third person who agreed to an interview was also a lesbian woman from Bradley, who was 31 years old. For the sake of this text, I will refer to her as A. A is a close childhood friend of mine and is due to get engaged in October. She works for a telecom company called Openreach, and her occupation entails driving around different areas of the country to install internet and television services in people’s homes. I had a lot of prior knowledge about A, but I aimed to treat her the same as other participants in the survey during my fieldwork.

A always felt like a lesbian, even though she *“didn’t really think [she] was gay as a kid”*. I found it interesting at this point that so far, none of the three people I had interviewed seemed to be fully aware of what it meant to be gay at the time they started to realise their sexuality. This suggests that there hasn’t been a great deal of information available (at least before the current age of pervasive social media) for people growing up regarding gender and sexuality.

Unlike the previous two respondents, A didn’t think she would be any different if she was growing up today, although she did say *“I think it would be more accepted today than it would have been back then.”*

A then conceded that she probably would have been *“out sooner”* if she was growing up now due to social media influence.

When asked about whether or not there was a presence of an ‘LGBT community’ in Wrexham, A responded: *“Not a big community, I don’t think; but I suppose again with social media groups like that, like that Rainbow Alliance like... .. I suppose there is but they’re just maybe not as confident or open about it, so...”*

She also implied that the LGBTQ+ community currently had a much stronger presence online than in person because “*cause there’s nowhere for people to meet up*”, and lamented on the lack of LGBTQ+ venues such as gay clubs. This matched my own experiences spending time with the LGBTQ+ community on nights out in Wrexham, which is that of a community that no longer has any real spaces to convene, which could potentially dismantle or damage the Wrexham LGBTQ+ community as a contemporary social group.

A was optimistic that this would improve due to The Hollywood fame of Wrexham and the Disney docuseries, as she felt it would improve the economy, and in turn attract more gay venues to Wrexham. From talking to A, it seemed to me that if *Welcome to Wrexham* could really improve the local economy (as LGBTQ+ visibility also continues to improve), it could embolden queer communities (such as those in the Lionesses) through more acceptance and public awareness, and especially boost awareness of the intersectionality of many in the LGBTQ+ community (such as being disabled, a person of colour, etc.)

## Conclusion

To summarise, this study investigates the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham not just as a part of a global LGBTQ+ community, but also as a marginalised group within the societal fabric of Wrexham as a working-class town of Wales and the United Kingdom. This community has faced a myriad of challenges in living memory, from societal discrimination to section 28 and the economic policies of the 1980s. It now seems they continue to face a lack of public visibility and public safe spaces. My analysis of this group has been based on participant observation, surveys, interviews, and my own personal experiences and relationship with the town and the community (something which was perhaps unavoidable given my upbringing in the town). My analysis attempted to unravel the complex dynamics of this community.

At the beginning of this study, I set out to explore the relevance of the high profile of football to the LGBTQ+ lived experience, and I unearthed the deeply entrenched homophobia of the sport, to find that the reality on the ground in Wrexham, is that most of the people in the LGBTQ+ community of whom I was exposed to did not feel oppressed or discriminated against due to this football history, and that the current changes are for the most part being viewed positively and as an opportunity for the city, even if with some cynicism.

The economic profile of Wrexham also has played a larger role than I had first expected, and it seems economic problems (that perhaps are important to most people in Wrexham) may be of a greater concern to many in the LGBTQ+ community over societal ones. This is a reality I am also aware of from my own experiences growing up in Wrexham, which I tried to set aside for the sake of avoiding the study being corrupted by my own biases. It seems Wrexham could have all the gay bars in the world, but they perhaps would be of little use if few people can afford to go to them. Many complaints about living in Wrexham from the LGBTQ+ community seem to be complaints that you could perhaps hear from many non-LGBTQ+ people.

This seems to be a big part of the reason why Reynolds, McElhenney and *Welcome to Wrexham* are viewed positively by many in the LGBTQ+ community, as there seems to be hope it will improve general living standards, and that other living concerns, such as the freedom to live openly, may follow greater financial freedom.



In reflection of my efforts, I realise the difficulty of what I had set out to do with my fieldwork was greater than I had anticipated. Because I was going back to my hometown and was dealing with a community with which I thought was more familiar, I thought perhaps that this would make my life easier. In hindsight, I'm not sure that this was the case. I also don't necessarily think my close relationship to this community (or 'folk group') made my job more difficult either. It seems the struggles I faced were ones that could have affected any ethnographer; struggling to meet the time constraints (and work-lives) of participants, a lack of organisation amongst the community (a tendency to 'go with the flow') and attracting interest and willingness in participating in the study. Overall, I am fairly pleased with the amount of data collected, but I feel there could have definitely been more diverse results had I more time. To me, it seemed the interviews were the most insightful as the respondents went much more in depth and personal than in the online interviews (however the ease and scope of the online interviews was also a great benefit). Whilst engaging in participant observation, the line between being a participating member of the community and an observer felt constantly blurred. It was difficult to separate my preconceived notions from what I was experiencing in front of me.

The implications of this study, I feel are relevant to far more than just the LGBTQ+ community. As a minority group from an already working-class town (and in Wales), in many ways this community is a good representation of what it means to be 'marginalised' in the UK. Strategies that can help this community live openly, freely and happily could perhaps be employed to help other societal groups. What these strategies could entail is difficult to say, but based on the research it seems visibility is something which greatly benefits marginalised groups such as the LGBTQ+ community, and it was something most respondents felt there wasn't much of in Wrexham, so to paraphrase some of the brief, blunt online responses, more 'gay bars' and 'events' could indeed be beneficial to the LGBTQ+ community, and also for Wrexham, as it becomes more well-known, and perhaps a desire will emerge for its image to be one of a modern and progressive town. I hope that studies such as this can help increase visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham and spread awareness of the marginalisation still felt by this community (especially due to the various levels of intersectionality within it) despite the progress that has been made in the last 40-50 years. Perhaps it is an ambitious thought, but I would hope works such as this one could contribute towards such a goal.

From a folkloristic perspective, in many ways this community felt like a folk group under threat, as more and more social interaction moves online, and less and less meeting places are available. This means the everyday and vernacular communication of this community will also become less common, as the community begins to increasingly resemble an *imagined community*. The theme of the ‘lack of visibility’ seemed to be repeated throughout my research, which leads me to conclude that perhaps if this group were to have more visibility and economic prospects, perhaps some of these issues could be addressed, aiding in the preservation of the community.

I finally would like to acknowledge the western-centric angle that this study may be perceived to have. Advancements in LGBTQ+ rights and society (whether we’re talking about Stonewall or Wrexham) are spoken about not only in relation to the western world, but through my own lens, which as someone who grew up in Wrexham, could also be considered to be a western perspective. As touched upon in my theoretical framework, homophobia and intolerance towards the LGBTQ+ community were widespread in the west until fairly recently, and it may prove difficult (or simply ignorant) to compare to non-western societies from this understanding. For example, the Bugis people of Sulawesi in Indonesia traditionally view gender as a spectrum, with five genders in all: makkunrai, oroané, bissu, calabai, and calalai (Davies 2006, xi), and the concept of a ‘third-gender’ exists as the *fa’afine* of Samoa (those assigned male at birth who feel female and are traditionally accepted as such) (Bartlett, N. H & Vasey P. L 2006, 659-66) and the *hijra* of the Indian Subcontinent (who are legally recognised as a third gender in Bangladesh) (Agrawal 1997, 273-97) (Karim 2013). These non-gender-conforming aspects of traditional culture in non-western communities showcase that the tolerance, visibility and recognition of sexual and gender minorities are not a uniquely western phenomenon, but it seems unlikely that those practicing these customs would identify themselves with the fairly recent, western term of LGBTQ+. This is perhaps an area of research that would need to be considered if similar fieldwork was to be carried out in a less Eurocentric society. As such, I do not claim the findings and ideas of this thesis to be a ‘one size fits all’ approach to non-heteronormative communities globally, but hope that they can be used with sensitivity and common sense and adapted appropriately.

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## Resümee

Interseksionaalne vaade LGBTQ+ kogemustele tänases Wrexhamis

Magistritöö analüüsib Kirde-Walesi väikeses töölisklassi linnas Wrexhamis LGBTQ+-na identifitseeruvate inimeste narratiive, kogemusi ja nägemusi elust LGBTQ+ indiviidi ja kogukonna liikmena. Uurimuse üldeesmärk on analüüsida küsitluse, intervjuude ja osalusvaatluse teel kogutud andmete toel LGBTQ+ inimeste elu ning kuidas kogevad indiviidid end laiemas Wrexhami LGBTQ+ kogukonnas, arvestades ka linnas hiljuti filmitud Disney dokumentaalsarjaga „Tere tulemast Wrexhami“ (*Welcome to Wrexham*). Sarjas jälgitakse Wrexhami ajaloolist jalgpallimeeskonda Wrexham AFC, mille ostsid Hollywoodi staarid Ryan Reynolds ja Rob McElhenney.

Töö on jagatud seitsmeks peatükiks. „**Teoreetiline raamistik**“ tutvustab uuringuga seotud võtmeteemasid ja mõisteid. „**Kontekst**“ annab asjakohast informatsiooni Wrexhami linna, selle ajaloo, jalgpalliklubi ja autori isiklike kogemuste kohta. Peatükk „**Tere tulemast Wrexhami: Fame, Celebrity and Pop Culture**“ selgitab mõistete kuulsus, popkultuur ja kväärkultuur seost Disney dokumentaalsarjaga. Kolm viimast peatükki – „**Kväär Wrexham: Interneti-uuringud**“, „**Kväär Wrexham: osalejate vaatlus**“ ja „**Kväär Wrexham: intervjuud**“ – analüüsivad välitöödel kogutud ainek.

Magistritöö toob välja Wrexhamis LGBTQ+ indiviidide identiteedi/kuulumise interseksionaalsuse, keskendudes marginaliseerumise ja marginaliseerimise eri aspektidele, eriti seoses (kuid mitte ainult) sotsiaalmajandusliku klassiga Ühendkuningriigi laiemas klassikultuuri kontekstis. Uurimus põhineb novembrist 2023 kuni 2024. aasta jaanuarini Wrexhami LGBTQ+ elanike seas läbi viidud internetiküsitluse, osalusvaatluse ja intervjuude teel kogutud andmete analüüsil.

Küsitlusele vastas kaheksa inimest. Suurem osa neist leidis, et kuigi nad on ühiskondlikult aktsepteeritud, on LGBTQ+ nähtavus selles piirkonnas puudulik. Samuti oldi üksmeelel, et vaatamata homofoobia pikale ajaloole Briti jalgpallis, ei evi spordiala populaarsus LGBTQ+ inimeste jaoks negatiivseid tagajärgi ning paljud pidasid meeskonna ostmist ja meediakajastust üldiselt positiivseks. Vastajad viitasid LGBTQ+ kohtade ja sündmuste vähesusele Wrexhamis, mistõttu suhtlemine toimub rohkem võrgus kui füüsilises maailmas.

Mõnevõrra autobiograafilise osalusvaatluse tulemused osutavad võimalusele, et hoolimata LGBTQ+-spetsiifiliste kohtade vähesusest toimub LGBTQ+ inimeste seltsielu suuresti

Wrexhami ööelus. LGBTQ+ kogukonnaürituste edendamist linnas on raskendanud majanduslangus, mille tulemusena on kannatanud ka olemasolevad ööelupaigad.

Magistritöö raames intervjueriti kolme LGBTQ+ inimest Wrexhamist. Osalejad viitasid teadmatusele seksuaal- ja soovähemustest oma nooruses ning pidasid täna Wrexhamis kasvavate LGBTQ+ noorte olukorda väga erinevaks, kuigi mitte tingimata lihtsamaks. Kui kahel vastajal oli positiivne vaade hiljutistele muutustele linnas ja nende võimalikele mõjudele, siis üks vastaja leidis, et need ei too kaasa muutust paremuse poole.

Magistritöö tulemused annavad mõista, et mitmed LGBTQ+ inimeste kogetud probleemid ei tulene sellest, et nad on LGBTQ+, vaid positsionaalsuse interseksionaalsetest, ristlõikuvatest takkudest. Paljud LGBTQ+ inimesed seisavad silmitsi sotsiaalmajanduslike raskuste ja/või rassi või religiooni põhise tõrjutusega, mis võib seksuaalsusest või soolisest identiteedist tingitud probleeme veelgi teravdada. Mõnevõrra üllatuslikult selgus ka, et vaatamata jalgpalli ja seksuaalse identiteedi suhete probleemsele ajaloole ei nähta Wrexhami aktiivses jalgpallikultuuris asjaolu, mis olemasolevaid probleeme süvendaks (nt nähtamatus ja kohtumiskohtade puudumine), vaid pigem ähvardavad Wrexhamist pärit LGBTQ+ inimeste kombeid ja elustiili samad sotsiaalmajanduslikud tegurid, mis mõjutavad Wrexhami elanikke tervikuna. Wrexhami majanduslik olukord on „Tere tulemast Wrexhami“ sarja keskseid teemasid ja näib olevat hästi teadvustatud. Selle tulemusena tundub, et Wrexhami LGBTQ+ kogukond on saate võimaliku positiivse sotsiaalse, kultuurilise ja majandusliku mõju suhtes optimistlikult meelestatud.

Kokkuvõttes võib öelda, et kirjeldatud asjaolude tõttu näib LGBTQ+ grupi suhtlus ja olemasolu liikuvat *online*-ruumi, kuid ehk toob dokumentaalsari rahalist vabadust ja nähtavust, mis toetaksid mittedigitaalsetes ruumides eksisteerimiseks. Magistritöö heidab valgust marginaliseerumise protsessidele digiajastul ning pakub võrdlusainest teistele uurimustele sel teemal.

## Resümee in Welsh

### Ail-ddechrau yng Nghymraeg

Mae'r traethawd hwn yn canolbwyntio ar naratifau a phrofiadau y pobl LGBTQ+ yn Wrecsam yng Ngogledd Cymru; dinas fechan ddosbarth gweithiol. Mae'r diben cyffredinol nod yr ymchwil hwn yw defnyddio dulliau ymchwil ansoddol a gwaith maes ethnograffig i ddatgelu gwirioneddau bywyd o pobl LGBTQ+ yn y ddinas hwn, yng ngoleuni'r ddiweddar docuseries, *Welcome to Wrexham*, dilyn pryniant tîm pêl-droed hanesyddol Wrecsam, Wrecsam AFC gan sêr Hollywood Ryan Reynolds a Rob McElhenney.

Mae'r traethawd ymchwil hwn wedi'i rannu yn saith o brif benodau; **“Fframwaith damcaniaethol”**, egluro'r themâu allweddol o'r astudiaeth; **“Cyd-Destun”**, rhoi gwybodaeth berthnasol am Wrecsam, ei hanes, y clwb pel-droed, a phrofiadau personol yr awdur, **“Croeso i Wrecsam: Enwogrwydd, Enwogion a Diwylliant Pop”**, yn egluro'r berthynas rhwng y cysyniadau hyn (a diwylliant queer) mewn perthynas â docuseries Disney. Mae'r ymchwil hwn hefyd tair pennod am y gwaith maes ethnograffig, **“Queer Wrecsam: Arolygon Rhyngrwyd”**, **“Queer Wrecsam: Arsylwi Cyfranogwyr”**, a **“Queer Wrecsam: Cyfweliadau”**

Mae'r traethawd ymchwil hwn gwyllo'r croestoriad o hunaniaeth/perthynas y pobl LGBTQ+ yn Wrecsam, canolbwyntio ar agweddau o ymleddio o ran diwylliant dosbarth y DU. Roedd data ethnograffig yn cynnwys arolygon rhyngrwyd a gasglwyd rhwng 5 a 12 Tachwedd 2023; arsylwi cyfranogwyr a gynhaliwyd o ddiwedd mis Rhagfyr 2023 hyd at Ionawr 2024; a chyfweliadau personol a gynhaliwyd ar 19 a 21 Ionawr 2024. Nod y gwaith maes oedd ymchwilio i'r effeithiau o'r enwogrwydd Disney a dadeni pop-ddiwylliannol Wrecsam ar unigolion LGBTQ+ lleol.

Mae'r arolwg rhyngrwyd yn cynnwys ymatebion i wyth cwestiwn gan wyth pobl LGBTQ+ o Wrecsam. Canfu'r arolwg oedd y rhan fwyaf o bobl yn teimlo eu bod yn cael eu derbyn, ond roedd diffyg gweledd LGBTQ+ yn yr ardal. Roedd consensws hefyd, er gwaethaf hanes o homoffobia ym mhêl-droed Prydain, nad oedd nifer yr achosion o chwaraeon mewn gwirionedd yn cyfrannu at amgylchedd negyddol i bobl LGBTQ+, ac roedd llawer yn gweld prynu'r tîm a'r sylw yn y cyfryngau yn gadarnhaol ar y cyfan. Roedd canfyddiadau eraill o'r arolwg yn awgrymu diffyg lleoliadau a digwyddiadau LGBTQ+ yn Wrecsam, felly mae cyfathrebu LGBTQ+ yn dod yn fwy ar-lein.

Mae arsylwi'r cyfranogwr y natur fywgraffyddol, ac yn datgelu posibilrwydd y gall cynulleidfaoedd personol o bobl LGBTQ+ ganolbwyntio'n bennaf ar fywyd nos Wrecsam, er gwaethaf diffyg lleoliadau LGBTQ-benodol. Mae'r bywyd nos hwn wedi dioddef achos ffactorau economaidd, yn effeithio ar fannau cyfarfod LGBTQ+.

Cynhaliwyd y cyfweiliadau personol gyda thri unigolyn LGBTQ+ o Wrecsam. Datgelodd y cyfweleion hyn ddiffyg ymwybyddiaeth o leiafrifoedd rhywiol a rhywedd wrth dyfu i fyny yn Wrecsam, er eu bod yn cytuno bod y sefyllfa yn wahanol heddiw i pobl ifanc. Er bod gan ddau ymatebwr farn gadarnhaol ar newidiadau diweddar yn y dref a'u heffeithiau posibl ar y ddinas, teimlai un ymatebwr na fyddai'n dod â newidiadau cadarnhaol.

I gloi, mae traethawd hwn yn datgelu posibilrwydd bod llawer o frwydrau pobl LGBTQ+ bodoli achos asedau croestoriadol o leoliadolrwydd. Mae llawer o bobl LGBTQ+ yn wynebu brwydrau economaidd-gymdeithasol a/neu gwahardd yn seiliedig ar ffactorau eraill (fel ethnigrwydd neu grefydd) a allai waethygu materion a wynebier oherwydd rhywioldeb neu hunaniaeth rhywedd. Mae'r canfyddiadau'n awgrymu bod llawer o ffactorau sy'n bygwth arferion a ffordd o fyw pobl LGBTQ+ o Wrecsam fel 'cymuned' yn ffactorau economaidd-gymdeithasol a allai fod yn berthnasol i lawer o drigolion Wrecsam yn gyffredinol. Mae sefyllfa economaidd Wrecsam yn thema ganolog i sawl pennod o Welcome to Wrexham, ac mae'n ymddangos bod y gymuned LGBTQ+ yn Wrecsam yn optimistaidd am effaith gymdeithasol, ddiwylliannol ac economaidd bosibl y sioe teledu.

I grynhoi, mae'n ymddangos bod rhyngweithiadau a bodolaeth y grŵp hwn yn symud i ardal ar-lein ac efallai y gallai'r docuseries ddod â'r rhyddid a'r gweledd ariannol sydd eu hangen i barhau i fodoli mewn manau nad ydynt yn ddigidol.

## Appendices

### Online Survey Results

Table 1. Question 1.

	<b>How do you view the general acceptance and visibility of the LGBTQ+ Community in Wrexham?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	It's a small town, so it won't be as visible as bigger cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, London, etc. but I've never had a negative experience. I find the few people who have often project onto everybody else.
<b>Response 2</b>	I think there's a lot more to be done for LGBTQ visibility in Wrexham. I personally haven't had any homophobia or biphobia but I think a lot of people have and that's worrying especially in this day and age.
<b>Response 3</b>	I have never experienced negative behaviour in Wrexham around the LGBTQ+ community. I have found people to be quite polite and fine about it, maybe I have just been lucky.
<b>Response 4</b>	I've never had any problems but I don't feel comfortable walking through the town holding my wife's hand. I don't feel that the community is very visible
<b>Response 5</b>	I have never experienced much negative behaviour in the way of acceptance in Wrexham. I do think the visibility could be increased through events, etc.
<b>Response 6</b>	Visibility is poor but I think acceptance isn't so bad.
<b>Response 7</b>	I don't think there is enough of either if I'm honest.
<b>Response 8</b>	Poor.



Table 2. Question 2.

	<b>Wrexham has a history of being a sports town. In your opinion, has this had an effect on your experience as a member of the LGBTQ+ community in Wrexham?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	Nope 😊 If you think about it, women's football teams are more likely to be LGBT+ and talk about it, like the Lionesses.
<b>Response 2</b>	No, I don't think it has had an effect on my experience at all.
<b>Response 3</b>	I think it can make it intimidating to be yourself.
<b>Response 4</b>	No, I am part of Wrexham Rugby Club Ladies.
<b>Response 5</b>	No - I am a sports person!
<b>Response 6</b>	Not for me personally.
<b>Response 7</b>	No it hasn't.
<b>Response 8</b>	No

Table 3. Question 3.

	<b>Wrexham has recently gained celebrity attention through the Disney documentary ‘Welcome to Wrexham’ and celebrity investment in the Wrexham Football Club. In your opinion, has this affected LGBTQ+ life or society in Wrexham? If so, how?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	I think it’s had a fantastic impact on the town as a whole but I don’t think it’s affected the LGBTQ community in Wrexham. I did think it was good when Rosie Hughes’s girlfriend was shown on screen though, just showing a normal healthy relationship.
<b>Response 2</b>	No I don’t think so, I think with more money coming into Wrexham and more recognition coming in its improving Wrexham and providing more opportunities for people. With Wrexham getting bigger the prides might be become more of a thing.
<b>Response 3</b>	With Rob having two gay Mothers I would say this has helped the community. For example, there have been occasions when the team have worn pride shirts and this has been spoken about on the documentary.
<b>Response 4</b>	I think LGBTQ and Welcome to Wrexham have no connections whatsoever. If there is an LGBTQ story on the show further down the line, maybe it will, but as of yet nothing.
<b>Response 5</b>	I think it has improved as one of the owners mother is a member of the LGBTQ+ community.
<b>Response 6</b>	Haven't watched it.
<b>Response 7</b>	Not really.
<b>Response 8</b>	Nope.

Table 4. Question 4.

	<b>Do you believe the newfound fame of Wrexham will benefit or influence your life in the future, as a member of Wrexham’s LGBTQ+ community?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	I’m a season ticket holder at the racecourse so the success of the football club has had a positive impact on me and my family. But again I don’t think this has impacted the LGBTQ community.
<b>Response 2</b>	I don’t think it will for me personally. But it will help others a with more job opportunities.
<b>Response 3</b>	No I don't think so. For the most part football is still a 'straight' persons’ game.
<b>Response 4</b>	Yes I think it will help the town economy wise.
<b>Response 5</b>	I don't believe it will.
<b>Response 6</b>	Here's hoping it does
<b>Response 7</b>	Benefit.
<b>Response 8</b>	Lol

Table 5. Question 5.

	<b>What challenges and/or opportunities do you think exist for LGBTQ+ individuals in Wrexham, and what advice would you give to n LGBTQ+ person moving to Wrexham?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	There is still a perception of the town not being as progressive as larger cities and I think part of this is due to not having a visible LGBTQ community. The introduction of Wrexham pride next year and the setting up of local pride Facebook groups will hopefully help this. My advice to someone new would be to join the Facebook groups and attend socials to build a network.
<b>Response 2</b>	Wrexham needs more LGBTQ+ friendly venues although a few are they don't really publicise the fact. With a large university in Wrexham there is an opportunity for the community to grow.
<b>Response 3</b>	There are definitely challenges, having faced a few personally. While I wouldn't say don't move to Wrexham, I would say give the place a chance as there is a huge opportunity to grow.
<b>Response 4</b>	Wrexham Rainbow Alliance and Wrexham Pride groups on Facebook and the meet ups the latter group have started, definitely are a good sign of things to come.
<b>Response 5</b>	I suppose just to be aware of your surroundings, but I haven't experienced anything negative so I don't know.
<b>Response 6</b>	I wouldn't recommend for anyone to move to Wrexham regardless of whether or not they were LGBTQ+.
<b>Response 7</b>	I feel I have the same opportunities as people who aren't part of the community.
<b>Response 8</b>	I think it makes it intimidating to be who you are in public.



Table 6. Question 6.

	<b>What is your experience on LGBTQ+ social life in Wrexham?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	I have always found the nightlife in Wrexham to be fun if you are with the right people. When I was younger we could have done with more gay bars as I don't think there were any and I suppose that still stands now.
<b>Response 2</b>	I've gained a few friends on Wrexham Rainbow Alliance and hope this grows. I've had a few meet-ups using dating apps are a bad example of meeting because for the most part, people don't want to know you as a person.
<b>Response 3</b>	The only LGBTQ people I socialise with in Wrexham are my wife and close childhood friends that happen to be part of the community. I'm not aware of pride evenings or any events that I could attend.
<b>Response 4</b>	Very few until recently but the community is growing via various social media groups.
<b>Response 5</b>	There really isn't one like there was years ago when Arnold's was open (now iJazz).
<b>Response 6</b>	I would like to see more.
<b>Response 7</b>	I help run an LGBT group
<b>Response 8</b>	I'm too busy with work.

Table 7. Question 7.

	<b>In your opinion, what can be done to improve LGBTQ+ life in Wrexham?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	More visibility. The pride event set for next year will definitely be a catalyst for opening people's eyes to show them that there are queer people in Wrexham.
<b>Response 2</b>	Increased visibility. More events. Pride
<b>Response 3</b>	Everything, more gay-inclusive places.
<b>Response 4</b>	More patience and less preaching.
<b>Response 5</b>	More LGBTQ+ friendly venues.
<b>Response 6</b>	More visibility.
<b>Response 7</b>	More gay bars!
<b>Response 8</b>	More events.

Table 8. Question 8.

	<b>In your opinion, can the recent sports fame of Wrexham be used to benefit the LGBTQ+ community? As a member of the community, do you feel involved and included in the changes happening in the town?</b>
<b>Response 1</b>	As I answered on a previous question, if Welcome to Wrexham cover an LGBTQ story then that would bring a positive spin on our community to 'the straights'. I don't think the Wrexham AFC popularity and the Wrexham queer community are connected at all. I'm not saying there aren't queer Wrexham AFC fans, just there's no real connection to the groups.
<b>Response 2</b>	Yes I think it can. I think if I wanted to be involved and included in something round Wrexham it would be welcomed.
<b>Response 3</b>	I feel like it could benefit, think a lot of us don't feel included in changes to Wrexham.
<b>Response 4</b>	I believe it can and will get involved when time allows.
<b>Response 5</b>	This could definitely be used to benefit the community.
<b>Response 6</b>	Absolutely! Again, see the Lionesses!
<b>Response 7</b>	I believe it could.



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**20/05/2024**