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CONSENSUS ANALYSIS AND PERSONHOOD
IN WELSH-AMERICAN POPULATIONS**

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***ABSTRACT:** In a multi-site study of Welsh-American identity, informants were asked to rate the "Welshness" and "Americanness" of the behavior in a set of 21 scenarios, or brief narratives designed to exemplify Welsh and American personhood concepts. In addition, consultants were asked to rate how desirable or ideal the behaviors were, in their opinion. The Welsh-American population in the two sites, one in Iowa and the other on the Vermont/New York border, varied from low to high social visibility. Using consensus analysis of the scenario data, we test of a series of hypotheses concerning the perceived differences between "Welsh" and "American" personhood in high and low visibility sites and between the diaspora populations and the homeland of Wales.*

Introduction

Like Scotland, Wales is a stateless nation within the United Kingdom and has a distinct history, culture, language and identity. Through political devolution, both Wales and Scotland recently received greater autonomy and local control, which has led to a resurgence of emphasis on Welsh and Scottish identity, rather than the more inclusive British identity (Paterson, et al. 2001:101-120). Residents of Wales are increasingly thinking of themselves as Welsh first and British second (Cole 2002:102). For the first time in more than a century the number of Welsh speakers is increasing and Welsh-language education, television, and print media are thriving. Our earlier research in Wales has confirmed the importance of the following five personhood concepts in Welsh

identity: egalitarianism, emotionalism, martyrdom, nostalgia, and performance orientation (Trosset 1993, Trosset and Caulkins, 2001, 2002, Caulkins et. al. 2000).

Briefly stated, many of the cultural schema in everyday life in Wales are organized around these five ways of acting and thinking: minimizing social hierarchies, responding emotionally, not just analytically, sacrificing self-interest for the good of the group, longing for those persons or things no longer present, and taking a performative stance toward social life. We have also shown that these personhood concepts, derived from long-term participant observation in Wales and subsequently verified with formal methods, are also characteristic, to varying degrees, of the rest of the "Celtic Fringe" in the British Isles (Caulkins 2001 Painter and Caulkins 1999; Hedges and Caulkins 2000). In each of these studies we have used a set of scenarios, or brief narratives from daily life, as indicators of the personhood concepts. In this paper we ask whether Welsh-Americans in two geographically separated areas also identify with the five personhood concepts associated with Welshness in Wales. Postmodernists, fascinated with the study of differences (Clifford 1994), suggest that diaspora populations occupy a "third cultural space" quite unlike either the host population or the home population (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996:3). Because we have measured the identification with the five personhood concepts both in the mother country of Wales and in diasporic populations in two regions in the U.S., we will be able to answer this question of continuity or discontinuity between the mother country, the host country and the diaspora population.

The Welsh Diaspora in two locations in the U.S.

In terms of population sizes, Welsh emigration was minor in comparison with the better-known diasporas from Scotland (Ray 2001) and Ireland (Byron 1999). Less of a "victim diaspora" (Cohen 1996) than either the Scottish or Irish counterparts, the flow of Welsh immigration into the U.S. after the colonial period drew on occupational specializations, such as coal mining, quarrying, and iron production, needed by the industrializing U.S. economy (Caulkins 1997, Caulkins and Caulkins 2001). This paper focuses on two American components of the Welsh diaspora, one the descendants of 19th century Welsh quarry workers in the Slate Valley on the New York/Vermont border, and the other the descendants of Welsh coal miners and farmers in Iowa. The New York/Vermont populations came from North Wales where the vein of slate quarried locally allegedly crosses under the Atlantic and emerges in the Slate Valley. After the Welsh, other immigrant groups found work in the quarries, which are still productive today. Within the Slate Valley are a number of institutions that are identified with the Welsh immigrants. Several protestant churches are known as "Welsh" churches, sometimes with a minister of Welsh ancestry. Green Mountain College, in Poultney, VT, established a collection of Welsh books and folk life materials. The college maintains a flock of Welsh mountain sheep on the College farm adjacent to the campus. Each year the college sponsors a Harvest Festival with a Welsh theme, inviting participants from Wales or from other Welsh institutions. The new Slate Valley Museum incorporates a great deal of material

on the Welsh immigrants. A national organization that sponsors Welsh language courses got its start locally. Many of the events and institutions focused on Welsh identity are inclusive and community-centered, rather than exclusively targeted toward those of Welsh ancestry.

The coalfields of Iowa proved to be less sustainable than the slate quarries of Vermont. They thrived during the last quarter of the 19th century and first quarter of the 20th century, before being supplanted by the western coalfields. The Welsh immigrants who came to Iowa were less numerous than those who came to the slate quarries. The Iowa coal-mining towns flourished for a time before declining and, in some cases, disappearing all together. Welsh farmers came to several locations in Iowa but their cultural presence was generally diluted by the waves of German, Scandinavian and Dutch immigrants. The tiny mining town of Lucas, Iowa, was the birthplace of John L. Lewis, the most powerful American labor leader of the 20th century. The residents of Lucas built a John L. Lewis Museum to celebrate the fame of its Welsh-American native son. Lewis did not emphasize his Welsh ancestry during his union-building years, but late in life he received invitations to lecture in Wales and began to acknowledge his Welsh heritage.

The thinness of the Welsh cultural residue extends to the other Welsh institutions in Iowa. The Iowa Welsh Society meets several times annually for programs that are for members and guests, rather than for the wider community. The Welsh Church annually holds a Sunday *Gymanfa Ganu*, or song festival, which is attended mainly by locals of Welsh ancestry, their neighbors, and an occasional New Age Celt. In contrast with the socially visible Slate Valley Welsh, the less visible Iowa Welsh focus their events primarily on the aging organizational membership.² Transnational flows between Wales and the US, in the form of tourism, visiting artists, and media exchanges, occur more frequently in the Slate Valley than in Iowa. In short, the Welsh of the Slate Valley are a social visible population while the Welsh of Iowa are socially less visible.

Measuring Concepts of Personhood in Wales and America

In addition to our ethnographic survey of institutions and organizations in the Slate Valley and Iowa, we collected interviews with persons claiming Welsh ancestry in both locations (Slate Valley N=61; Iowa N=52). While most of these individuals had other national ancestry, their primary identification was with their Welsh heritage. Earlier we collected similar scenario interviews in Wales (N=33). Our interviews included a battery of 21 scenarios or short narratives from lived experience, dealing with the Welsh concepts of egalitarianism, emotionalism, martyrdom, nostalgia, and performance. Most of these scenarios were drawn from actual events in during fieldwork in Wales.

For example, here is a scenario measuring egalitarianism, in both a British and American version:

A university professor has tea in his kitchen with the workers who are repairing his garden wall. (British Version)

A university professor has coffee in his kitchen with the workers who are repairing his garage. (American Version).

Consultants are asked whether this seems like “Welsh” behavior. They are not asked to articulate the concept that informs this scenario. Thus, we are not asking to invent or articulate some representation of “Welshness,” only to recognize a pattern that may be incorporated in cultural schema associated with the imagined community (Anderson 1983) of Welsh or Welsh-Americans.

Appendix A lists all 21 scenarios that we have used for interviews in Wales and diaspora populations. We included some scenarios to measure American concepts of personhood, such as individualism and achievement (Spindler, Spindler, and Williams 1991).

Each of the scenarios was printed on a separate card and the 21 cards were shuffled before each interview to avoid order bias. Next, each card was presented to the consultant and three questions were asked: First, "On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest or most intense, how "Welsh" is the behavior in this scenario? Next, how "American" is the behavior, again, on a scale of 1-5. (In Wales we did not ask how “American” the behaviors were.) Finally, how "good or desirable" is the behavior in the scenario, on a scale of 1-5. Thus, for each scenario there are three ratings: Welshness, Americanness, and desirability. The consultant's task, in effect, is to use the scenarios to construct "Welsh" behavior and identity, "American" behavior, and the desirable or ideal behavior. We then use consensus analysis to understand the degree of agreement or disagreement on these three constructions (Romney, Weller, and Batchelder 1986; Romney, Batchelder and Weller 1987; Caulkins 1998). We can imagine a variety of possible outcomes of consensus analysis for each of the three sets of ratings by the Welsh and Welsh diaspora populations. The findings could include random, patternless responses, bimodal distributions, overlapping subcultures, or high concordance agreement that we can call cultural patterns (Caulkins 1998, 2004; Caulkins and Hyatt 1999).

Our inquiry will be guided by the following four hypotheses concerning the cultural similarities and differences in the Welsh diaspora:

H₁ The construction of Welshness in Wales is more highly correlated with the construction of Welshness by the socially visibility diaspora population (Slate Valley) than with the construction of Welshness in the low visibility population (Iowa).

Rationale: The expectation is that the greater the density of persons of Welsh ancestry and the greater the transnational flows, the greater the similarity between the diaspora and motherland populations. With greater isolation and less intense participation in ethnic organizations and events, the Iowa construction of Welshness may be more divergent from that of Wales.

H₂ The construction of Americanness in the two diaspora sites is highly correlated.

Rationale: Because of population mobility and media exposure, the construction of American behavior will be relatively similar in these two largely rural areas of the U.S., even though they are half a continent apart.

H₃ Both diaspora populations agree closely on what is desirable, but diverge from the Welsh construction of the desirable.

Rationale: Again because of population mobility and media exposure, the American diaspora populations are much more similar to each other in their construction of the ideal than they are to the Welsh ideal. The underlying assumption is that the ideal is forged in the context in which people live their lives, not in a setting which they have not experienced or only experienced for a short time as tourists.

H₄ In the diaspora populations, the construction of desirability is more highly correlated with the construction of Americanness rather than Welshness.

Rationale: Americans tend to regard their own culture as superior to that of other populations. Persons who celebrate their heritage from another country might regard that culture as a close second to US culture, but not the ideal.

Consensus Analysis of Ratings of Personhood Concepts

Using ANTHROPAC (Borgatti 1992), we factor-analyzed the rows (or individuals), rather than the columns (or variables) of the data sets to learn how similar the collective responses were on the set of 21 scenarios for each of the different tasks of rating Welshness, Americanness, and desirability. If there is a great deal of agreement by the raters in the sample, the first factor will be large and will account for much of the variance in the data. By convention in consensus analysis, if the ratio between the eigenvalues of the first and second factors is 3 or greater, we have a “cultural” level of consensus. For the Welsh sample (Table 1) we obtained a cultural level of agreement on both Welshness and desirability, with much of the variance for the two data sets explained by the first factor (63.4% and 70.8%, respectively).

Table 1: WEST WALES (N=33)

Rated for:	Eigenvalue factor 1	Variance explained	Ratio between factors 1&2
Welshness	9.954	63.4%	3.122
Desirability	12.101	70.8%	4.469

The Slate Valley Welsh-Americans (Table 2) show cultural levels of agreement for all three tasks: Welshness, Americanness and desirability. Note that the highest agreement is not on either Welsh or American identity, but on desirability or the ideal, where 82.3% of the variance is explained by the first factor.

Table 2: SLATE VALLEY WELSH (N=61)

Rated for:	Eigenvalue factor 1	Variance explained	Ratio between factors 1&2
Welshness	21.358	70.4%	4.103
Americanness	16.952	65.73%	3.432
Desirability	30.452	82.3%	8.444

The Iowa data (Table 3) contrasts with that from the Slate Valley (Table 2). First, the Iowa sample achieves a cultural level of consensus only on desirability or the ideal. Second, the least agreement in Iowa was on the construction of Welshness. The construction of Americanness is just short of consensus. These results suggest that the construction of Welshness in the less visible community, Iowa, is more varied and idiosyncratic than in the Slate Valley, where there are more institutional and public performances of Welsh identity.

Table 3: IOWA (N=52)

Rated for:	Eigenvalue factor 1	Variance explained	Ratio between factors 1&2
Welshness	10.777	58.2%	2.684
Americanness	13.157	61.8%	2.884
Desirability	21.407	79.3%	7.583

For a more direct test of our hypotheses, however, we need to examine another product of consensus analysis. If there is a cultural level of consensus on a task, then we can use the consensus answers, the "cultural key" or "culturally correct answers" for each of the rating tasks. Each of the populations has a "culturally correct" profile for Welshness, desirability, and (except for Wales) Americanness.

Those profiles can be correlated to show how similar or different the profiles are in the various populations. Because of the lack of consensus on Welshness and Americanness in Iowa, however, we need to make some adjustments before correlating the consensus keys. Since the "Americanness" score was very nearly at the cultural threshold (ratio between first and second factors > 3), we decided to use that key, but cautiously. In the case of Welshness for the Iowa population we went back to the data and found that eliminating several outlying individuals from the data set would enable us to re-run the analysis and achieve consensus. We will use that provisional new key for Iowa in the analysis that follows, but will not forget that the consensus is marginal for Welshness. The high level of agreement on desirability (79.3% of the variance explained) tells us that the lower levels of agreement for the cultural descriptions was not an artifact of the methodology in which our consultants were confused about the nature of the rating task.

FINDINGS: Correlation of Cultural Keys

Hypothesis H1 suggests that the Welshness profile derived from Wales will be more similar to that of the Slate Valley than to that of Iowa.

Table 4: Correlation of Welshness Keys

	Slate Valley	Iowa Welsh-Americans
Wales	+0.89	+0.91
Slate Valley Welsh-Americans		+0.90

Since the Iowans are marginally more highly correlated with the Welsh (+0.91) than are the Slate Valley residents (+0.89), the hypothesis is not supported (Table 4). We need to remember that the Iowa consensus was somewhat arbitrarily "improved" by the removal of some of the outliers, so the evidence is ambiguous. More important, however, is the convergence of the three populations in their construction of Welshness (+0.89, +0.90 and +0.91). It appears that both within Wales and within the American components of the Welsh diasporas, populations agree on the nature of Welshness.

A skeptic might suggest that what the populations have agreed on is the typical essentializing stereotypes of the Welsh. However, when we asked consultants about the stereotypes of the Welsh, they produced few characterizations ("fond of singing," "stubborn," etc.) and very little agreement on the stereotypes.

The analysis of the "Americanness" cultural keys (Table 5), predicted in H₂ to be similar to each other, supports the hypothesis, with a correlation of +0.92 for the Americanness keys. We took a small sample of Slate Valley residents who had no Welsh ancestry and asked them to rate the scenarios for Americanness as well. This control group's view of "American" behavior was similar to that of the two diaspora populations, which suggests that the two regions shared an understanding of American culture. The culturally correct answer keys for the Iowa Welsh and Slate Valley Welsh are more highly correlated (+0.92) than are the keys for the Slate Valley Welsh and their local neighbors (+0.83).

Table 5: Correlation of Americanness Keys

	Slate Valley Welsh-Am.	Iowa Welsh-Americans
Slate Valley American Control Group	+0.83	+0.87
Slate Valley Welsh-Americans		+0.92

The evidence, then, strongly supports hypothesis 2, which further confirms that our use of scenarios is successful in measuring cultural schemas.

The skeptic, however, might suggest that our consultants are giving the same ratings regardless of the task, so that all the constructions of Welshness, Americanness, and the

desirable are all highly correlated. The suspicion, in short, is that our consultants may not be distinguishing between Welsh and American or ideal behavior. Table 6 undermines that suspicion and shows that our consultants are describing different cultural systems:

Table 6: Correlation of Americanness and Welshness Keys

	Slate V. "Americanness"	Iowa "Americanness"
Slate Valley "Welshness"	+0.46	+0.24
Iowa "Welshness"	+0.21	-0.02

The constructions of Welshness and Americanness for the Slate Valley consultants are substantially different, correlated at only +0.46. For the Iowans, there is no correlation (-0.02) between their constructions of American and Welsh personhood.

The third hypothesis predicts that the construction of the desirable for the two diaspora populations will be very similar, but will diverge from the ideal for the Welsh sample.

Table 7: Correlation of Desirability Keys

	Slate Valley Desirability	Iowa Desirability
Wales Desirability	+0.93	+0.88
Slate Valley Welsh Desirability		+0.95

The third hypothesis is narrowly supported (Table 7), but the real news is that all three constructions of the ideal converge, suggesting very similar notions of the desirable in the mother country and in the diaspora populations.

The fourth hypothesis predicts that the notions of the desirable among the diaspora population will more closely resemble their image of Americanness than their image of Welshness. The general ethnocentrism of American society would suggest that Welsh culture, as understood by the diaspora populations, would be less desirable than American culture.

Table 8: Correlation of Welshness and Desirability Keys

Welshness	Desirability		
	Iowa	Slate Valley	Wales
Iowa	+0.72		
Slate Valley		+0.90	
Wales			+0.79
Americanness	Iowa	Slate Valley	
Iowa	+0.30		
Slate Valley		+0.53	

The fourth hypothesis is firmly rejected. The diaspora populations consider Welshness more ideal than Americanness (Table 8). For Iowa the difference is between +0.72 for Welshness and desirability compared with +0.30 for Americanness and desirability. Similarly, in the Slate Valley the correlation for Welshness and desirability is +0.90 compared with +0.53 for Americanness. The imagined community of Wales may be a more idealized society than the one that our consultants deal with on a daily basis. In the mother country, Welshness and desirability also have a high correlation, +0.79. Note, however, that the population in Wales is more critical of Welshness than the Slate Valley Welsh-Americans (Table 8).

Discussion

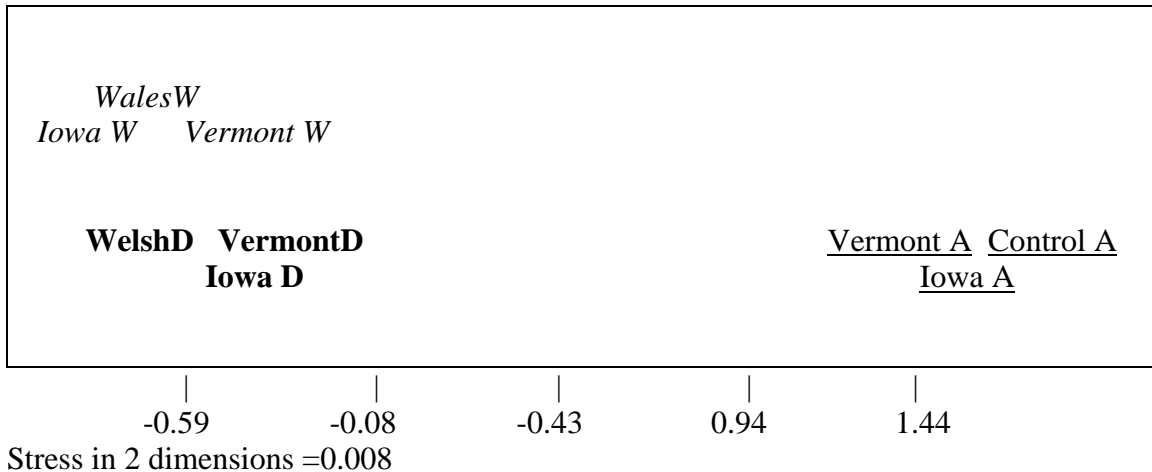
Mary Waters (1990:150) observes that

“Having an ethnic identity is something that makes you both special and simultaneously part of a community. It is something that comes to you involuntarily through heredity and at the same time it is a personal choice.”

All of our consultants (except for our small control group) have made the personal choice of accepting Welsh-American heritage as one basis for their identity. All of them could have selected other components for their identity since there are no overt physical markers of Welsh heritage. This means that their ethnic identity can be largely self-constructed rather than externally imposed. Given this freedom, five of our findings seem particularly noteworthy. A multidimensional scaling (Diagram 1, next page) of the similarities between the Wales, Iowa, and Slate Valley profiles of Welshness, desirability, and Americanness will show these points well. The diagram shows the distribution in Euclidean space for the correlation matrix for the cultural keys of these constructs in the three populations. In the MDS diagram, the closer that a population is to another spatially, the greater their agreement; the more distant they are spatially, the greater their disagreement.

First, as the italicized identifiers (*IowaW* and *VermontW*) in the upper left section of Diagram 1 indicate, the Welsh-American populations, both the socially visible populations in the Slate Valley and the less visible Iowa community, have similar understandings of Welsh cultural schema, as measured by the scenarios for egalitarianism, emotionalism, martyrdom, nostalgia and performance-orientation. The Welsh constitute an imagined community (Benedict 1983), about which our consultants have some relatively clear knowledge (Baumann 1998: 81-96), although those ideas might not be easy to articulate abstractly. For that reason, our scenarios are a good method for measuring this knowledge since consultants are only required to recognize patterns, not to articulate them. We are reminded, however, that the Iowa community, with a less visible and concentrated set of institutions and activities focused on Welsh culture, has less agreement on the characteristics of those cultural schema.

**Diagram 1: Multidimensional Scaling of Similarities:
Welshness, Americanness & Desirability Keys in Wales, Slate Valley, and Iowa**



Second, and perhaps more surprising to postmodernists, the understanding of Welshness among the Diaspora populations is similar to that of our sample in the Welsh homeland (*WalesW*). This finding tends to revise the expectations of the "third space" diaspora theorists (Bhabha 1994), at least with regard to the Welsh-American case. Rather than drawing attention to the differences between the diaspora populations and the mother country, our findings draw attention to the similarities. What makes this result even more remarkable is that we are not dealing with a recent diaspora. Most of our consultants are third or fourth generation Americans. We suggest that the ability to respond to the scenarios in a "Welsh" way draws upon unmarked family cognitive schema. That is, the schema are not labeled "Welsh" in everyday discourse but are thought of as "the way that my family, or the Welsh side of my family, does things."

Third, not only do our consultants agree on the nature of "Americanness" (VermontA, IowaA, ControlA in Diagram 1), but they clearly distinguish between "American" and "Welsh" schemas in responding to the scenarios. This again possibly confounds some postmodernists who assume that there would be little agreement on the similarities in one ethnic or national group, let alone agreement on the differences between two. "American" of course is not an ethnic group but an imagined community. Our results indicate that our consultants do, indeed, perceive differences between ethnic groups in terms of their culture content (cultural schema), rather than just external markers or boundary mechanisms (Barth 1969).

Fourth, and perhaps counterintuitive for theorists who assume that the U.S. is irredeemably ethnocentric, our consultants do not seem to regard American culture—at least those aspects measured by our scenarios—as ideal. In fact, our consultants appear to be implicit culture critics who see clearly how American culture falls short of their ideal--

an ideal that appears to be transnational, since the desirability keys for Wales, Iowa and the Slate Valley are highly correlated (**WalesD, VermontD, IowaD**). The potential emergence of transnational ideals as part of globalization is worthy of further study.

Fifth, Welsh culture seems to be closer to the consultants' collective ideal than is American culture. It is more difficult, of course, to be positive about a culture if its flaws are apparent on a daily basis. And many consultants treasure the family stories and evaluations of their Welsh heritage. However, we suspect that there is more than simple nostalgia and unfamiliarity at work here. As Mary Waters noted, ethnic affiliation is a personal choice, and it may be that many of our consultants are constructing their identities in ways that makes them special or different from generic Americans. The Welsh-Americans may be performing an identity that shows them to be different and more critical of American culture. Thus we have some tension between two imagined communities, one of which has the assumed advantage of a smaller scale community, committed to egalitarianism, emotionalism, nostalgia, a bit of martyrdom, and performance orientation—a "Welsh way."

In general, our results may be a corrective for the radical postmodern perspective that takes the anthropology of difference to an extreme. Barth (2001) may also have gone too far in his rejection of culture and cultural content as legitimate objects in the study of ethnic groups. In practice, our consultants were able to identify cultural scenarios for different imagined communities. When we find agreement among geographically separated diasporic populations and the mother country, it becomes clear that we need to pay attention not only to cultural differences but also to cultural similarities in the study of diasporic processes.

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Notes

¹ Descendants of 19th century Welsh immigrants have a notable presence in Argentina, where they were invited to help colonize Patagonia for sheep production. They had a similar impact on the economy of Australia. We will deal with these diaphora movements in other publications.

² One of the senior author's publications (Caulkins 1997) notes that the Welsh-Americans in Iowa were not particularly knowledgeable about their heritage. In a newspaper advertisement for a Welsh heritage event in Iowa, the sponsors quoted the offending passage and suggested that their event would give participants an opportunity for learning about Welsh heritage in greater depth.

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APPENDIX A

IDENTITY SCENARIOS

EGALITARIAN

1. A school teacher, while shopping, modifies her speech in an attempt to avoid sounding more educated than the shop employees.
2. A university professor has tea in his kitchen with the workers who are repairing his garden wall.
3. An employee of a firm is pleased because he wins a promotion that gives him authority over other workers.
4. A child is discovered in tears after receiving third prize in a local competition.

MARTYRDOM

5. A woman regularly buys petrol at the higher of two available local prices, because the owner of that gas station is a member of the same religious denomination.
6. A mother, who needs a winter coat, goes without so that her not-very talented daughter can continue her piano lessons.
7. A person chooses a career and a place to live based on the opportunity they provide for a high salary and job advancement.

EMOTIONALISM

8. A middle-aged farmer speaks with deep feeling about how moved he is by the words of a song.
9. A published letter from a reader of a newspaper asserts that one should argue social policy from the heart, not from the head.

NOSTALGIA

10. After five years in the city, a bank clerk still feels a bit homesick every Sunday as he thinks about his parents and sister having dinner without him.
11. When an old couple dies, their adult children clear out the house before selling it, and toss old things like family photographs in the dustbin.

PERFORMANCE

12. A family unloads their removal van after dark to prevent the neighbors from seeing their belongings.
13. At her parents' request, a small child stands on a kitchen stool, smiles at their family guests, and sings a song she recently learned at school.

INDIVIDUALISM

14. The youngest daughter in a family refuses to learn the piano like her older siblings and insists on playing a different instrument.
15. When given the choice, office workers decide to work on a project as a group rather than on their own.
16. Despite her dreams of becoming a lawyer, a young woman attends medical school at her parents' urging.

17. A man purchases an automobile similar to those of his associates at work.

ACHIEVEMENT

18. A young woman whose parents cannot afford to pay for her college education works her way through college with part-time jobs.

19. A primary school teacher rewards children who read the greatest amount of books in the shortest amount of time.

20. A young girl has music lessons everyday but rarely puts much effort into them and will sometimes just skip class entirely.

21. A single man decides he doesn't have enough time to himself and quits his steady job for part-time work.