

Institution: University of Ulster
Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The UoA has a strong tradition of conducting research in the areas of conflict, conflict transformation, nationalism and multi-nationalism. As evidenced in the 2001 and 2008 research assessments, UoA members have examined a range of 'live' political issues during periods of conflict transformation and their expertise has informed debates generated by transitions from ethnic conflict to power-sharing and devolved arrangements. During REF 2014 members recalibrated their research agendas around these themes. The impact of their research is demonstrated through its effect on shaping the contours of on-going, highly complex, and sensitive political debates about transformational processes which deal with the legacies of ethnic antagonism and multi-national diversity. The <u>Building a Shared Future in a Divided Society</u> Impact Case Study reflects these aspects of our research agenda and highlights how our analytical focus impacts public/political dialogue and concrete processes of conflict transformation. Identity remains a strong research theme, and UoA members have explored ethno-nationalist identity, conflict and transition in a range of geographical contexts. The UoA's research on this theme has challenged the tacit and explicit terms of political debates on identities within contexts of antagonism and transition. This focus invariably connects the constitution of identities to issues of policy, power and governance. The <u>England and the British Question</u> Impact Case Study with its focus on British/English identity, reflects these core concerns. The examples below illustrate the UoA's impact on debates about antagonistic identities through advising policymakers, informing the policy positions of political parties, and through reshaping political debates.</p> <p>Trench's work on devolution has had considerable impact on informing the knowledge base of policymaking communities through acting as an adviser to the Scottish Conservative Working Group on Devolution and the Silk Commission in Wales. He has given oral and written evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Scotland Bill Committees and the Commons Scottish Affairs Committee. His advice on constitutional issues includes acting as specialist adviser to the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee, and giving oral evidence to various other committees, including the Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, the Scottish Parliament Referendum Bill Committee and the Commission on the Consequences of Devolution for the House of Commons. He gave written evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Select Committee on corporation tax and to the Silk Commission for Part 2 of its inquiry. He is co-investigator on the Institute for Public Policy Research flagship project 'Devo More'. Its second report is forthcoming.</p> <p>Patterson's research on dealing with the past reflects the themes of both case studies. He secured a Leverhulme Research Fellowship (2009-2011) on the role of the Irish state during the Troubles which focussed on the IRA's exploitation of the Irish border and the devastating effects of its campaign on border Protestant communities. His monograph, <i>Ireland's Violent Frontier: The Border and Anglo-Irish Relations during the Troubles</i> (Palgrave 2012) and a number of newspaper articles ('People who risk being written out of history' <i>Belfast Telegraph</i> 12 May 2011) led to invitations to address victims' groups in border areas of Northern Ireland. The results of his research have been used as part of the campaign by victims' groups to encourage the Irish government to acknowledge that the Irish state could have been more robust in preventing its territory being exploited by the IRA. ('Could Dublin have done more to defeat IRA campaign' <i>Irish Times</i> 13 September 2013). It influenced the Tánaiste's speech to the British-Irish Association in Cambridge on the 6 September 2013. Commentator Dr John-Paul McCartney wrote: 'Whoever wrote the Tánaiste's script almost certainly had Patterson next to him or her on their desk' (<i>Sunday Independent</i> 15 September 2013). In line with some of Patterson's work on unionism, and having published previous work on border unionists, Simpson built on several years of ethnographic work supported by a British Academy grant and produced his second monograph <i>Unionists Voices and the Politics of Remembering the Past in Northern Ireland</i> (Palgrave, 2009) which examined experiences which had, hitherto, been side-lined in the dealing with the past debate. He expanded the boundaries of public debates on the issue through three articles in the <i>Belfast Newsletter</i>.</p> <p>McGrattan's work on truth recovery has been beneficial to policy makers' awareness of the various ways in which truth recovery is understood. With Braniff, he gave evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly Finance and Personnel Committee (2013), and he provided workshops for the SDLP on dealing with the past. Further impact on party policy frameworks was facilitated through a policy paper on dealing with the past commissioned by the SDLP (2012). Braniff and</p>

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McGrattan worked with cross-community victims' organisations such as the Wave Trauma Centre to explore legislative developments. Their evidence to the Assembly on the **Civil Service Special Advisors Bill** was referred to in the Assembly debate on the Bill. Their work was cited in the Assembly report on that Bill further demonstrating their role in broadening key political debate. McGrattan has contributed directly to local and national media discussions on this topic. In September 2013 Braniff and McGrattan were invited by the **Ulster Unionist Haass talks team** to develop a position paper for the party. With Aughey and Patterson they also made a joint submission to those talks and were invited to present their research at the Unionist Party annual conference in October 2013 to inform further the party's position on dealing with the past. The **Haass team requested a one-to-one meeting with Gormley-Heenan** to inform their review of issues such as flags, parading and dealing with the past. Braniff also acted as a researcher on the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) funded project, 'What works and why?: Approaches and methodologies to support good relations and reconciliation objectives in Northern Ireland' (2012). Project findings were disseminated through policy/stakeholder roundtables and, like McGrattan, she has published in OpenDemocracy.

McDowell's ESRC funded research examined the impact of processes of gendered, class and sectarian identities on commemorative practices in a range of geographical contexts. She has disseminated her research expertise to a range of public and policy audiences. With Braniff she has organised **major policy/practitioner conferences**. Gormley-Heenan (with Byrne and Robinson) was awarded an OFMDFM grant in 2012 to conduct an attitudinal survey of peace walls in Northern Ireland which continue to divide ethno-nationalist communities. The **research addressed a key commitment within Priority Four of the Northern Ireland Assembly's Programme for Government 2011-2015** which is to 'actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of peace walls'. The research feeds directly into government-led policy by providing extensive data to inform policy development around the de-segregation of ethno-nationalist communities. The researchers hosted seminars with key policymakers/stakeholders including the Department of Justice, OFMDFM, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, local councils and NGOs to discuss the implications of the research for policy development. The dataset and associated outputs are published on the Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive (**ARK**) **open access website** enabling wide dissemination. During REF 2014, Wilson **secured €97,000** of funding to establish an Ulster-Scots Education and Heritage Centre in County Donegal, which provides and enhances opportunities for shared historical and cultural understanding within and between communities in Ireland and related communities elsewhere in the world. The **Centre offers educational partnership with local schools, councils and other related community groups**. It translates academic material into more accessible forms for public use.

b. Approach to impact

The UoA's thematic research areas combined with the pattern of grants awarded during the REF 2014 period demonstrates engagement in producing theoretical and empirical analysis that informs, widens and reshapes dominant political/policy debates on conflict transformation and political identities through the dissemination of research findings in public, political and policy arenas. The UoA's research agendas and the politically sensitive nature of the contexts investigated have meant that it has **developed and sustained meaningful collaborations with government and other potential research beneficiaries**. These relationships emerge organically through the research process and have been built-up over time through the efforts of individual researchers utilising strong institutional support (see below). The implementation of methodological approaches that create strong research-stakeholder linkages means that routes for research dissemination are often built into the research design. User-orientated research supported the dissemination and utilisation of key research findings throughout the REF cycle. Our approach to impact is co-ordinated by the Institute for Research in Social Sciences (IRiSS).

c. Strategy and plans

IRiSS has assigned importance and recognition to impact related initiatives by Institute members. It provides a system of support to broaden researchers' access to potential users and hosts a seminar series of public/policy events across the UoA's research areas. It maintains **a network of contacts in politics, public administration and civil society** that enables researchers to disseminate findings and build meaningful relationships with user groups. A key development to support impact in the area of government policy has been the dissemination of research findings through the **Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)** organised by the Research and

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Information Service of the Northern Ireland Assembly which aims to promote evidence-led policymaking. The Seminar Series is jointly sponsored by IRiSS and Queen's University, Belfast and is designed to encourage debate and improve understanding of policy issues by providing an opportunity for the presentation of research findings to politicians and policymakers. Gormley-Heenan presented a KESS seminar in 2012 on peace walls. Trench presented 'Fiscal Devolution Debates and the Future of the Barnett Formula' in October 2013. IRiSS supports a range of other partnering strategies with external users, such as think tanks and NGOs.

IRiSS has hosted a number of events in conjunction with our visiting professor, **Dean Godson, Research Director of Policy Exchange**. It hosts **multi-media blogs and social media**. It provides **impact generating conference support** for events such as 'The Commemoration and Conflict Symposium' (2011), 'The Good Friday Agreement: 15 Years On' Symposium (2013) and the 'Unionism and Loyalism Challenges for the Future' Conference (2013). **Events** supported by Braniff and McDowell's AHRC grant 'Place or Past' included, 'The Gender and Commemoration Conference' which enabled McDowell and members of political parties, the Orange Order and community groups to develop a set of critical questions on the issue. 'The Place or Past? Violence and Commemoration in the New Northern Ireland' conference held at the Crumlin Road Gaol reflected on the relationship between violence and commemoration. The findings from the project were displayed in an exhibit that included a series of academic posters and a multimedia audio-visual display. This event analysed key findings from the AHRC grant. Mervyn Gibson of the Orange Order and the Parades Commission Chair Peter Osborne joined the panels. Sinn Fein Chair Declan Kearney attended as did members of other political parties. McDowell also developed an ESRC funded website of visual commemoration images targeted at non-academic users.

IRiSS works closely with INCORE to ensure non-academic access to the UoA's research. **ARK Northern Ireland and CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) are widely consulted conflict databases for non-academic users generating 480,000 monthly 'hits'**. Additionally, all research outputs are detailed on the University's online research repository. UoA members are registered on **Ulster's directory of experts** and **Ulster's media team** supports the dissemination of research findings and expertise to public audiences through press releases that act as **accessible briefing papers** on research. Gormley-Heenan's peace walls research was featured in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and the *Irish Independent*. She presented **live political commentary** during the annual party conference season televised on BBC Parliament. McDowell contributes to the '*Journal of Memory Studies*' blog. Trench is author of the influential **blog 'Devolution Matters'**. Impact generating activities have been supported by the University. It has generated £7m in consultancy revenue by disseminating Ulster's knowledge to the public and private sectors, leveraged £23m in venture capital investment into spin-outs and created 266 jobs. For non-commercial research the University has developed the **Research Impact Awards scheme**, allowing academics to realise and demonstrate the impact of high quality research in the upcoming and **future research assessments**. Since 2009, 22 projects have been funded representing a **total investment of £180K**. To **extend impact during REF 2020** the UoA will **expand the core aspects** of its current strategic framework. Our think tank Arkiv, was established in October 2013 to impact policymaking on the legacies of the past. New initiatives to extend impact significance and reach through national/international collaborations and networks are in development.

d. Relationship to case studies

The Building a Shared Future in a Divided Society Case Study reflects the UoA's impact on dealing with the legacy of conflict. It highlights our **intervention in political/policy/community debates** to develop **informed responses to contentious aspects of political transition**. It illustrates members' involvement in generating findings which are disseminated through policy/practitioner seminars, the media and a range of activities designed to include stakeholders and affected communities. Additionally, it reflects the UoA's emphasis on utilising research findings **to benefit groups in civil society and marginalised communities emerging from conflict**. The exploration of issues of identity in the context of devolution detailed in the England and the British Question Case Study illustrates our focus on **informing debates** on identity, power and governance. It provides a clear example of how our research feeds into **political/public discussions** of identity and reframes those discussions.