

Foreword

The idea for the conference on which this edition is based came from a series of discussions among PhD students from several schools within QUB early in 2014. Although all of us used very different methods and interpreted our data through very different theoretical lens, it was apparent that two common threads existed between our work. All were focused on Northern Ireland, and all involved the curious notion of ‘identity’. A call for papers was distributed widely and the [‘Explorations of Northern Irishness’](#) conference was held in the Riddel Hall on the 12th March 2015. Particular thanks for the work involved on this conference and the manifold logistical planning issues that it entailed go to Julia Andrade Rocha, Owen Fenton, Portia Ellis-Woods and Jonathan Evershed.

Identity research in Northern Ireland is hardly a new thing, and indeed the region is said to be one of the most over-researched. Why then is it still important to look at identity in the region? Even a cursory look at the contemporary political, social and cultural environment of Northern Ireland and its cyclical crises show that identity is still relevant and the old questions that drove past research have still not been answered. This conference did not answer any of these questions in a prescriptive way. Rather its value lay in the variety of disciplinary viewpoints of the issues involved and in the high quality of the work put on display. This special issue came from a selection of papers presented on the day. Together they give a flavour of the diversity of research presented and they importance of continuing work in this field. The authors are worthy of commendation for their hard work and patient editing and reediting. The fruit of their efforts can be clearly seen in this edition.

Finally, thanks go to Ivanka Antova, Carolyn Augspurger, Ben Christman and Owen Fenton for their meticulous editing and copy editing. The final product is a testament to the work of many people over a long period of time. I hope you find the edition as enjoyable and stimulating to read as it was to produce.

Kevin McNicholl (Chief Editor)