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# Irish America Today A New Research Project

**Prof Liam Kennedy**  
Director, UCD Clinton Institute

**In the last national census in the United States, in 2010, 34.7 million Americans registered Irish ancestry. This large number is often cited to emphasize the size and scale of the Irish diaspora in the US vis-à-vis the population of our nation-state. It is suggestive of a long history of emigration and close relations between the two countries. But this seemingly impressive number throws up many questions. What does this subjective indexing of identity mean? Are those who tick the Irish box in the census indicating a core sense of identity, or some vague if strongly felt affinity? What does it mean to be Irish American today?**

The Clinton Institute has begun an ambitious research project that will seek to answer these questions. We will be working with partners in the US as we develop a multi-stranded project that will provide a comprehensive documentary snapshot of contemporary Irish America, and consider its future and the future of Irish-US relations.

To date, we have completed a pilot study - based on fieldwork research in Chicago - that we hope will function as a template for further studies of key cities and regions in the US with substantial Irish populations. We have also collaborated with New York University and Irish Central in creating recent online surveys of Irish America - Ted Smyth, Chair

of CI'S Advisory Board, has taken a lead in this initiative and he comments on it below...

This pilot research in Chicago was funded by the Irish Abroad Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and we are pleased to acknowledge this support. Earlier this year our

research assistant Dr Gemma McNulty and I spent several weeks in Chicago conducting interviews and surveys. We conducted 88 in-depth interviews with a wide range of Irish individuals and focus groups, representing diverse sectors of Irish presence in the city. In addition to the interviews we designed (with the help of Dominican University) and disseminated an online survey, which received 330 responses. It was designed to capture issues of identity, political views, and health and well-being of the community. The survey has provided valuable information about the basic demographics and perspectives of Irish Chicago, while the interviews tell us more about how Irishness is experienced and lived, and how Irish articulate their identities.

(Continued overleaf)

**IRISH CHICAGO**  
Late Generation Ethnicity and the Future of Irish America

A Research Report Commissioned by The Irish Abroad Unit,  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**Liam Kennedy and Gemma McNulty**  
Clinton Institute, University College Dublin  
September 2017



## Irish America Today – A New Research Project (Continued from page 1)



A float at the St Patrick's Day Parade, Chicago, March 2017

### Some of the key findings:

- The Irish American community in Chicago is a mature, settled diaspora community, and markedly successful as measured by its representation in the upper reaches of government, law, labour and business organizations.

- It is also a diverse, fragmented populace, no longer bound by neighbourhood and church. There is a generally strong though fragmented civil society of organisations, institutions and networks supporting the Irish in Chicago. They serve different sections and needs among the diaspora Irish, only occasionally intersecting.

- The most frequently voiced concern by those interviewed and surveyed in this study is that the relations between Ireland and the US are growing weaker and the “next generation” of Irish America will be even more distant from its Irish heritage.

- There are very few new Irish emigrants to Chicago in recent years. They are mostly young professionals who view themselves as sojourners and tend not to engage with the more settled Irish communities. They have a different sense of Irish identity to that of the settled Irish community and retain strong links to the home country via media and regular return.

- There are pockets of vulnerability among the Irish in Chicago, most clearly with the undocumented and the elderly, but also less visibly in areas of mental health and addiction. The work of the Chicago Irish Immigrant Service demonstrates that the role of dedicated Irish immigration centres in the US remains a crucial agency for front-line advice, counselling and support services.

- The undocumented Irish are increasingly fearful about their status and futures, reluctant to trust and engage service providers, and uncertain about support within the Irish community.

- Immigration reform was viewed by a majority of survey respondents as the greatest challenge facing the Irish in Chicago. The issue was unquestionably heightened in the context of the Trump administration's initiatives on immigration. At the same time, there was evidence that the settled Irish community have limited empathy for the undocumented or for immigration reform in their favour.

- Culture remains crucial to the making and maintenance of ethnic Irish identity in Chicago. There is a strong sense of cultural loss and diminishment among older generations but also pride and energy in maintaining identity through particular institutions and activities.

- Given the challenges posed by late generation ethnicity, education must be at the centre of any strategic effort to engage the next generation of the Irish diaspora in the US.

The research confirms that Irish America is at a stage of late generation ethnicity, no longer refuelled by new emigrants, and this conditions the worldview of Irish America. A notable feature of this is that Irish ethnic identity in the US is increasingly symbolic, a matter of choice rather than need or circumstance. It is an identity that is no longer associated with immigrant trauma or oppression but with pride and distinction.

As we take this research forward, we will be exploring more broadly and in more depth the culture and social lineaments of contemporary Irish America and its relations with Ireland.

## The Trump Project

Dr Eugenio Lilli

The 2016 US presidential campaign and the eventual election of Donald Trump to the White House generated a renewed interest in American Studies. This was the context that led the UCD Clinton Institute to organize an international conference that would examine the political and cultural significance of Trump's election as president of the United States and consider the first 100 days of his administration. Titled “Trump's America”, the conference discussed a variety of fascinating topics ranging from populism through foreign policy and immigration to the concept of post-truth (The full list of the speakers and their paper titles can be accessed through at [www.ucdclinton.ie](http://www.ucdclinton.ie)).



The “Trump's America” conference was also the catalyst event for the creation of the “Trump Project”. The “Trump Project” brings together a number of international scholars with a diverse range of expertise in US politics and foreign policy, including Robert K. Brigham, Professor of History and International Relations at Vassar College, and Inderjeet Parmar, Professor of International Politics at City University London. The Trump Project aims at creating an international network which will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and analyses over topical issues in international affairs in relation to the Trump presidency. As a first step, a Trump Project website has been created in order to provide a platform to develop future research, teaching and outreach programmes – the site can be viewed at [www.trumpproject.org](http://www.trumpproject.org)





## JAKE SULLIVAN

Former senior Policy Adviser to Hilary Clinton and National Security Adviser to Vice President Joe Biden during the Obama administration presented a talk for the Institute on the 27th September titled 'U.S. Policy at a Populist Moment'.

His talk touched on a number of contemporary issues, but focused on key areas where the U.S. must do more to shape an effective and sustainable foreign policy.

These included:

1. Elevate foreign economic policy within the United States foreign policy.
2. Do a better job at sharing the burden of global problem solving.
3. Deal more effectively with the question of how the U.S. should use its military power.
4. Put values back at the heart of U.S. foreign policy.

A video of the full talk is available on [www.ucdclinton.ie](http://www.ucdclinton.ie)

Sullivan is currently the Marin R. Flug Visiting Lecturer in Law at Yale Law School.

# A word from our Alumni

**Charisma Gollan  
& Katie Morris**

**Having spent the last year at the Clinton Institute studying for our Master degrees in Media and International Conflict, the two of us felt ready to start the new chapter of our life with a trip to the West Bank to witness conflict for ourselves.**

Both of us carried a journalistic background, we both studied journalism for our undergraduate degrees and have worked in newsroom environments. For years we were told that being a journalist means to witness but not intervene with a story. This proved to be more difficult than expected.

We met with different advocacy groups of both sides of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, spoke with locals and visited refugee camps. However, the moments that stuck with us the most and were the hardest to witness was the discrimination of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers and the severe human rights violations that occur every day in the West Bank and Gaza.



Having started our journey along the picturesque shores of Jaffa, an old port town not far from Tel Aviv, we were in for an enormous culture shock when we crossed the world famous "security wall" in Bethlehem.

Manicured roadways suddenly give way to littered broken pavements, huge lumps of concrete scattered randomly. Those are only the immediately visible ramifications of the occupation.

On our second day living within the Occupied Palestinian Territories we entered the narrow alley ways of Aida Camp. Erected in 1950, in the wake of the 1948 Nakba (the catastrophe), Aida was meant to provide temporary housing to 1,125 refugees from the nearby areas of Hebron and Jerusalem. Figures from UNRWA from 2014 say residents now number close to 5,500.

The most striking memory from our visit to Aida was when a video presentation by our host regarding tear gas attacks on the camp was interrupted by IDF personnel firing tear gas. The smell and sensation hung in the air as we made our way up to the rooftop to see what was happening.

From there we witnessed an Israeli tank speeding down the street firing rounds of CS gas before retreating. Upon the retreat a small group of Palestinian youths emerged and threw stones, not one rock launched would make it within 50 meters of the soldiers.

What we were witnessing was one of the many cat and mouse games the Israeli military play with Palestinians on a daily basis. Whether it's restricting work permits to Jerusalem so Palestinians can only cross through cages at 4am, or routinely denying entry to those with permits to enter Israel for adequate healthcare, one thing is certain – the occupation is enforced with an iron fist.

But we learned to be a witness to these events, we learned our part is to tell the story, educate ourselves on the incidents. However, it is one thing to know this and it is another to watch Israeli soldiers firing CS gas at young Palestinians or patrolling the streets of Hebron ensuring only Israeli's walk that street.

# National 2017 Survey of Younger Irish Americans

## Ted Smyth

Chair of UCD Clinton Institute Advisory Board

**In March 2017, a national online survey of Irish Americans was conducted to research their views and interests in relation to their ethnic background and their contacts with Ireland. The survey, supported by the UCD Clinton Institute and Glucksman Ireland House NYU, was conducted via a link to the IrishCentral.com website and quickly generated 3,180 responses from Irish Americans all over America. The survey confirmed the power of the internet to reach Irish Americans who are not born in Ireland, with 51 percent of respondents being third generation and beyond, the vast majority eager for deeper ties with their Irish identity, including online and university courses in Irish studies.**

Because the age profile of these respondents proved older, with 62 percent 55 years of age or over, we decided, with generous support from the Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Program and the Ireland Funds, to conduct a second survey in September, 2017 limited to Irish Americans who are aged 18 to 45. This second survey was circulated on IrishCentral.com and a number of online and social media channels and was completed by over 1300 Irish Americans under the age of 45, with 75 percent in managerial or supervisory occupations.

Only eight percent of these respondents were born in Ireland, with 57 percent third generation or further removed. At a time when ethnicity is a choice for many multi-ethnic Americans, fifty-nine percent choose Irish American ancestry over other possible options. Ninety-eight percent are interested in studying Irish history, especially their



own, the Famine, the War of Independence and the Peace Process. Irish music is the most popular Irish cultural pursuit, followed by Irish literature.

Ninety-five percent feel that it is important that Irish Americans stay connected to Ireland, but 64 percent do not belong to any Irish organization and 35 percent have never been to Ireland. This represents a huge opportunity as visits to Ireland were seen as one of the best ways to sustain Irish heritage among this group, along with family and community and through involvement with Irish organizations in the U.S. Eighty-two percent said they would attend university-organized courses while on vacation in Ireland.

Not surprisingly, 85% stated that social media platforms have increased their engagement with Ireland, Facebook in particular.

## PhD Profile: Alireza Hajhosseini

Alireza is the Executive Producer of CNN international flagship current affairs program 'Connect the World, with Becky Anderson'. Thesis title: 'Narrative in the Age of Hybridity: Episodes from the Trump Era'.

Humans are storytelling animals. We rely on stories to understand where we came from, the situation we find ourselves in currently and where we're heading. This perennial desire to make sense of our past, present and future through the power of stories is what makes narrative so central to the human experience. Narrative can be understood as the frameworks that enable us to connect apparently unconnected phenomena around some causal transformation. Political narratives bestow meaning on current affairs and explain political actions.

But, how is narrative formed, projected and received at a time when the power to narrate is no longer the sole preserve of the elite and when the

masses have greater ability to intervene in the news-making process? As Castells argues, transformations in the digital technology have moved us from an age of mass communication to an age of mass self-communication. Within that framework, this thesis argues that in today's media ecology narrative is hybrid, episodic and strategic.

Hybrid in the way that old and new media logics are co-evolving with one another to create more opportunities for mass intervention. Narrative is episodic reflecting the dominance of social and digital media platforms that give greater credence to story bursts and viral moments. Narrative is also strategic. Every story has an inherent intention



Hybrid in the way that old and new media logics are co-evolving with one another to create more opportunities for mass intervention. Narrative is episodic reflecting the dominance of social and digital media platforms that give greater credence to story bursts and viral moments. Narrative is also strategic. Every story has an inherent intention when it emerges and as it develops actors within a given narrative find ways to strategically use it to achieve their goals.

The thesis will present its findings about narrative through an examination of a series of narrative episodes taking place during what can be best described as the "Trump era."

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