

‘Observers of the Minutiae of Social Life’: A History of the Harvard–Irish Mission (1930–1936)

Anne Byrne

National University of Ireland, Galway

2022

POUR CITER CET ARTICLE

Byrne, Anne, 2022. “‘Observers of the Minutiae of Social Life’: A History of the Harvard Irish Mission (1930–1936)”, in *Bérose - Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie*, Paris.

URL Bérose : [article2573.html](https://www.berose.fr/article2573.html)

BEROSE Publisher: ISSN 2648-2770

© UMR9022 Héritages (CY Cergy Paris Université, CNRS, Ministère de la culture)/DIRI, Direction générale des patrimoines et de l'architecture du Ministère de la culture. (All rights reserved).

Your use of this article indicates your acceptance of the Bérose site (www.berose.fr) terms and conditions of use, available [here](#).

Visited on 24 April 2024 at 13:07

The US-based Harvard-Irish Mission (HIM) [1] to Ireland took place from 1930 to 1936. The Mission was composed of three disciplinary strands, archaeology, physical anthropology, and social anthropology. The Mission required extensive planning, funding, management, trained personnel, and US engagement with representatives of the Irish State to undertake prolonged, public, and intensive fieldwork in Ireland. Ireland was selected by the multi-disciplinary Harvard University investigators as a suitable site for an ‘all-Ireland study’ to investigate a population in transition from a traditional to a modern way of life. The plan spanned pre-historic to contemporary time with a programme of excavations of archaeological sites, an anthropomorphic, photographic, and occupational study of men and women and an anthropological study of the relation between family form, kinship structures and economy. The stated purpose of the HIM was the ‘...The scientific interpretation of a modern nation....’. [2] The HIM was funded by Harvard University, Irish-American donations, and grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, supplemented with financial support from the Irish government.

Ernest Hooton (1887–1954), professor of anthropology, Harvard University, coordinated the three strands, based in the US. Wesley Dupertuis (1907–1992), Helen Lucerne Dawson (1904–1982) and Helen E Stimpson (1911–1996) [3] carried out the anthropomorphic work and statistical analyses for a racial survey, overseen by Hooton, whose specialist interest was in physical anthropology. Hugh O’Neill Hencken (1902–1981) and Hallam J. Movius (1907–1987)

led the archaeological strand of the Mission, excavating and reporting on a range of burial mounds, settlements and middens. William Lloyd Warner (1898–1970) was the overall Mission director in Ireland, with particular responsibility for the social anthropology inquiry. Warner recruited graduate students for fieldwork in Ireland, Solon Kimball (1909–1982) and Conrad Maynadier Arensberg (1910–1997). The focus in this dossier is on the history of the social anthropology strand in Ireland.



Fig. 1

William Lloyd Warner, social anthropologist.

CC BY-SA

Social Anthropology and Ireland as a Research Site

Dissatisfied with the classical methods and approach of American and European anthropologists concerned with distant civilisations and cultures, Warner and colleagues sought to legitimise a social anthropology located in urban, modernising, industrial societies. A focus on investigating the culture and values of ‘new world’ populations emerged in parallel to ‘old world’ societies, providing a rationale for a comparative and modern anthropology. Comparative research meant that an exclusive focus on the study of ‘exotic peoples’ was no longer warranted and that the ‘science of society’ included modern social life. [4] Writing of the influence of Émile Durkheim on European and American anthropology, Warner’s aspiration for a new social anthropology is evident in the scientific terms and concepts utilised to align anthropology with the social sciences.

The new social anthropology has become a social science investigating the nature of social behaviour, with hypotheses tested inductively by comparative research upon societies of diverse types. [5]

Warner’s empirical and theoretical interest in the diversity of social organization in different types of societies prioritised an investigation into social systems, structures and relations of societies in ‘social equilibrium’ to arrive at ‘adequate generalizations on the nature of human social interaction’. [6] While the language of science was mobilised in service of the new

social anthropology, for Warner, Arensberg and Kimball, [7] their methodology was divined more as an approach that was relatively free from personal bias, preferences and judgements. Objective methodological rigour was grounded in the intensive observation of all aspects of social life. [8] Family form, kinship structure, community relations and individual behaviours became the organising principles for fieldwork and interpretation. Warner's charge for anthropologists in the 1930s was to study social change in modern communities. Staying close to data and empirical work, grounding interpretation and arguments in the evidence collected developed into what was later known as the community study method, to understand human meaning, interaction, action and sociality. [9]

The development of social anthropology as a distinctive new academic discipline in the US coincided with Warner's ambitious work programmes for the Newburyport Studies and for the Harvard-Irish Mission. His interests in a comparative anthropology led him, Arensberg and Kimball, directly from the Yankee City [10] community studies research in Newburyport (US) to Ireland. Arensberg and Kimball summarise a history of the Irish research as follows:

It was begun in 1932 as an intensive field research in social anthropology as it had grown up in the ethnological field work of Malinowski and through the theoretical formulations of Radcliffe-Brown. Neither of the authors of this book had done firsthand work among primitive peoples. They had served apprenticeships in fieldwork under Professor William Lloyd Warner, then of Harvard University, in a study of a contemporary New England city and were thoroughly devoted to social anthropology as a technique for study of modern civilized communities. [11]

An island nation on the periphery of Europe, the Harvard anthropologists considered Ireland an exemplar of a society caught between traditional and modernising social and economic forces. Drawing on their experiences as graduate research assistants in Warner's Yankee City studies, Arensberg and Kimball adopted and adapted the community study method in their ethnography of small farm families in County Clare. Participant observation, interviews and living in situ for extended periods of time among the small farmer families and people of the town of Ennis characterised the fieldwork approach from which they produced one of the first ethnographies 'to represent "modern" European communities' in a largely rural setting (French 2015, 143).

County Clare represented 'a balanced mixture of demographic and social criteria', according to Solon Kimball. [12] Situated on the west coast of Ireland, the principal town was Ennis with a port at Kilrush. Dependant on a cattle-based economy and pastoral agriculture, the population comprised of property owners of large landed estates and small-farm property holders. English was the spoken language with traces of spoken Irish surviving in the western part of the county. Most of the population were Roman Catholic in religion, though membership of the Protestant Church was also evident.

Despite the apparent appeal of Ireland as an ideal research site, the 1930s was a highly troubled decade. Post the War of Independence (1919–1922) and an intense civil-war conflict

(1922–1923), Ireland was politically divided, north and south. Political and economic instability prevailed. With high rates of unemployment and the declaration of an economic war with England by Éamon de Valera, head of government, the possibilities for increased civil unrest, economic and political upheaval were discernible. [13]



Fig. 2

Conrad Arensberg, anthropologist. This image shows Conrad Arensberg in military uniform. During World War II he worked as a military intelligence officer in Washington DC and in Japan (1942-1946). Solon Kimball was employed as an anthropologist in the US Government War Relocation Authority (WRA) programme in 1942. The WRA was responsible for the internment of American-Japanese citizens. See Van Bremen 2003, for a critical examination of the legacy effects on anthropology and government policies of the employment of anthropologists in armed conflicts in Japan and America.

Image courtesy of Kelly Arensberg.

With responsibility for the overall Mission in Ireland, Warner met with state and local representatives of the Irish Free State (1922–1937). He became keenly aware of national and local political sensitivities. Warner developed research contacts with powerful political and religious leaders to explain the purpose of the Mission, negotiate the volatile research setting and secure approval to proceed with the archaeological and anthropological programme of work. De Valera endorsed the project, as did the Catholic hierarchy, including the bishop of Killaloe, who was a vigorous political opponent of de Valera. A newspaper media campaign was launched to inform US and Irish populations of the presence of the investigators on the ground, and to announce archaeological ‘discoveries’, for the duration of the Mission. Agreements with the National Museum concerning ownership of excavated materials (artefacts and human remains) and offers of support for excavation work were helpful to the archaeological teams. Scholars of politics and history in the National University of Ireland and the Irish Folklore Commission provided research contacts in Clare. The director of the Folklore Commission recommended particular farm families to host and accommodate visits from the social anthropologists. The Harvard team were directed to begin their

investigations in that part of Ireland which appeared to be unchanging. Customary and traditional ways of life were evident and farm families continued to marry, inherit, and transfer farm property from one generation to the next. The family form and small farm property maintenance system that Arensberg and Kimball encountered appeared to be able to withstand the forces of modernisation already evident elsewhere in Ireland.

The social anthropologists consulted and spoke with a wide range of political representatives, civil servants, priests, teachers, doctors, judges, accountants, solicitors, scholars, librarians and laborers, agricultural advisors, bankers, town commissioners and policemen, predominantly male professional and state informants. Kimball wrote that in no instance was the request for official support to cooperate with their investigations ever denied. [14]

Fieldwork and Publications

Following an immersive reading of Irish history, politics, literature, folklore and economic affairs, Arensberg interviewed his professional contacts about Irish culture, society and politics in Dublin and Ennis. In a letter report to Hooton in 1933, Arensberg wrote

...I feel I have the town and its people worked out pretty well. The great problem is to decide just how deep to burrow, and the fact that I am alone and can only do one job at once has made me feel on occasion that I have missed an opportunity here or there. I want very much to work among the farmers for after all they are our chief concern in an agricultural country. Of course I am skirting them as it were all the time, in working with local government, agricultural and land commission officials, and in watching the markets and fairs, but I haven't yet actually descended among 'em. However I am laying a plan of campaign, and hope to carry it out. Only the beastly wet cold of the weather is still just a bit discouraging... I keep myself pretty well absorbed in the work or in expectation as to next steps and the meaning of what I've got so far, and on the few occasions when a bit of recreation is needed I've the movies and the companionship of the bars, which are sorts of men's clubs here. [15]

Later, Arensberg lived with small farm families in the rural districts of Corofin, Rinnamona and Luogh for periods from 1932 to 1934. Kimball began his study of the economic relations between farm families and the people of Ennis in 1934. During the course of fieldwork

...the problem of the influence of family structure and kinship early forced itself into the center of the stage. The form of the community and the lives of its members could not be understood apart from the kind of relations among persons bound by blood and marriage which the country people exhibited. That influence, therefore, became the principal area of investigation. [16]



Fig. 3

Solon Kimball, anthropologist.

Image credit courtesy Solon Kimball Papers,
Newberry Library.

In the interests of mapping the pace and direction of social change, the anthropologists explained observations that specifically concerned them.

...details of the most minute and personal kind...the observation of personal relations, individual and group activities, expressions of sentiment and emotion of every kind, as expository matter in the presentation of the general process by which individuals are united, groups are formed, joined, opposed, and in which the cohesion of the community is created, maintained, defended, and lost. [17]

Arensberg's and Kimball's fieldwork diaries, interviews, reports and letter correspondences provide extensive evidence of their experiences of sharing home and working space with farm families. Living in the research setting, dependent on the hospitality of families for accommodation and food, they documented the daily, monthly, seasonal and annual cycle of work, noting religious practices in the home and church, paying attention to social customs and conversations about politics, noting family and community relations, while exposed to the vagaries of west of Ireland weather, as they biked and walked around the county. The American anthropologists observed the physical labour of all persons in the home, on the farm and in the wider community. They commented on the status of the young and old, men, women and children, noting everyday interactions among the country people. Their method was 'intensive observation', making extensive notes of who they met, what was said and what people were doing. In their own words 'the purpose of the study is not so much to characterise the communities described as it is to examine the behaviour of the persons living in them'. [18] Living in the farm household afforded Arensberg and Kimball with the first opportunity to meet and converse with older and younger country women, while documenting daily domestic labour and household relations. In describing all that they observed on the dynamic of kin relations and the structure of families, the anthropologists sought to determine individual and group behaviour and underlying meanings to

understand ‘human behaviour in social life’. [19]

On his return to Harvard and completion of his doctoral thesis, Arensberg was appointed as a junior research fellow and invited to lecture on his Irish fieldwork experience. These lectures were published as *The Irish Countryman* (1937), his first sole-authored book. This short book, dedicated to Warner and Patrick Joseph Meghen (Ennis town commissioner) as ‘good companions, philosophers, and friends, interpreters each of his own country and of his fellow-men’ [20] is a prelude to the authoritative, *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940), co-authored with Solon Kimball. Arensberg considered that *The Irish Countryman* and *Family and Community in Ireland* were distinctive for their ‘pioneering’ approach to studying local communities and that these texts were among the first of the US social anthropological studies in Europe. Positioning themselves as ‘two foreigners’, the anthropologists refused to claim particular Irish expertise, as their study concerned ‘only a very few of the many aspects of contemporary Irish life’. [21] Accordingly they did not ‘feel themselves qualified in any way to characterize or evaluate the culture, tradition or social life of the communities in which they made their study’. [22] *The Irish Countryman* is an account of rural ways of life in the 1930s, describing customs, folklore and beliefs, work on the farm, family relations between fathers and sons, kinship networks, matchmaking, marriage, family and land, the position of older people in the community and the world of shops, pubs and fairs. A concluding chapter contains an account of religion, fairy-lore and social values. The explicit orientation of social anthropology as developed by Arensberg and Kimball in Ireland was on questions of social meaning, human behaviour and what it is that people do and think as individuals and as members of society. In advocating for ‘a shift of emphasis’ among anthropologists, Arensberg advised that ‘The focus of interest need no longer be the culture trait nor the single custom, better perhaps to look at human beings who are the momentary bearers of culture’ (Arensberg, 1937, 6–7). Their ‘functionalism’, a combination of scientism and interpretivism, acted as a set of guidelines for fieldwork to inquire into ‘the interconnectedness of the conditions of human life’. [23] In their early and later work, both Arensberg and Kimball described their method as ‘inductive’, ‘analytical’ and an ‘interpretive’ approach to observation and analysis. [24]

Detail, local colour, dramatic incident, and specific quotation are offered not for themselves, or for the picture they make, but in answer to questions of how and why human beings come to act upon one another in certain ways, to govern their lives in particular fashions, and to accept sentiments and beliefs of the kinds recorded. [25]

The 1940 illustrated edition of *Family and Community in Ireland* consists of chapters on small farm families, the rural economy, family labour, kinship systems and relations, marriage, emigration, inheritance, sex, occupation and status, the treatment of the elderly, markets and the community, with a final chapter on an explanatory framework that highlights the importance of relationships (familial, generational, sexual, the division of labour and economic exchange) in Irish rural life. Plans to publish additional volumes and analyses of the collected material on Irish politics, religion and the class system were developed but did

not materialise. [26]

We were eager to discover whether the central position occupied by family among the countrymen was duplicated in the town setting. We also wanted to trace the connections between family and the greatly elaborated economic, religious, educational and political institutions of the town. We also sought to delineate the patterns of social class and its reflection in institution and behaviour. [27]



Fig. 4

The Irish Countryman (1937) Conrad M Arensberg.

Image courtesy Anne Byrne.

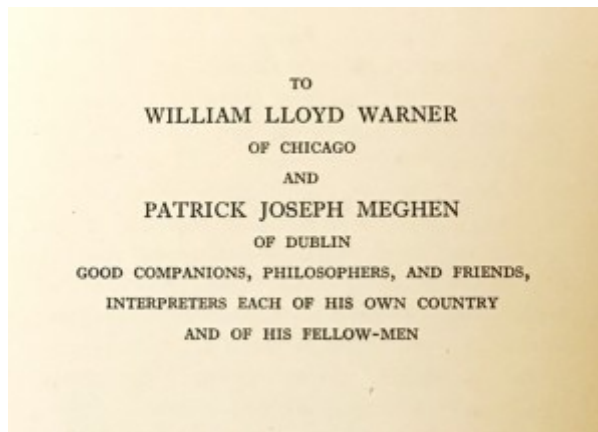


Fig. 5

Dedication, *The Irish Countryman* (1937) Conrad M Arensberg.

Image courtesy Anne Byrne.

It was not until 1968 that a second edition of *Family and Community in Ireland* investigating distinctions and connections of countryside and town was eventually published, some three decades after the initial fieldwork. The new edition drew from Kimball's earlier doctoral thesis on the market town of Ennis. In providing a warrant for the 1968 publication, Arensberg and Kimball acknowledged they had not the means to revisit Ireland to update their analysis. They accepted that their fieldwork notes were outdated and were displaced by

newer investigative methods, more developed anthropological concepts and more recent studies of the substantial changes in Irish life and culture since the 1930s. Yet they argued that the 1930s analysis had value when understood as ‘a document expressing a point-of time in the social life of rural Ireland and a distinctive methodological approach’. [28] The omission of analyses on conflict, politics, class, religion and their functionalist theoretical framing would lead to adverse critical reception by Irish scholars and from local communities about whom the work was written.



Fig. 6

Front cover *Family and Community in Ireland* (2nd Edition 1968). Cover Design by Kazuna Tanaka.

Image courtesy Anne Byrne.

Reception and Legacies

In the 1970s, critical responses to *Family and Community in Ireland* stimulated a debate among Irish intellectuals concerned with the impact for the anthropology (and sociology) of Ireland. [29] Scholars critiqued a conceptual framing that was dominated by structural-functionalism masking conflict in the ethnography and closed to signs of change in rural society. Others disputed that the Clare ethnography could stand in as a study of the Irish or Ireland as a whole. Some scholars accepted the validity of the ethnographic evidence and the significance of social structures such as patrilineal and impartible inheritance, patriarchal authority structures, stem family marriage and inter-farm co-operation, as presented by Arensberg and Kimball. Further critical responses focussed on the growing economic challenges to small farm family survival dependent on cooperation from immediate family and wider kin. New interpretations were developed concerning multiple survival strategies deployed by farm families, involving state support and engagement with wider market opportunities. [30] A re-examination of the version of functionalism in the study regarded the framing as methodological, offering a set of innovative guidelines for fieldwork, participant observation and collaborative interpretation. [31]

These critiques stimulated a body of critical reception scholarship, foundational to the

development of social anthropology and sociology in Ireland in the 1970s. The Irish study gave shape to distinctive aspects of contemporary anthropological ‘multi-sited’ inquiry, founded on ‘...comparison, team-work, multi-disciplinarity, and long term residential field research’. [32] While Arensberg and Kimball emphasised the importance of sociality, they were guided by the scientific imperative to stay close to their data, making interpretations, founded on evidence and free from professional and personal bias – or at least to the extent possible. Inevitably, critical responses, then and now, point to the romanticisation of the West and the idealisation of traditional family and farm life in the study. The 1930s national project to record disappearing folklore and customs, the influence of cultural nationalism in reviving spoken Irish, the ambitions of the new state to create a distinctively Irish identity are evident in the ethnography and in the overall framing of the Harvard-Irish Mission, according to critics. [33] These are valid and important appraisals.

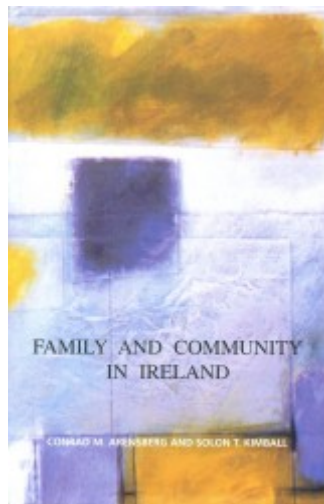


Fig. 7

Front cover *Family and Community in Ireland* (3rd Edition 2001). Jacket front painting: Oughtdarra No 6, 1994, Published by CLASP, the publishing association of Clare Local Studies Project, and supported by Clare County Library, the 2001 third edition is a facsimile copy of the 1968 Harvard University Press edition, with an extended introduction by Byrne, Edmondson and Varley. See Clare Local Studies Project at clarelibrary.ie for reviews of this edition.

Courtesy Paul and Teresa O'Brien.

Critiques of the ideological contexts, methods and ethics of the Irish ethnography continue into the present. [34] Examples of historical disciplinary limitations, breaches of trust and examples of unethical practices are raised in addition to the omission of any reference to social and political divisions, continuing violence and conflict that characterised Irish society, post the Irish civil war. Through an examination of the records of the district courts in Ennis, Co. Clare and analyses of archival material from Arensberg's and Kimball's unpublished fieldwork documents, French (2013) traces the deep vein of political conflict, contestation and interpersonal violence in the Irish Free State period as represented by local disputes and violent vigilante retributions. Arensberg's and Kimball's conceptual framing

prioritised a focus on consensus and solidarity and occluded a focus on conflict and change. In addition, French's analysis points to why Arensberg and Kimball, who collected extensive data, did not publish additional volumes; their military involvement in WW II, new research and employment agendas post war, and Irish and American sensitivity to any published reference to ongoing political violence that might challenge the legitimacy of the new state.

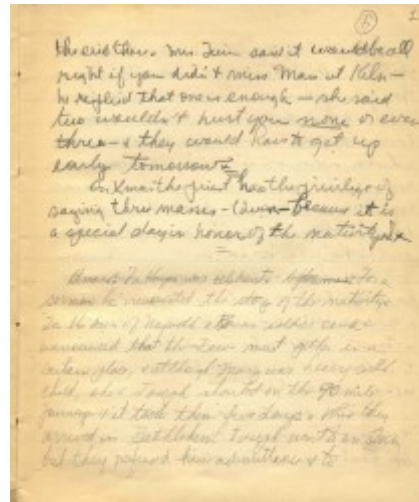


Fig. 8

Extract from the field diary of Solon Kimball, gift of Kelly Arensberg.

Image courtesy Anne Byrne.

Despite their best efforts to avoid characterizations and representations of individuals and small farm families in published accounts, those that the anthropologists drew for illustrative effects became a source of local antipathy and critical rejection by scholars of their account from the 1970s onwards. Just as scholars had contested the ethnographic representation of farm family life in Clare, so too did those whose ancestors had been written about in *Family and Community in Ireland*. Arensberg and Kimball modified personal names in their publications but not sufficiently for anonymity. Characterizations, behaviour or family circumstances of individuals were described in adequate detail to allow local recognition of particular persons and an evaluation of how persons were depicted in published accounts. Family, relatives, and friends of those written about were caught between acceptance or anger – depending on the anthropological depiction of forebears. The representation of one person or family was significant for all, as family connections extended into community relationships – just as Arensberg and Kimball had described for the same community in the 1930s. The identification of people by real names were also recorded in fieldnote diaries gifted to an Irish archive by Vivian ‘Kelly’ Garrison Arensberg, following publication of the third edition of *Family and Community in Ireland* in 2001. [35] The field diaries are first-hand social anthropological observations of rural families and communities in Clare from 1933 and 1934, written in situ and as such present a written record of the anthropologists’ observations of small farm family life. The diaries comprise five volumes of c. 407 pages, containing the daily observations, notes, memos, lists of things to do, people to meet – and express the investigative focus of the anthropologists.



Fig. 9

Harvard-Irish Mission fieldwork site in the Burren, Co Clare, Ireland.

Image courtesy Anne Byrne.

Given this context, a collaborative project ‘Successors read Predecessors’ (2008-2012) returned the unpublished field observations to the communities written about in *Family and Community in Ireland*. A process of consultation and interviews with local communities in Clare, numerous workshops, as well as a series of lectures and seminars with local historical and archaeological societies ensued. A participatory, community-based model for ethnographic and anthropological research across the generations was devised, using a narrative and visual inquiry approach. Kimball’s fieldwork diary was shared with community members which culminated in 2008 in a month-long community exhibition of photographs, texts and farm implements belonging to families and forbears.

The Rinnamona Research Group worked with artist Deirdre O’Mahony who was based in Kilnaboy, Co. Clare. [36] Together they curated and produced the exhibition that included 1930s farm tools and household objects, framed photographs of members of the ‘Rinnamona Dáil’ [37] and 16 family groups, a digital photo archive of the remains of the original farm households, copies of the Harvard-Irish Mission publications, a computer accessible presentation of the Harvard-Irish Mission and an audio of a radio programme based on the social anthropology. [38] Three books were made for the exhibition, a photograph album of the Rinnamona households in the 1930s inscribed with the names of the members of each household, an album of school photographs from the 1920s onward, and a facsimile book of selected extracts from Kimball’s diary. The images of 1930s family members and the ‘Rinnamona Dáil’ were carefully and deliberately selected creating an alternative medium through which the community re-engaged with the anthropological account, in a shared and public space. The exhibition of photographs, sourced from family albums, became part of a community narrative, a re-representation and alternative to the anthropological account. The ‘Successors read Predecessors’ project provided an opportunity for families and relatives to ‘speak back’ to and correct the anthropological account about forebears, and created a context for understanding the language and approach of anthropological research, ethics and methodologies of the period and importantly ‘took the harm out of it’. [39]



Fig. 10

Rinnamona Research Group archival installation with portrait of former postmaster at X-PO, Kilnaboy by Deirdre O'Mahony.

Image credit Ben Geoghegan 2008, courtesy Deirdre O'Mahony.

The Harvard-Irish Mission precipitated the introduction of American social anthropology into Ireland and earned a place in the history of anthropology and sociology for the main researchers. [40] *The Irish Countryman* (1937) and *Family and Community in Ireland* (1940, 1968, 2001) continue to be regarded as 'classic texts', are widely read, and are republished. Arensberg's and Kimball's subsequent academic publications on methodological and theoretical issues introduced comparative, field-based community studies, as 'a substantially new anthropology' and were considered significant contributions to the interdisciplinary study of modern European and North American societies. [41] Arensberg and Kimball developed a new paradigm for studying culture and community, based on the intensive observation of the minutiae of social life in Ireland. The legacy of the Harvard-Irish ethnography is evident in subsequent field-based studies for the investigation of rural communities, interrogating the stability of small farm family life and the durability of family-community relations. [42]

The Harvard-Irish Mission had far-reaching effects for Irish social anthropology and sociology, while stimulating theoretical and methodological debates about the locus, remit and direction of the disciplines. Arguably, anthropological studies such as the Irish ethnography are better understood in terms of the historical context in which they were produced, the intersecting and competing interests and the relations and mechanisms that shaped that production. [43] The community studies approach instigated by Arensberg and Kimball gradually expanded to a broader problem-oriented and policy focussed rural sociology and urban anthropology. [44] Despite the critique, it is widely recognised that the ethnographic fieldwork conducted during the Mission was of the 'highest quality'. [45] In observing the dynamic of tradition and change and 'the social forces which effected or prevented the Irish transitions to a modern society', Arensberg and Kimball recognised the resilience of the connection between family and land for the survival of the family farm and rural property ownership. [46]



Fig. 11

Successors Meet Predecessors, installation at X-PO including a wall drawing of the map of the area and the RRC photographic archive. The ethnography has increasingly attracted the interests of photographers, artists, writers, film-makers and radio producers, replicating and contesting representations of Irish rural culture, see Byrne 2018.

Image credit Ben Geoghegan, courtesy Deirdre O'Mahony, 2008.

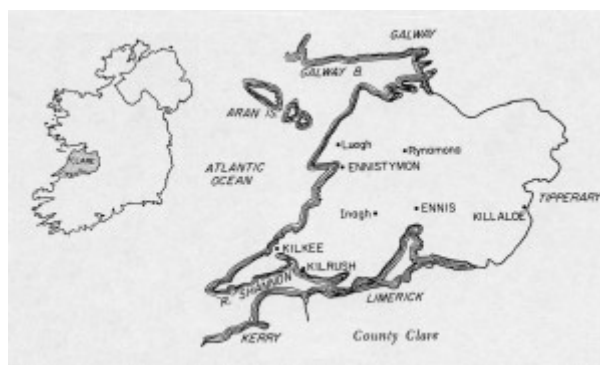


Fig. 12

Rynamona, Luogh, Inagh and Ennis social anthropology sites in County Clare, Ireland.

In *Family and Community in Ireland*, 2001, 2.

Acknowledgements

My sincere gratitude to colleagues and co-authors for the introduction to the third edition of *Family and Community in Ireland* (2001), Tony Varley and Ricca Edmondson; to Kelly Arensberg for her sustained interest and generosity in facilitating access to Conrad Arensberg's archives and fieldwork notebooks; and to co-authors, the Rinnamona Research Group and Deirdre O'Mahony, for taking the work to where it needed to go – back to the community and forward into the public domain. I wish to acknowledge financial support received from the National University of Ireland, Galway (Social Science Research Centre and Millennium Research Funds, 2001–2002) and Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2006. This dossier draws on the published work of Byrne, Edmondson and Varely, 2001, Byrne and O'Mahony 2012, 2013 and the Rinnamona Research Group 2011. Thank you to the editors and reviewers of BEROSE for much appreciated editorial guidance.

Bibliography

Social Anthropology Publications of the Harvard-Irish Mission

Arensberg, Conrad M., 1937. *The Irish Countryman: An Anthropological Study*. London: Macmillan.

Arensberg, Conrad M., and Solon T. Kimball, 1940, 1968. *Family and Community in Ireland*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Arensberg, Conrad M. and Kimball, S.T., 1965. *Culture and Community*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Arensberg, Conrad M. and Kimball, S.T., 1968b. Community Study: Retrospect and Prospect. *American Journal of Sociology*, 73, 6: 691–705.

Warner, M.H. 1988. 'The Harvard Irish Survey'. W. Lloyd Warner *Social Anthropologist*. New York: Publishing Center for Cultural Resources.

Warner, W. Lloyd (1940), 1968. 'Preface' to Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Warner, W. Lloyd, Preface. Arensberg, Conrad M., and Solon T. Kimball, 1940, 1968. *Family and Community in Ireland*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, vii–xiv.

PhD Theses

Arensberg, Conrad M., 1934. *A Study of Rural Life in Ireland as Determined by the Functions and Morphology of the Family*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University.

Kimball, Solon, 1936. *The Tradesman and his Family in the Economic Structure of an Irish Town*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University.

Relevant Readings

Arensberg, Conrad M., 1983. 'Sol Kimball: Anthropologist of our America', *Florida Journal of Anthropology*, Special Issue: A Tribute to Solon T. Kimball (1909–1982), 9, 1: 7–11.

Carew, M. 2018. *In Search of the Irish Celt. The Harvard Archaeological Mission to Ireland, 1932–1936*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.

Hooton, E. A. and Dupertuis, C.W., with Dawson, H., 1955. *The Physical Anthropology of Ireland*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, XXX, 1–2.

Kimball, Solon, 1979. 'Warner, W. Lloyd' in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Pt. 18: 791–796.

Lewis, H. 2014. *In Defence of Anthropology*. Transaction: NJ.

Smyth, William, J. 2008. Measuring Heads, bodies and evaluating family farming and occupational continuities: revisiting the 1931-1936 Harvard Anthropological Survey of Co. Clare/Ireland. M. Lynch and P Nugent (eds). *Clare: History and Society*. Dublin: Geography Publications.

Warner, W. Lloyd, 1941. Social Anthropology and the Modern Community. *American Journal of Sociology*, 46, 6: 785–796.

Contemporary Academic Publications on the Social Anthropology of the Harvard-Irish Mission

Byrne, A. 2011: “Letters from an Archive”, *Burren Insight*, Summer Issue 3, 34–36. <https://burrenbeo.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Burren-Insight-2011.pdf>

Byrne, A. 2011. Echanges épistolaires en anthropologie : Harvard-Irlande/ Letters in anthropological research: the Harvard-Irish Survey (1930-1936) in *Ethnologie Française, Irlande après Arensberg et O Duilearga* 4,2, 241–252. <http://hdl.handle.net/10379/2555>

Byrne, A. 2017. Epistolary research relations: correspondences in anthropological research - Arensberg, Kimball and the Harvard-Irish Survey 1930-1936 in Ó Giolláin, D. (ed). *Irish Ethnologies*. Notre Dame UP: USA. 58–87.

Byrne, A. 2018. Silence, silence. The story is (not) done’: redeploying the Harvard-Irish Mission (1930-1936) archive for the present. Paper presented to the 15th European Association of Social Anthropologists, Biennial Conference Stockholm, Sweden, 14–17 August 2018.

Byrne, A. and Edmondson, R. and Varley, T. 2001. Arensberg and Kimball and Anthropological Research in Ireland: Introduction to the third edition, Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*, CLASP: Ireland, 1–101.

Byrne, A. and O’Mahony, D. 2013. Revisiting and Reframing the Anthropological Archive. *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, 16,1, 8-15.

Byrne, Anne and O’Mahony, D. 2012. Family and Community; (Re)telling our own story. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33, 1, 52-75.

Byrne, A. and O’Sullivan, E. 2019. Arensberg, Kimball and de Valera: A story of sex and censorship in *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 1–24.

Byrne, A. And O’Sullivan, E. 2020. DeValera, Censorship and ‘Family and Community in Ireland’ in *History Ireland*, 28, 1, 42–45. <http://hdl.handle.net/10379/16101>

Byrne, A. Edmondson, R., Varley, T. 2015. Anthropological Research in Ireland: Arensberg, Kimball and the Harvard-Irish Mission of the 1930s. *Irish Journal of Sociology* (Special Issue: Society and Nationhood), 23, 1, 22–61.

Egan, K.M. and Murphy, F. 2015. Honoured Ancestors, Difficult Legacies: The Stability, Decline, and Re-Emergence of Anthropologies in and of Ireland, *American Anthropologist*, 117, 1, 134–142.

French, B. M. 2013. Ethnography and ‘Postconflict’ Violence in the Irish Free State. *American Anthropologist*, 115, 2, 160–173.

French, B. M. 2015. Anthropologies in and of Ireland: Postcolonial Subjectivities and Institutional Locations, *American Anthropologist*, 117, 1, 143–144.

Mathur, C. 2015. Anthropology and the Irish Encounter, *American Anthropologist*, 117, 1, 145–146.

Wulff H. 2015. Ireland in the World, the World in Ireland. *American Anthropologist*, 117, 1, 142–143.

Recommended Reading on Irish Social Anthropology

Donnan, H. 2017. Re-Placing Ireland in Irish Anthropology. Ó Giolláin, D. (ed). *Irish Ethnologies*. Notre Dame UP: USA Wilson, 19–35.

Ó Giolláin, D. (ed). *Irish Ethnologies*. Notre Dame UP: USA Wilson

Silverman, M and P.H. Gulliver, eds. 1992. *Approaching the Past: Historical Anthropology through Irish Case Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wilson, T. M and Donnan, H. 2006. *The Anthropology of Ireland*. Oxford: Berg.

Wilson, T. 1984. From Clare to the Common Market: perspectives in Irish ethnography. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 57, 1: 1–15.

Irish Journal of Anthropology <http://anthropologyireland.org/ija/>

Irish Journal of Sociology <https://www.ucd.ie/sociology/research/irishjournalofsociology/>

Media featuring the Social Anthropology of the Harvard-Irish Mission

Lynch, D. 1998. *Postcards to Send*. Independent Film (US).

O’Connell, Brian. 2016. Radio 1, 4 part series ‘Ties that Bind’ by Brian O’Connell Broadcast
27 – 30 December 2016.
<http://www.rte.ie/radio1/the-ties-that-bind/programmes/2016/1227/841432-the-ties-that-bind-tuesday-27-december-2016/?clipid=2366694#2366694>

Ó Mordha, Seán. 2011. RTE TV Documentary. *The Home Place: The Irish Family Farm*. RTE TV Documentary. Screened 9–10 May 2011.

Rinnamona Research Group, 2020: FOLK RADIO project at the X-PO, Kilnaboy Co Clare, curated by artist Tom Flanagan (https://www.mixcloud.com/X_POFolkRadio/) 17 January 2020. https://www.mixcloud.com/X_POFolkRadio/the-rinnamona-research-group/

Rinnamona Research Group. 2012. FILM. *Visualising the Anthropological Archive; a Community Collaboration*, film documentary, produced by Gallivanting Media.

Rinnamona Research Group, 2011. *Successors Read Predecessors, Representing the Rinnamona Dáil*, photobook project publication.

Rinnamona Research Group, 2008. Community Exhibition on the Harvard-Irish Mission. X-PO, Kilnaboy Co Clare. <https://deirdre-omahony.ie/portfolio/x-po/> 2008.

Owens, Mary, 2006. *Raw Data*. Radio documentary on the Harvard-Irish Mission, Clare FM radio.

Additional References

Arensberg, C. 1983. Sol Kimball: Anthropologist of our America. *Florida Journal of Anthropology, Special Issue, A Tribute to Solon T. Kimball 1909-1982*. 9, 1: 7–11.

Bartlett, T., Smith, B., Ohlmeyer, J., Eds. 2018. *The Cambridge History of Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, AF. Solon T Kimball, 1908–1982. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 14:148–157.

Comitas, Lambros, 1997. Conrad Maynadier Arensberg. *Anthropology Newsletter*, 38, 5: 18.

Comitas, Lambros, 1999. Conrad Maynadier Arensberg. *American Anthropologist*, 191, 4: 810–817.

Comitas, L. 1999. Obituary for Conrad Maynadier Arensberg. *American Anthropologist*, 101, 4: 810–817.

Curtin, C. 1986. The peasant family farm and commoditization in the West of Ireland. N. Long, J. Doouwe van der Plag, C. Curtin, L. Boux. *The Commoditization Debate*. Wageningen: Agricultural University Wageningen.

Ferriter, D. 2021. *Between Two Hells: The Irish Civil War*. UK: Profile Books.

Kimball, Solon, 1979. Warner, W. Lloyd. *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Pt. 18: 791–796.

Lucey, J. 2018. Women on a Mission. *Archaeology Ireland*, Autumn 2018, 40–42.

Macken-Walsh, A. Cush, P., Byrne, A. 2020. Strategies of Resilience in Irish Family Farming. *Irish Geography*, 53: 1, 23–42.

- Maume, P. 2009. Conrad Maynadier Arensberg. *Dictionary of Irish Biography* [online].
- Moore, Alexander, 1984. Solon Toothaker Kimball (1909-1982). *American Anthropologist*, 86: 386–393.
- Mullins, G and Dixon, D. 1996. *Dorothea Lange's Ireland*. London: Aurum Press.
- Mulvaney, D.J. 1990. Warner, William Lloyd (1898–1970) Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/warner-william-lloyd-8987/text15819>, accessed online 25 January 2022.
- O'Shea, H. 2019. (Re)interpreting Fieldwork: Jos Koning in East Clare. *Eire-Ireland*, 54: 1, 2, 188–214.
- Platt, J. 1996. *A History of Sociological Research Methods in America 1920-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, P. 2020. *Durkheim and After: The Durkheimian Tradition, 1893-2020*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Van Bremen, J. 2003. Wartime Anthropology, A Global Perspective. *Senri Ethnological Studies*, 65:13–48.
- Varley, T. 1983. The Stem Family in Ireland Reconsidered. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 25, 2: 381–92.

Archival Resources

- NUI Galway Library Archives, James Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland, Galway, The Field Work Diaries of Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball (a selection), digital copies.
- The Newberry Library Chicago, Modern Manuscripts and Archives, Solon Toothaker Kimball Papers 1902–1981.
- Smithsonian, National Museum of Natural History, Guide to the Conrad M. Arensberg papers, 1931–1997.
- Smithsonian, National Museum of Natural History, Guide to the Vivian E. Garrison papers, 1930–2009.
- University of Chicago Library, W. Lloyd Warner Papers, 1913–1981.

[1] Also known as the Harvard-Irish Survey or Harvard-Irish Study or Harvard-Irish Expedition (with and without hyphen). The social anthropology strand was referred to as the Social and Economic Survey of Ireland.

[2] For a detailed examination of the purpose, organization, and impact of the Harvard-Irish Mission, see Byrne, Edmondson, and Varley 2001. For an overview of the development of anthropologies in and of Ireland, see Wilson and Donnan 2006 and O'Giollain 2017. For contemporary critiques of the legacies and opportunities of the Harvard-Irish Mission, for archaeology see Carew 2018 and for anthropology, see Egan and Murphy 2015, French 2015, Mathur 2015 and Wulff 2015.

[3] For an account of women's professional involvement in the Harvard-Irish archaeological excavations, collecting anthropomorphic samples and statistical analyses, see Lucy 2018. Women in farm households and family businesses acted as points of contact, informants and referral for the social anthropologists and are identified in letters and field notes. Apart from these diary references and formal identification of women who prepared material for publication (proofs, figures, and style) in the acknowledgements to *Family and Community in Ireland* by Arensberg and Kimball, there are very few references to women as field investigators, proofreaders, report writers or contributing authors. Mildred Warner wrote that she completed the statistical reports for 'Connie' Arensberg on local Clare markets (Warner, M, 1988, 67).

[4] Warner, Preface in Arensberg and Kimball 1968, vii.

[5] Warner, Preface in Arensberg and Kimball 1968, xii.

[6] Warner 1941, 787–788. The urban sociologist, according to Warner, had ignored stable, integrated societies favouring the study of 'social disequilibrium' (e.g. crime, insanity, ethnic conflict and suicide), providing an opportunity for anthropologists to carry out research in societies that 'accented harmonious adjustment, high integration, and well-organized social relations' (787).

[7] In a four-decade review of the development of community studies, Arensberg and Kimball identify the 'inductive, natural-history method upon which community study is founded' (1968b, 693).

[8] European theoretical and methodological influences that shaped Warner's cultural and methodological approach to social anthropology are reported to include Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Lévy-Bruhl, Levi-Strauss, Malinowski and critically his mentor, field supervisor and advisor, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. Brown invited Warner to Australia 'to take up the study of the aborigines in the field', marking the beginning of a strong friendship and lifelong pattern of correspondences (Warner, M 1988: 3). For a contemporary analysis of the influence of Durkheim's ideas and social thought on sociology and anthropology in the US and Europe, see Smith 2020. Platt (1996) is sceptical about Durkheim's influence on sociology in the US, observing that *Rules of Sociological Method* was not translated into English until 1938. In describing the

close working partnership between the Australian academic Elton Mayo and Warner, Mildred Warner writes that 'Mayo also came under the influence of Émile Durkheim, the French sociologist whose *Division of Labour in Society* had first appeared in French, in 1983' (Warner, M, 1988, 43). It was not unusual for

anthropologists at this time to be fluent in several European languages; Conrad Arensberg could speak German and French and had some familiarity with Irish (Gaeilge).

[9] For a discussion of the anthropological functionalism of Arensberg and Kimball and their fieldwork approach, which bore little resemblance to the strong functionalism of Talcott Parsons, for example, see Byrne, Edmondson and Varley, 2001, LXX-LXXX; also Arensberg and Kimball 1968b.

[10] Yankee City is the pseudonym used by Warner to refer to Newburyport in Massachusetts as a study site in the US. The Newburyport study was reported in five monographs: *The Social Life of a Modern Community* (1941), *The Status System of a Modern Community* (1942), *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (1945), *The Social System of the Modern Factory* (1947) and *The Living and the Dead: A Study in the Symbolic Life of Americans* (1959). The practice of using pseudonyms and anonymisation remains of critical concern for the social and human sciences. Interestingly, Arensberg and Kimball did not disguise place names in *Family and Community in Ireland* and lightly anonymised participants. This had adverse consequences for the local reception of the publication which persisted over time, retrospectively raising questions about the ethics and intrusiveness of observation based fieldwork practices (see Byrne and O'Mahony, 2012, 2013).

[11] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxx.

[12] Byrne, Edmondson and Varley 2001, fn 38, 39.

[13] For a history of the Irish Civil War, see Ferriter 2021. For an overview of Irish history see Bartlett 2018.

[14] Byrne, Edmondson and Varley 2001, fn 34, 35.

[15] Cited in Byrne, Edmondson and Varley 2001, 50. [Arensberg to Hooton, January 11, 1933. The Hooton Papers, 995-1, 21–6. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University].

[16] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxvi.

[17] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxxii.

[18] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxix.

[19] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxix.

[20] Arensberg, 1937, dedication page.

[21] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxvi.

[22] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxix.

[23] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxviii.

[24] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxxii.

[25] Arensberg and Kimball, 1968, xxxii.

[26] See Byrne and O'Sullivan 2019 for an account of US and Irish restrictions imposed on the content of *Family and Community in Ireland*, prior to publication in 1940. For publication to proceed, Arensberg excised content and revised Chapter 11 on Familism and Sex. Further volumes did not materialise due in part to the exercise of censorship on an academic publication. In response to a question on the lack of attention to religion, Arensberg remarked in 1958 'But we did, indirectly line by line. But we had so much trouble with sex (Irish sources wouldn't back "Fam[ily] and Community' 'because of the chapter on familism and sex in it) that we knew better than to treat religion directly' (cited in Byrne and O'Sullivan, 240).

[27] Arensberg and Kimball 1968, ix.

[28] Arensberg and Kimball 1968 viii.

[29] See Byrne, Edmondson, and Varley 2001, 59–69, for a discussion of the impact of the study on Irish anthropology and sociology.

[30] See for example, Curtin 1986, Varley 1983.

[31] See Byrne, Edmondson and Varley 2001.

[32] Donnan 2017, 21–22.

[33] See O'Shea 2019.

[34] See Egan and Murphy 2015 for example.

[35] Kelly Arensberg (1933–2013) worked as an applied medical anthropologist, publishing on mental health care of migrant communities in New York. Her PhD, *Social Networks, Social Change and Mental Health among Migrants in a New York City Slum*, was completed in 1971. Kelly's papers are archived at the Smithsonian; see guide to the Vivian E. Garrison papers, 1930–2009. Conrad Arensberg and Kelly Garrison married in 1973. The diaries gifted by Kelly are available to view by appointment in NUI Galway Library Archives, James Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland, Galway.

[36] The Rinnamona Research Group consisted of Mary Moroney, John Ruane, Sean Roche, Francis Whelan and Anne Byrne. See Deirdre O'Mahony, Rinnamona Research Group, 2008, Projects and Exhibitions, <https://deirdre-omahony.ie>

[37] The 'Rinnamona Dáil' was a term used by the community and the anthropologists to describe the regular but informal gathering of older men in the community, regulating and debating internal affairs. Members were characterised by their role and influence in the group and identified by names and given nicknames such as 'Judge', 'Public Prosecutor' and 'Senator'. Farming methods were discussed and the authors write that 'Much of the community's relation to the outer world is debated and determined by the

old men's agreement' (184) (see Arensberg and Kimball 1968, 177–184).

[38] Owens 2006.

[39] Byrne and O'Mahony 2012, 2013.

[40] For overviews of Conrad Arensberg's academic career, see Comitas 1997, 1999 and Maume 2009; for Solon Kimball see Arensberg 1983, Burns 1983, Moore 1984; for Warner see Kimball 1979, Mulvaney 1990.

[41] Comitas 1999, 811.

[42] Wilson and Donnan 2006, 23.

[43] See Lewis 2014.

[44] See Donnan 2017 for a recent account of the history of Irish anthropology.

[45] Smyth 2008, 615.

[46] Wilson and Donnan 2006, 21. See also Macken-Walsh et al. 2020 for examples of contemporary research on farm family resilience that draws on the ethnography by Arensberg and Kimball.