



Disclosure of Sexual Abuse: encouragement, facilitation, and support

One-Day Virtual Conference: October 8, 2021

Disclosure of sexual abuse and violence is a process often beset with many barriers. Developing systems, practices, and environments that encourage, facilitate, and support disclosure of sexual abuse by both children and adults is key to the timely provision of services, stopping the cycle of abuse, and moving towards healing.



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October 8th, Schedule

9:30am Welcome & Introduction

9:45am Voices from Research – Introduction to this session

9:50am Dr Jennifer O'Mahony – Waterford Institute of Technology

Experiences of disclosing “historical” sexual abuse: Stories from survivors of Ireland’s Magdalene Laundries

10:05am Dr Carol Ballantine – Independent Researcher

Stigma and shame in the disclosure of lifetime violence for African migrant women in Ireland

10:20am Neha Kamrani – University College Dublin

Body and Memory: Comparative Study of Adult Disclosures of Rape and Child Sexual Abuse in Deirdre Kinahan’s Rathmines Road and Dina Mehta’s Getting Away with Murder

10:35am Dr Michelle Walshe – Rape Crisis Network Ireland

An Exploration of Sexual Harassment among Irish Adolescents: Experience and Understanding

10:50am Marilien Romme - Cork Counselling Services

Traumatic Repeat or Healing Environment? Ethical Dilemmas of Mandatory Historical Reporting.

11:05am Live Q&A/Morning Panel

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October 8th, Schedule

11:25am Movement/Coffee Break

11:40am Aiding Retrospective Disclosures of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Report Launch

12:10pm Live Q&A

12:30pm Lunch Break

1:10pm Voices from Experience – Introduction to this session

1:15pm Hazel Katherine Larkin

1:35pm Mick Finnegan

1:55pm Live Q&A

2:15pm Voices from the field – Introduction to this session

2:20pm Deirdre Kenney, Deputy CEO/Director of Advocacy, One in Four

2:40pm Dr Rosaleen McElvaney, Principal Psychotherapist, St Clare's Unit, CHI

3:00pm Live Q & A

3:25pm Keynote Address – Introduction to speaker

3:30pm Keynote – Professor Ramona Alaggia, University of Toronto

4:10pm Q&A / Panel Discussion – Facilitating, Encouraging, Supporting

4:30pm Thank You & Close

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Keynote Profile – Professor Ramona Alaggia



Ramona Alaggia is a Professor at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and is affiliated with the Women and Gender Studies Institute. She is the former Factor-Inwentash Chair in Children's Mental Health (2008-2018). Ramona is currently the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Chair in Child and Family. Ramona's overarching area of interest is in trauma and resilience across the life course.

Her research focuses on gender and violence; child sexual abuse disclosures and mental health effects; intimate partner violence and structural barriers; and promoting ways to foster resilience processes in children, youth and adults exposed to violence. Results of these studies aid in mitigating the long-term effects of trauma, violence and abuse on children and youth. She strongly advocates for the use of trauma informed approaches for service delivery.

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***Voices from
the Field***

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Speaker Profile – Deirdre Kenny



Deirdre is the Deputy CEO and Advocacy Director in One in Four, a Dublin based non-profit providing professional psychotherapy and advocacy support services to men and women who have been sexually abused in childhood and to their families. One in Four also delivers a sex offender intervention programme to adults who acknowledge sexually harmful behaviour towards children and to their families. One in Four engages actively in influencing policy and legislation that impacts on our clients. Deirdre has over 20 years' experience working the NGO sector in Ireland and Africa, predominately in the area of sexual violence but also covering the areas of HIV/AIDS, prostitution, trafficking. Deirdre is also a Restorative Justice Facilitator and trainer.

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Speaker Profile – Dr Rosaleen McElvaney



Dr Rosaleen McElvaney is a Clinical Psychologist and Psychotherapist, a Fellow and Past President of the Psychological Society of Ireland and an Assistant Professor in Psychotherapy in Dublin City University. She co-manages the sexual abuse therapy service in St. Clare's Unit, CHI at Connolly. She has published extensively on child sexual abuse disclosure, including a book for professionals (*Helping Children Tell About Sexual Abuse*, Jessica Kingsley, 2016) and parents (*Finding the Words*, Veritas, 2015). Rosaleen has served on the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, the Board of Crime Victims Helpline and One in Four, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland and is currently a member of Tusla's National Review Panel, which investigates the deaths of children in care and known to the child protection system.

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Speaker Profile – Mick Finnegan



~~Mick is a native of~~ Dublin's inner-city who is an experienced health and social care professional. He has worked in various inpatient and assertive outreach roles across the UK and Ireland. Mick is an expert by lived experience and has a passion for working with disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

He has also worked in partnership with Health Education England and NHS Improvement as a member of their expert referencing group which developed a new competency framework for lived experience roles within the NHS in the UK. This now forms part of their national programme to develop new roles, and expand others, to transform the mental health workforce in England. He lives to pass on his story of hope and recovery, to help others avoid the pitfalls, into which he fell.

Mick is a National Advisor to London's Royal College of Psychiatrists, working with the National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health. Now living back in Dublin and studying in Trinity College Dublin, he also sits on the Board of Directors in Kyrie Farm.

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Speaker Profile – Hazel Catherine Larkin



Hazel Catherine Larkin is a survivor of child sexual abuse, incest, trafficking, and intimate personal violence. She is a doctoral candidate at Dublin City University, where her area of research is transgenerational trauma regarding women and child sexual abuse. Hazel has a background in Theatre, and holds degrees in Psychology & Sociology, Sexuality Studies, and Law. Hazel has designed, and runs, training for professionals interested in trauma-informed practice in Ireland, and internationally. In addition, she has created, and runs, courses for parents who were sexually abused as children; daughters of narcissistic mothers; and parents of sexually abused children. She also provides specialized doula care to women with histories of CSA. Hazel is also involved with the Public Will Campaign – a collaboration between Traverse Bay Child Abuse Centre and Michigan State University – to end child sexual abuse.

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Speaker Profile – Dr Jennifer O’Mahoney



Dr Jennifer O’Mahoney is a Lecturer in Psychology and a Chartered Member of the Psychological Society of Ireland. She is also Co-Director of both the Analysing Social Change Research Group and Crime and Justice Research Group at WIT. Jennifer is also a Senior Researcher at INSYTE (The Centre for INformation SYstems and TEchnoculture) at WIT. Her research focuses on how victimology and trauma are remembered and narrated; the relationship between memory and cultural heritage in digital humanities; and activism and social change. She is the primary investigator of the Waterford Memories Project, which examines historical institutional abuse in Ireland. She is currently a Working Group Leader of EU Cost Action “Cultures of Victimology: Understanding processes of victimization across Europe”.

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Speaker Profile – Dr Jennifer O’Mahoney



Title: Experiences of disclosing “historical” sexual abuse:
Stories from survivors of Ireland’s Magdalene Laundries

International systematic reviews report that sexual violence (predominantly against women) exists worldwide with endemic levels in some countries, to the extent that sexual violence should be considered as a human rights issue (McMillan and Lombard, 2013; Abrahams et al., 2014; Yount, 2014). Adult disclosure of sexual abuse has received a lot of attention in the academic literature, indicating that there are many intersecting individual, social, and cultural dimensions of a person’s life effecting disclosure (McMillan and Lombard, 2013; Tener and Murphy, 2015). Clearly, responding to survivors of sexual violence is a constant challenge to the health professions, but, more broadly, must also be recognised as a serious challenge to our legal and social systems. In cases of “historical” sexual violence these individual, social, and cultural dimensions which frame a survivor’s life present additional, specific challenges to disclosure. Drawing on oral history interview data with survivors; interviews with legal professionals; and survey data from health professionals, this paper will consider the intersecting individual, social, and cultural dimensions of disclosure of historical sexual violence experienced by Magdalene women. This paper argues that understanding disclosure as a both a distinct, individual phenomenon, as well as a function of more generalised patterns of human cognition and behaviour, will deliver a more complete understanding of factors relating to the enhancement (or curtailment) of disclosure of historical sexual violence. Such an approach responds to Daly’s (2015) call for an international (but highly contextualised) research and policy agenda, which is open to the development of new forms of coping and justice.

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Speaker Profile – Dr Carol Ballantine



Carol Ballantine received her PhD from the school of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway in 2020. Prior to that, she spent more than ten years working in the field of international development. She works as an independent researcher, focusing on gender, gender-based violence, race and migration: her two most recent projects are with UNHCR, and the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD.

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Voices from Research – Dr Carol Ballantine



Title: Stigma and shame in the disclosure of lifetime violence for African migrant women in Ireland

There is a substantial research literature on the impacts of violence against women in the context of intersectional oppression and abuse (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005; Ting and Panchanadeswaran, 2009; Women's Health Council, 2009; Kalunta-Crumpton, 2016; Kanyeredzi, 2018). A very small element of this literature specifically concerns the role of stigma and shame (Tankink, 2013; Tonsing 2015; Tonsing and Barn, 2016; Kanyeredzi 2018; Thaggard and Montayre, 2018).

This paper uses stigma and associated shame as a lens for understanding barriers and facilitators to disclosure for racialised African migrant women living in Ireland. Drawing on a mixed methods PhD study on narratives of violence in the lives of African women in Ireland, it describes specific stigmas affecting the research participants, and the practices that they adopted to navigate intersecting stigmas. These practices both responded to and reinforced a collective narrative identity of the resilient survivor/ strong Black woman – in turn inhibiting disclosure, and potentially causing mental distress. However, they proved surprisingly protective against the worst impacts of gendered shame documented elsewhere (eg Buchbinder and Eisikovits, 2003, Baker, 2013, Overstreet and Quinn, 2013, Tonsing and Barn, 2016) The paper therefore concludes with recommendations for further research into gendered shame in the specific context of wider pervasive stigmatisation; and practical considerations of community endorsement of stigma-avoidance practices.

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Speaker Profile – Neha Kamrani



Neha Kamrani is presently researching for her doctoral thesis on 'Representations of Sexual Violence in Contemporary Irish and Indian Theatre' at the University College Dublin, Ireland. She is also a Research Fellow for Media Action Against Rape (MAAR), a UNESCO funded project to study rape reportage in India and served as its Project Manager at UNESCO, New Delhi Cluster Office. Her MPhil thesis, *New Rape Narratives in the Indian Public Sphere*, is an academic intervention against sexual assaults as she worked on fictional and non-fictional rape narratives uttered via new media forms such as photographs, documentaries and blog posts. She completed her Bachelor's degree in English Literature from Delhi University, following which she went on to pursue her Masters and MPhil at Jawaharlal Nehru University. In India, she worked as an Assistant Professor at Delhi University and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. She continues to work with various Indian NGOs to contribute towards the well-being of the girl-child in India.

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Voices from Research – Neha Kamrani



Title: Body and Memory: Comparative Study of Adult Disclosures of Rape and Child Sexual Abuse in Deirdre Kinahan's Rathmines Road and Dina Mehta's Getting Away with Murder

This paper will present a comparative study of Deirdre Kinahan's Rathmines Road (2018) and Dina Mehta's Getting Away with Murder (1990) in their depictions of sexual violence on the Irish and Indian stage respectively. Both the plays deal with adult disclosures of rape and child sexual abuse (CSA), manifestations of trauma on body and mind, hallucinations and the lack of emotional and legal support for the survivors. This paper will read the physical manifestations of PTSD in survivors of CSA and understand the differential narrativizing of past trauma. In doing so, the effects of recalling repressed memories on survivors in the two plays will also be studied. Simon McCarthy-Jones's study of the relation between CSA and Auditory Verbal Hallucinations will form the basis of this analysis. Within this, the role of families as bystanders to CSA will stand out among other psychological, legal and physical difficulties to survivors of CSA. Finally, the paper will draw similarities on how despite being set continents apart, adult disclosures of rape in these plays find little support within the Irish and the Indian legal systems.

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Speaker Profile – Dr Michelle Walsh



Dr. Michelle Walsh, is the Project Lead on this Clinical Innovation Project at Rape Crisis Networks Ireland, she completed her PhD within the Unesco Child and Family Research Centre in NUI Galway, where she undertook a nationwide study which looked at the effects and Understanding of Sexual Harassment among the Irish Adolescent population. She has been worked as an extern on the REAL U project for several years, delivering the training on the module on SEX and the LAW, in addition to delivering trainings on sexual violence and consent to a wide variety of audiences in the last number of years. Michelle also works for Rape Crisis Midwest as a counsellor, counsellor trainer and former board member. She is aware of the many of issues faced by Clinicians who work with and Survivors who have experienced sexual violence. She is both knowledgeable and passionate about sexual, domestic and gender-based violence and doing anything she can to prevent it.

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Voices from Research— Dr Michelle Walsh



Title: An Exploration of Sexual Harassment among Irish Adolescents: Experience and Understanding

Sexual harassment, and its existence within a continuum of behaviours (Moffitt et al., 1993) is expanded upon as well as the contribution of social norms and gender inequality in the continuance of adolescent sexual harassment. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory is utilized as a method to explore both the bi-directional and interconnected issues that contribute to adolescent sexual harassment at each level of their ecological system. The role parents, peer groups, school, bullying, social media are discussed along with the issues that exist within each of these systems. Employing thematic analysis, the findings from this study are based upon utilizing mixed methods of data collection, comprising (n=599) quantitative questionnaires completed by adolescent participants in addition to a qualitative section comprised of (n=93) adolescent and (n=21) youth worker interviews. A combination of descriptive statistical and inferential analyses was used to analyse the quantitative data within this study. The study found that Irish adolescents are experiencing high levels of sexual harassment. Social norms and gender inequality are two major contributing factors, along with a lack of adequate RSE within educational settings. Additionally, there are few supports available to those who have experienced sexual harassment. Based on these findings, an ecological framework for understanding and responding to adolescent sexual harassment has been developed. It is intended that this framework can be employed by academics, policy makers and at a practice level to understand and implement strategies in response to the key issues outlined within this research study.

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Speaker Profile – Marilien Romme



Marilien Romme is a Counsellor at Cork Counselling Services with a Masters in Clinical Psychology (University of Amsterdam) and a B.Sc. (Hons) in Counselling and Psychotherapy. She also trained as a Professional Mediator and Coach. Marilien is passionate about bringing innovation to the world of mental health and draws on 25 years of professional experience in Strategy and Change Management. Marilien's style of therapy is Humanistic Integrative, which is a non-diagnostic, person-centred approach. Her clients ask her for support with a wide range of themes, including trauma, abuse, crisis intervention, identity, shame, depression, anxiety, grief and anger. At Cork Counselling Services, Marilien is also responsible for the alumni programme of its Training Institute and for developing a supportive community with other local mental health services to promote working together and learning from each other.

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Voices from Research – Marilien Romme



Title: Traumatic Repeat or Healing Environment? Ethical Dilemmas of Mandatory Historical Reporting.

Should practitioners, for the benefit of society, send clients into a system that has the potential to re-traumatise? Marilien will present a qualitative study of the ethical dilemmas surrounding mandatory historical reporting experienced by Irish Counsellors and Supervisors. A thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed that counsellors support Mandatory Historical Reporting and, at the same time, are not comfortable with it. Their concerns were rooted in a division between therapy and law, as well as negative experiences of the reporting system. The participants of this study propose a more relational approach at every stage of the reporting process. Changing how clients are met could be the difference between another abusive, traumatic repeat or it being held in the context of someone's healing. Creating a more supportive environment requires the different professionals to work together and for counsellors to take their seat at the multi-disciplinary table. Finally, participants agreed on the need to slow down when clients disclose historical abuse. While Tusla recommends we do not rush with the paperwork, client readiness is not enshrined in law. This puts counsellors in a vulnerable position, and it needs to be addressed.

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