



RAPE CRISIS
NETWORK
IRELAND

SEXUAL VIOLENCE & ALCOHOL IN IRELAND:

A CULTURE?

Clíona Saidlár
Policy and Communications Director
Rape Crisis Network Ireland

CULTURE

- ◉ ‘*Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*’ Edward Burnett Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871)
- ◉ ‘The total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitutes the shared basis of social action.’ Collins English dictionary

PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN IRELAND

- ◉ One in five women experienced contact sexual violence in childhood
- ◉ One in six men experienced contact sexual violence as boys
- ◉ One in five women experienced contact sexual violence as adults
- ◉ One in ten men experienced contact sexual violence as adults
- ◉ Women lifetime experience of some form of sexual violence (42%)
- ◉ Men's lifetime experience of some form of sexual violence (28%).

(Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland, Hanna McGee et al 2002)



In 1992 the UN CEDAW Committee formally recognised that VAW constitutes a form of gender discrimination that impairs or nullifies women's enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and constitutes a major impediment to making use of their capabilities.



PRESENCE OF ALCOHOL IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN IRELAND

Rape & Justice in Ireland, Conor Hanly, Deirdre Healy and Stacey Scriver NUIG, RCNI commissioned, 2009

596 DPP files on recent adult rape cases between 2000 and 2004 found that:

- ◉ 77% of suspects had consumed alcohol on the date of offence
- ◉ Over 80% of complainants had consumed alcohol around the time of the offence
- ◉ Where alcohol consumption was measurable 90% of complainants had 'binge' levels (7 standard drinks) consumed
- ◉ 41% of suspects were severely intoxicated
- ◉ 23% of suspects had consumed no alcohol at all

The impact of that toxic mix of
alcohol and sexual violence?



IMPACT OF ALCOHOL ON INVESTIGATION

- Qualitative study of rape survivors found that a third (34%) chose not to report the rape
- ◉ of those not reporting 30% chose not to report because they had consumed alcohol at the time (voluntarily and involuntarily).
 - ◉ a further 30% of complainants with a history of alcohol abuse chose to withdraw their case after reporting.

IMPACT OF ALCOHOL ON DECISION TO PROSECUTE

The RAJI study found that the DPP's decision not to prosecute was negatively impacted by the complainant's history of alcohol abuse.

The DPP made a decision not to prosecute cases where a complaint had a history of alcohol abuse on the grounds of:

- lack of evidence (49%)
- complainant unreliability or lack of credibility (36%) and
- inconsistencies in statements (32%). (more than one reason allowed)

The latest DPP annual report states that:

- 58% of rape cases involved the intoxication of either the suspect or the complainant
- In rape cases received in 2005 the DPP prosecuted only a third and that the '*reliability of the complainants' account was undermined by high levels of intoxication*' accounted for a '*significant proportion*' of the DPP's decision not to prosecute.

PERPETRATORS OF RAPE AND ALCOHOL

Of recent rape cases which were prosecuted between 2000 - 2005:

- Of the 142 defendants it was possible to measure 65 (46%) for their level of alcohol consumption at the time of the rape:

- 88% had consumed in excess of 7 units
- 68% had consumed in excess of 11 units
- 17% had consumed in excess of 20 units

A further 17 of the defendant admitted to being drunk but their consumption could not be measured

- There were 70 convictions for rape, of that 70 over 50 were identified in probation reports as having a history of alcohol abuse

BLAME, SHAME AND GUILT

In Irish law and legal practice alcohol is not a mitigating factor for committing a sexual offence.

However

In Irish culture alcohol is often cited as a mitigating factor for so-called 'uncharacteristic' behaviour eg violence, rape, other criminal activity committed while intoxicated etc.

Recent attitudinal research reveals the cultural value system which blames victims of sexual violence.

There is evidence that intoxicated people are targeted by sexual predators precisely because they are intoxicated. (Kelly & Regan 2001)

For the victim of a sexual offence:

- ◉ Alcohol intoxication will impact negatively on a person's ability to identify danger
- ◉ Alcohol intoxication will impact negatively on person's ability to escape danger
- ◉ Alcohol intoxication will negatively impact a victim's ability to clearly remember details and the sequence of events in order to give a statement that can be the basis for a successful prosecution.

‘Thus the consumption decisions of both men and women can have the effect of facilitating the incidence of rape and make its detection and prosecution more difficult.’

(RAJI, 2009)



‘It is strongly recommended that dealing with Ireland’s drinking culture be seen as both a part of any anti-rape campaign and a prerequisite for the success of any such campaign.’ (RAJI 2009)



Irish drinking culture is one that supports a toxic mix of alcohol and sexual violence.



INTERNATIONAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS TO TACKLE SEXUAL VIOLENCE

States, *‘have to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating VAW, which entails adopting all appropriate measures, ... to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women ...’*

Article 4 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993)



- ◉ Culture is not static or given
- ◉ Culture is actively produced and reproduced
- ◉ Certain values and interests are served by the culture that is produced
- ◉ Other values and interests can be harmed by the reproduction of particular cultures.



MEASURING CULTURAL HEGEMONY:

1: Homogeneity:

Mainstreaming

Ubiquitous



MAINSTREAMING DRINKING CULTURE INTO IRISH CULTURE

‘In 1759, history was made when Arthur Guinness signed a 9,000-year lease on the famous St. James's Gate brewery in Dublin, Ireland.

Thanks to Arthur, people everywhere have been enjoying the world's most famous beer for more than 250 years. ...

And what better way to celebrate great beer than with great friends and live music from some of the best artists of our time?

Arthur Guinness Day brings people together in their local pubs, their cities and around the globe to share and toast the black stuff together.’

Guinness.com ‘What is Arthur's Day?’

Connection to Place

Tradition

Positive Social activity

*Guinness culture made this
all possible*



MEASURING CULTURAL HEGEMONY:

1: Homogeneity:

- Mainstreaming
- Ubiquitous

2: Immutability:

- Shared understanding of the rules
- Myth that the rules are 'natural' and common sense

3: Apolitical:

- Myth that there is no one responsible
- Myth that there is no one who gains
- Myth that there is no effort invested in reproducing that culture.



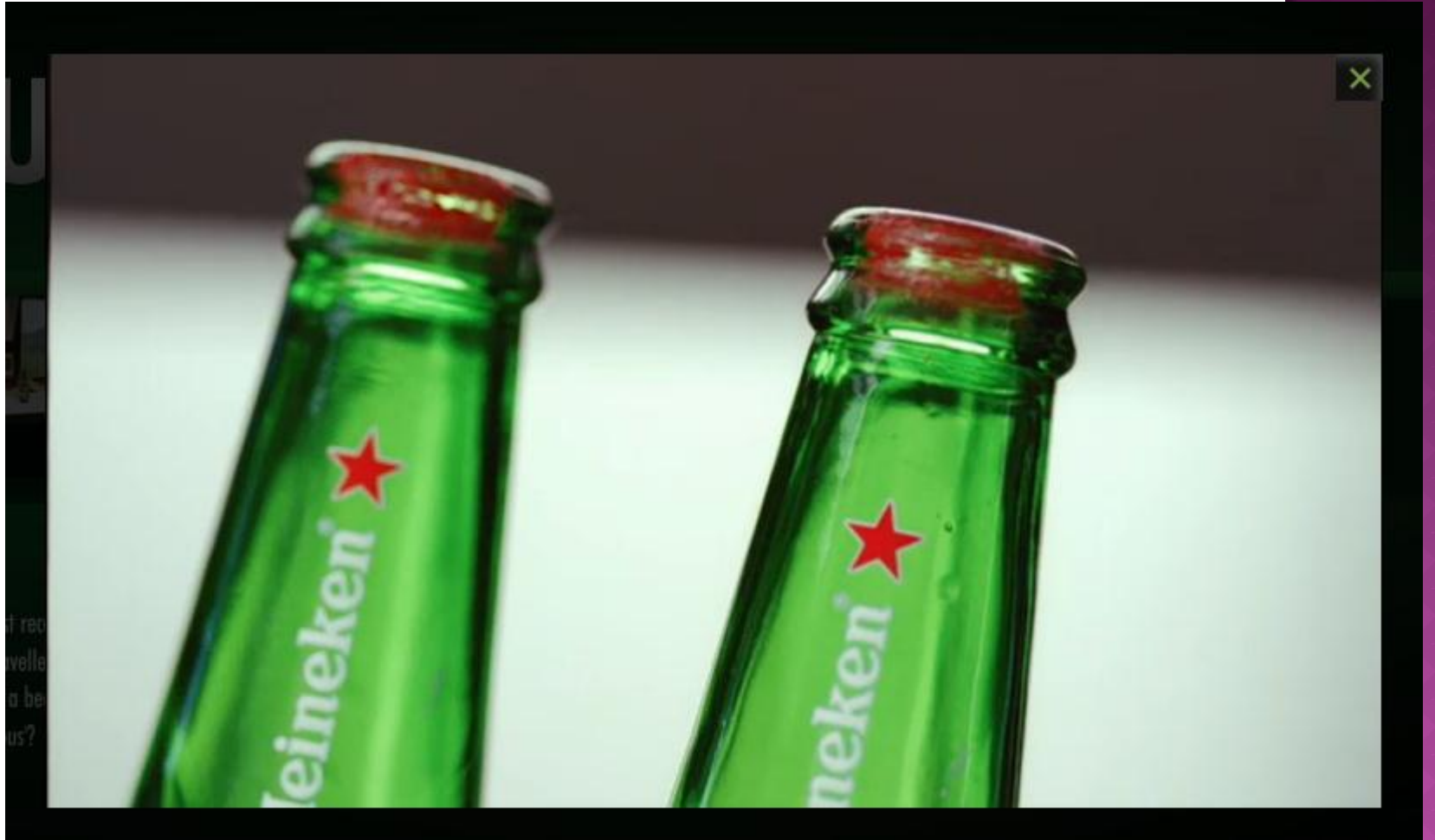




COMMUNICATING AND RE-ESTABLISHING THE ALCOHOL CULTURE

Advertising Standards Authority in Ireland

7.4(c) should not suggest, by word or allusion that the presence or consumption of alcohol can contribute towards sexual success or make the drinker more attractive. Advertisers should take account of public sensitivities regarding coarseness and sexual innuendo in marketing communications for alcohol;



ti rec
vella
a be
us?



00:23 / 00:30

SPACEMAN

In July 1969, mankind did something amazing. Something that had never been done before. Something really worthy of a Carlsberg. Watch our version of that historic step for mankind now.

UN Special Rapporteur, Yakin Erturk, report to UN Human Rights Council 2007

‘States’ obligations go beyond criminalizing and prosecuting VAW, and supporting survivors, they are also bound to:

- ◉ identify those aspects of a given culture which are linked to the violent practice and
- ◉ are required to develop a comprehensive strategy to transform those aspects.’



The reproduction of current forms of Irish drinking culture causes harm to women, girls, and indeed to men and boys in their sexual victimisation and constant threat of sexual victimisation.

Therefore, we have a moral and legal obligation to transform Alcohol's current role in Irish culture.

