Alice Harrison

This paper is based on jury research undertaken as part of the Rape Attrition Project conducted by the National University of Ireland, Galway which was commissioned by the Rape Crisis Network, Ireland, over the past four years. As well as completing an archival study on juries in rape trials in Ireland, information was compiled from previous empirical studies around the world. The question of jury composition was addressed and in particular, issues such as the impact of gender and attitude towards rape were studied in detail. Although the results of the Rape Attrition Project cannot be disclosed before its launch on December 7th, this paper will discuss the literature review undertaken and the research methods used to establish whether a connection exists between jury composition and verdict pattern. Another intention of this discussion is to shed light on the jury system in Ireland, both from a historical perspective, and as it currently stands under the Irish Constitution. Jury trial has not proved well suited to Irish circumstances given the history of unrest, political turbulence and hostility towards the state. Even after it was entrenched as a Constitutional right in 1937, trial by jury has been continually eroded since then and can now be regarded as a system under threat of decline.