Framing a new paradigm for

Irish abortion discourse:

The move from deadlock to dialogue

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to frame a new paradigm for Irish abortion discourse that will facilitate movement on the issue from the existing static position of polarisation and deadlock. It is proposed that reconsideration of the issues in more sensitive, nuanced and balanced terms would do much to progress an increased awareness of, and ultimately compliance with, international reproductive rights norms. This thesis suggests that, in order to move from deadlock to real dialogue, access to abortion must be reconsidered not merely in terms of individual rights-based arguments but crucially, as a universal human rights issue incorporating a broader social-good context that is inextricably linked with healthcare, justice, gender, equality and the caring ethic. In order to advance this new paradigm shift, including a review of the complex and deep-rooted cultural and historical reasons for Ireland’s current position, it is important to analyse Irish abortion discourse from varying perspectives including power dynamics, feminism, humanitarianism, national identity-formation and international human rights law. The new dialogue-facilitating discursive paradigm proposed by this thesis is one that will consider abortion as a universal human right and a social good that is indivisible from justice, equality and access to healthcare. The introduction of care ethics and compassion into the discourse would enable such a framework to emerge.
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2015

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https://doi.org/20.500.11825/317

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