I am absolutely determined to bring more women into politics. A critical discourse analysis of exclusion in the Irish public arena

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Abstract

Power, which is enforced through coercion and consensus (Gramsci 1971), can be enacted in all possible contexts mostly by male-controlled social machinery. The discourse of fear, threat and public punishment is imposed over those considered the weakest link of society. Ireland is no exception. Traditionally represented as a female icon, this nation still privileges a particular type of womanhood associated, by the same token, with protection, legislative control and disempowerment. Women are a major minority in a country whose national statistics of abuse are startling, which is more worrying in the case of Travellers, Blacks and Asians. At the same time, it is noticeable that, in the last twenty years, two women, Mary Robinson first and Mary McAleese later, have been elected President of the Republic. In such a context, and taking into account that the act of subject representation seems to be the right of those who hold symbolic power, in the present paper I aim to do the following: explore the role of politicians in the establishment of an inclusive discourse that gives voice to all sorts of Others (Said 1978); identify which out-groups are mis- or underrepresented in the Irish Parliament; classify the discursive strategies employed to depict some minorities in particular (i.e. prostitutes, Muslims, battered women, the poor); elucidate whether these can be explained by gender, ideology or institutional responsibility. For such a purpose, I will study the speeches delivered by some political leaders from 1997 onwards, by combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics (Baker et al. 2008).

Bibliography


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