

Muted group theory and the little mermaid

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Muted Group Theory This topic is to basically analyze the theory of Muted Group and to see how it correlates with Walt Disney's The Little Mermaid. What is Muted Group Theory? Muted Group Theory was first proposed by Edwin Ardner and the theory is an attempt to explain why certain groups in society are muted which means they are either silent or just not heard. Edwin Ardener was an anthropologist who discovered that a group becomes mute due to the lack of power that is experienced of a group with a low status.

Ardener then realized that this particular theory might form more of a gender perspective. Females are seen as being constructed differently and it is these specific differences that cause females to act in a different way as opposed to males. It is these reasons that women and minorities are to be considered muted groups because they are considered to be of a lower status than the dominant groups. Ardener called the theory the muted group because these muted groups are liken to black holes since they are muffled, overlooked and invisible (Griffin. 003: Prentice. 2005: Rogers 1978). It is not necessarily always seen that women are automatically muted or feel like a muted group but women believe that have no choice in order to "fit in" other than to change the way they act and talk. Women still live in a world that is dominated by men and women have taken the backseat to a man for centuries and depending on some cultures, the status of women and how they are viewed is not likely to change any time soon.

There is quite a bit of power play being executed in environments where a specific group because of gender, race, or cultural background cannot be heard for who they are, but rather only by acting in ways they are reflective

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of who is “listening”, the dominant group. It would not be until Cheris Kramarae offered a different perspective to the Muted Group Theory.

According to Cheris Kramarae, language is something that was constructed by man. The words and thoughts of women are ignored in our society.

Because of this, it is difficult for women to express their experiences as opposed to men. Kramarae further stated that language does not serve all its speakers in an equal manner regardless of the culture because women are not as free as men to say what they want, when they want, and where they want. Men have a dominant control of society and how the members of society should express themselves. As such, different terms are used to describe tasks done by both males and females even when they are doing the exact same thing.

It is also because of this that most sexual suggestions that are considered degrading are usually referring to women than to men (Anderson & Haddad 2005; Eckert & McConnel-Ginet, 1992; Epstein, 1986; Griffin, 2003; Prentice. 2005; West. 1983). In Order for women to express themselves to others, they must do so as how males express themselves (Epstein, 1986; Griffin, 2003; Rogers. 1978; Stets & Burke. 1996) One of Kramarae’s first published articles explains why women are perceived differently in the world and how they are not only less powerful but a group that does not speak a similar language as men.

Men and women speak a different language. According to popular belief, at least, the speech of women is weaker and less effective than the speech of men. Our culture has many jokes about the quality of women’s speech . . .

Compared to male speech, the female form is supposed to be emotional, vague, euphemistic, sweetly proper, mindless, endless, high-pitches, and silly" (p. 82). The Muted Group Theory does not necessarily explain all the possible ways woman can interact to obtain their desired goals within an organization or something along those lines.

Some women use certain techniques and tactics in which they are inherently strong and it is these particular women who can overcome the male power. One prime example of a women overcoming male power is the classic Disney Movie " the Little Mermaid". When Walt Disney released its adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's " The Little Mermaid," it had become a box-office hit. Yet, the movie captured the attention not just of young girls back in the late 1980's but sociologists and anthropologists as well since the movie became a perfect example of wthey they had termed as the " muted group theory. References Griffin, E. M. (1991). A first look at communication theory (3rd Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. ISU Communication Studies. (n. d.). Context of communication. Muted Group Theory Information Page. (1998, April 8). Kramarae, C. (1996). Classified information: Race, class, and (always) gender. In J. Wood (Ed.), Gendered relationships (pp. 20-38). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield. Kramarae, C. (1981). Women and men speaking: Frameworks for analysis. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.