

Muted Group Theory: Women in the Christian Church

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COML 595: Theorizing Communication

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Outline: Muted Group Theory: Women in the Christian Church

Format: The presentation will be a video presentation with slides and a speaker. The presentation will be embedded on a website with resources listed.

Thesis Statement: While men may not intend to be oppressors, women in the Christian Church are a muted group because their public discourse is limited, they must change their language to assimilate, and first-hand account data reports that muted group theory is prevalent within the church.

I. Introduction describing the problem and imagining what could be.

A. Description of women being overlooked/voiceless within the church

1. My story

B. Imagining what the church could be if both genders were equal in voice and power

C. Muted group theory explains why women in the Christian Church are overlooked and must change their language when communicating

II. Description of Muted Group Theory (MGT) and its history

A. Definition of MGT

1. How we see this in the Christian Church

B. History

1. Edwin and Shirley Ardener

a. 1975

b. Power

2. Cheris Kramarae

a. 1981

b. Language and communication

III. How an MG Theorist thinks about the problem of women in the Christian Church

A. Public discourse is limited

1. Sermons

2. Governance

B. Language was created by men, both the cultural language and the language of the church (the Bible)

1. Women change their language to assimilate
2. Language is also used to separate

C. Lack of power

1. Governance
2. Leadership roles
3. The way language is used to control

IV. How are evidence and data reviewed when applying a MGT to women in the Christian Church? Data shows that muted group theory is prevalent.

A. Evidence

1. Personal case study
2. Interviews of those within the church
 - a. Example 1
 - i. (umbrella)
 - b. Example 2
 - i. Elders are all male.
 - ii. Lack of power and voice.
 - c. Example 3

B. Data

1. Interpretive
 - a. Can men ever understand the power dynamic women experience?
2. Quantitative
 - a. How often are women's voices included in the Sunday sermon
 - i. Count the number of times
 - b. How many women are in leadership
 - c. How many women are included on the preaching team
 - d. How many women authors are listed as resources

V. How MGT affects women in leadership roles within the church.

A. What is leadership?

1. Influence

B. Women are rarely given the same level of leadership positions as men

1. "Given" - that word is problematic

2. Personal experience - the same job, but cannot preach, pay is not the same

VI. Opposition/Limitations of the MGT

- A. Men don't intend to be oppressors
- B. Encourages talk of victimization
- C. Neglectful of the complexities between male and female communication
- D. May encourage thinking that marginalized voices never speak
- E. May seem male/female, it isn't

VII. Repeat the problem of women within the Christian Church and imagine what it could be like if this theory was taken seriously and addressed.

References

- Barkman, L. (2018). Muted Group Theory: A Tool for Hearing Marginalized Voices. *Priscilla Papers*, 32(4), 3-7.
- Cunningham, C., Hazel, M., Hayes, T. (2020). Communication and Leadership 2020: Intersectional, Mindful, and Digital. *Communication Research Trends*, 39(1), 4-31.
- Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A., Sparks, G. (2015). *A First Look at Communication Theory. (Ninth Edition)*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Kramarae, C. (2005). Muted Group Theory and Communication: Asking Dangerous Questions. *Women and Language*, 28(2), 55-61.