Muted groups and implicit bias

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Introduction

Muted groups: groups that are denied a voice

Who is muted?

Why?

How?

How does implicit bias play into muting groups?

How does muting lead to erasure and hence to discrimination?

Focus on women as a muted group

Why?

1. Women are the largest muted group

2. Women are also the ultimate bastion of discrimination
“Women and minorities”

Why is this term a problem?

Women are (typically) the majority of a country’s population (51% in the UK)

Women is not a category independent of minorities

Intersectionality

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3477987/
Ultimate bastion of discrimination

It is still ok to openly discriminate against women, e.g.
Hilary Clinton vs. Barack Obama

Women as either irrelevant (and objects of mild ridicule) or unseemly
Ultimate bastion of discrimination

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Women as either irrelevant (and objects of mild ridicule) or unseemly
Josh Jordan  @NumbersMuncher

Gallup: As Americans become more familiar with AOC, the more unfavorably they view her. Her net favorable rating has dropped from -2 to -10, now at to 31-41 (was 24-26).

AOC is underwater with every demographic group except women (+4), nonwhites (+20), and 18-34 year olds (+5)

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  @AOC

If you want to know what subconscious bias looks like, it’s a headline saying “AOC is underwater with every group EXCEPT women, nonwhites, and 18-34 year olds.”

So older, conservative white men are considered “everyone” and everyone else is discounted as an exception.

Cool 👍
On sex and gender

Sex is biological: it depends on our karyotype (XX or Xy) and development in utero and beyond

About 1% of the population do not fit neatly into this binary division (intersex)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUDKEI4QKI

Gender is based on cognitive development and socialization

Socialization determines how we perform gender in a culture-specific way

These culturally specific expressions of gender as so ingrained they are considered natural
Gender differences and essentialism

Much of what we assume about gender is based on the assumption that it is an **essential** and largely **immutable** part of our identity.

Differences between men and women **because** they are men and women are taken for granted and not much scrutinized.

Differences are assumed to apply to the entire population and neatly divide us into two groups.
A quick note on differences

Personality traits, abilities, and behaviours show significant overlap between men and women.

Differences are not consistent across cultures: larger in industrialized societies.

The magnitude of differences changes with age.

Many reported differences are artificially inflated because of what is measured and how.

Interestingly, differences are relevant mostly when they give men an advantage (cf. brain vs. medicine).

https://theconversation.com/are-male-and-female-brains-really-different-54092
What are the differences here?

Men are more helpful than women but only in social settings mainly towards women when help is *not* solicited

Are men equally helpful towards all women?

What is the definition of help?

Do women help?

General knowledge: men do better than women

What is general knowledge?

On questions on food/cooking, and medicine women did much better than men (Cohen’s d is -0.48 and -0.32 respectively)
Linguistic differences (or are they?)

MALES --- FEMALES
Value independence --- Value intimacy
Emphasize report talk --- Emphasize rapport talk
Talk more than women --- Talk less than men
Talk for information --- Talk for interaction
Overestimate word power --- Underestimate word power
Argue categorically --- Argue personally
Argue from external data --- Argue from internal data
Focus on external events --- Focus on personal data
Focus on large picture --- Focus on personal details
Lecture --- Listen
Seek respect --- Seek to be liked
Offer information --- Seek understanding
Focus on content --- Focus on emotions
Listen silently --- Give feedback as they listen
So, what are muted groups?

**Muted groups** are groups that have been denied a voice (i.e. access to public discourse) and when allowed access their contributions are not appreciated as much as those of more powerful groups.

Muting is about power and control not about gender (or other) differences.

Term coined by Dale Spender in “Man Made Language” (1980)

*work* and *working women*

Classic example of a muted group in the UK: children
Women as muted groups

Long history of muting women, particularly the women of the middle class
Some of the ways in which women are muted/become invisible in the UK:

**Weddings:** brides “given away” from one man to another; groom and bride’s father give speeches (think of the *blushing bride*)

**Name changes:** women take their husband’s name

**Church:** most religions and denominations do not ordain women

**Politics:** There are currently (2017 election) 208 female MPs, out of a total 650 (32%; that’s 12 more than in 2015, a “record number” according to the BBC

**Media:** Women are a minority in serious BBC news programmes, but feature heavily in BBC Breakfast

**Entertainment:** Women’s jokes are edited out of shows like “Have I got news for you”

Can you think of other examples?
How much do women talk?

Mehl, Vazire, Ramírez-Esparza, Slatcher & Pennebaker (2007) *Science*

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Women used on average 546 more words per day
Cohen’s $d = 0.07$

one sided t-test $p = 0.248$, i.e. statistically non-significant
Why the talkative woman stereotype?

Precisely because women are a muted group: any talking is too much talking

Men (and often women) react badly to women “talking too much”

Teachers who achieved parity in class (calling on and listening to boys and girls equally) complained that the girls were talking all the time

Men have made similar comments in online lists when women’s contributions took up about 50% in a thread

It is reflected in recent reactions about films with all women casts

Extreme muting: murder

Women are not allowed to talk at all, especially to men

Turkish girl, 16, buried alive 'for talking to boys'

Death reopens debate over 'honour' killings in Turkey, which account for half of all the country's murders

Qandeel Baloch (26) was a Pakistani model, actress, and social media celebrity. On 15 July 2016, she was asphyxiated while asleep in her parents house by her brother who said she was "bringing disrepute" to the "family's honour"

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/feb/04/girl-buried-alive-turkey
Women are complicit

Female relatives were involved in the killing of the girl in Turkey
Female relatives in a recent femicide in Greece pleaded on behalf of the killer who was a “good boy”
Female judges in Italy
- cleared two men of rape charges; they had doubted the accuser’s account in part because they considered her “too masculine” to have made an attractive victim
- gave a lenient 16 year sentence to a man who brutally killed his wife; the judge cited the killer’s “anger and desperation, profound disappointment and resentment” over the victim’s relationship with another man.

https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/18/world/europe/italy-sexism-courts.html
Incarceration

Nasrin Sotoudeh, an internationally renowned human rights lawyer jailed in Iran, has been handed a new sentence that her husband said was 38 years in prison and 148 lashes.

Intimidation & verbal abuse

Diane Abbott received almost half (45.14 per cent) of all abusive tweets in the run up to the 2017 Election

Tweets to Diane Abbott

“I’ve had death threats, I’ve had people tweeting that I should be hung if "they could find a tree big enough to take the fat bitch’s weight’…

• this fat retarded black bitch thinks you should be forced to feed and house a bunch of violence foreign invaders. i strongly disagree

• Piss off you disgusting useless fat bitch! You’re a parasite alien looking to silence native people for your power.

• You forgot “fat disgusting obese chicken-loving n*****”

• An acid attack would probably make your face look better you fat n*****

https://www.newstatesman.com/2017/09/we-tracked-25688-abusive-tweets-sent-women-mps-half-were-directed-diane-abbott
More verbal abuse

- Excluding Diane Abbott, black and Asian women MPs in Westminster received 35 per cent more abusive tweets than white women MPs.
- Online abuse cuts across party lines, affecting women from all UK political parties.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2wsCBKVruY
The Guardian’s caption of this photo:
Michael Willson’s photo, a stunning portrait of the athleticism on show in the AFLW.
Photograph: Michael Willson/AFL Media/Getty Images

The New York Times’s article:
TheGuardian’s caption of this photo:
Michael Willson’s photo, a stunning portrait of the athleticism on show in the AFLW.
Photograph: Michael Willson/AFL Media/Getty Images

More subtle abuse

Clinton as a witch
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ODloNpu8Bg

The real story
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSYZ12LGVxw

What is happening in these interviews?
How is Clinton responding?
Humiliation

In some people, humiliation may lead to anger. Most typically, however, “humiliation [often] leads to shame, which is associated with a desire to withdraw, hide or submit. [...] Humiliation is a weapon of hierarchy.” (McCarthy-Jones, 2019, The Conversation)

Humiliation denies you dignity.

Being chastised

Michelle Obama was criticized for not following while middle-class norms when talking about her husband.
Ridiculing

One of the more insidious ways of silencing women is by ridiculing them or their contributions

Jeremy Corbyn’s “stupid woman” comment

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1edfyaJ4YrA

This is powerful because it puts the person on the defensive and denigrates the usefulness of their contributions
Patronising

Patronizing can take many forms

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWKBSYqtu7M

Compliments

How one refers to women’s contributions

my *cri de coeur* [a passionate appeal] example

How one refers to women themselves

the little Greek example

How we talk about people and actions is important

**immigrant**

/nəˈmɪɡrənt/ noun

*a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.*

“They found it difficult to expel illegal immigrants.”

synonyms: newcomer, settler, inmigrant, new arrival, migrant, emigrant; More

**migrant**

/ˈmɪɡrənt/ noun

*1. a person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions.*

synonyms: immigrant, emigrant, inmigrant, newcomer, asylum seeker, settler, expatriate, expat, exile; More

organizing for success

budget improvements

consultation
Dominating the conversation by violating turn-taking

**Turn-taking** governs conversations, particularly in western low-involvement cultures (Zimmerman & West, 1975)

Basic principles:
- **No gap** = no silence longer than 1.35 s
- **No overlap** = no two people talking at the same time

Violating these principles leads to domination in conversational settings
Techniques for dominating a conversation

In some cases, a speaker may dominate the conversation
   The speaker **grabs the floor** (interrupts)
   The speaker **hogs the floor** (talks for longer than expected)

A speaker may do the reverse: talk too little
   This stifles conversation

Both are examples of dominance in conversation
   Who controls topics?
   Does the conversation flow?
Interruptions and choice of topic

**Choice of topic**: choosing topics in which women cannot participate

**Interruptions** are a way of controlling the topic or winning an argument (think Jeremy Paxman)

In the public sphere interruptions are particularly prevalent among men who are well-informed

Those not so well-informed did not interrupt to the same extent

But informed women do not interrupt as much
So, the average period is between 10-35ml of blood, each tampon holds about 5ml, so 7 tampons per cycle. Let’s be generous and say 10 for those ladies with an extra juicy uterine lining. 9 periods per year = 90 tampons max.

You can get a 64 pack on Amazon for £7.90 plus shipping. Buy two packs, save on shipping and have 128 tampons for the year, that’s about £20 here or there for a year’s periods.

Cut down on your Starbucks venti frappas and stop whining. This isn’t a

Men as the expert
mansplaining
How much do women talk?

All research shows that in many situations men talk much more:
staff meetings
seminars
panel discussions on tv
mock jury deliberations
experimental pairs
professional discussion lists
interviews (even if the male is the interviewer)
monologues (e.g. describing pictures: females 3.17 min; males 13 min)

Women are given 1/3 of the time men have: this applies even if females are of higher status
Why the discrepancy between perception and reality?

Women are a muted group
Essentially, they do not have the right to talk
If women speak at all, this is seen as speaking too much
In addition, their talking is described in terms, such as *gossiping, nagging, tattling*

What do these terms mean?
Other derogatory terms?
Do men engage in any of the above?
Non-Cooperation

Lack of back-channeling, the use of minimal responses to indicate you are listening

Delayed response
  in single sex conversations silences last on average 1.35 s
  in mixed talk they last 3.21 s
  this is much longer and it is seen as an indication that the interlocutor is not interested, does not accept the choice of topic

Silence
The outcome of these strategies is that women do not dominate conversations, because they do not succeed in having their topics accepted
Ignoring contributions

Hepeating, a term coined by astronomer Nicole Gugliucci, to refer to situations in the workplace when a man repeats a woman’s idea and gets the credit for it.

What women say is often ignored, dismissed, or disbelieved.

Can you think of recent and older examples of women being disbelieved?
Consequences

• Lack of acknowledgement of women’s achievements
• Low expectations for women and reinforcement of stereotypes
• Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Polish MEP is a prime example of this [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNs_nn_qBIQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNs_nn_qBIQ)

• Check out: [http://womenyoushouldknow.net/](http://womenyoushouldknow.net/) to counter arguments by men like Korwin-Mikke
• Read “Invisible Women” by Caroline Criado Perez
Some consequences of invisibility

Little understanding of women’s health needs (from menstrual cramps to heart attacks)

Neglect of women’s human needs, such as the ability to perform bodily functions without danger to self, or to walk safely around campus (cf. Giles Lane)

Not recognizing women’s work (especially house work and care)

Neglect of women’s needs; e.g. tools, safety harnesses, bullet-proof vests

Neglecting the existence of women overall; e.g. in speech technology

More consequences of invisibility

The traditional absence of women in some spheres gives rise to masculinist discursive norms. These norms assume the guise of gender-neutral professional norms. These professional norms create communities of practice:

*an aggregate of people who, united by a common enterprise, come to develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, and values – in short, practices*” (Eckert 2006)

Women entering these communities are seen as “interlopers” and often encounter resistance as men try to defend their privilege, e.g. talking in ways or about topics that are likely to exclude women.

Women are often fooled by processes designed to give them a sense of equality and faith in institutions.
UK parliamentary and political discourse

Style of debate
rowdy
banter
repartee
a culture of bullying

Jeremy Paxman on Cameron in interview with David Davis (2005):

“[Cameron was described] by your colleagues [other Tories] to us as [...] a thug a bully an adventurer (.) disloyal (.) congenitally treacherous (.) and winner of the whips’ office shit of the year championship”
How do women cope?

Women have been trained all their lives not to use such practices; if they do use them, like, e.g., Gwyneth Dunwoody, they are seen in a negative light; Dunwoody was nicknamed *Mrs Badger* and called a *battleaxe*.

If they do not adopt these norms, however, they are seen as weak, or inconsequential.

To cope, women in power often adopt personas that reflect stereotypes of women in power: the *queen*, the *iron lady*, the *mother*, the *boarding-school matron*.

They are often adopted by those with a female boss, and co-opted by the boss (rather than created by her).

Where does all this come from?

**Implicit bias**: bias that we do not recognize as such

As a result we explain it away in various ways

Bias, like stereotyping and confirmation bias, is a cognitive shortcut we cannot avoid

The aim is not to feel guilty but to try to *debias* our attitudes

We can do this by

(i) acknowledging bias

(ii) being vigilant

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
https://perception.org/research/implicit-bias/
JENKINS! I NEED THAT REPORT BY LUNCHTIME! PUT DOWN THE COFFEE AND GET TO WORK!! YOU'RE NOT GETTING PAID TO STARE AT THE WALLS!

WOW, WHAT AN UNCOM-PROMISING TASKMASTER!

Yeah, she really gets things done!

HEY, JENKINS! I'M GONNA NEED YOU TO RETYPE THIS! THERE'S AT LEAST FIVE TYPOS, FOR GODSAKE! YOU'RE NOT GETTING PAID TO MISSPELL COMMON WORDS!

GOD, WHAT A BITCH!
The case of the female Viking warrior

The grave of a Viking warrior was discovered in the 1880s in Birka Sweden; it contained all the implements required for battle, plus a set of game pieces suggesting the person was interested in strategy, and may have used the pieces to plan battle tactics.

The warrior was assumed to be a male, even though physical anthropologists can detect sex from bones and since the 1970s had raised the issue that the warrior could be female.

There are many such graves and they are all labelled “anomalous.”

In 2017 DNA analysis left no doubt the warrior was female.

Some even now doubt this is so or that it is relevant: “This burial is clearly of a high-status woman. The fact that she’s buried with weapons indicate this. It doesn’t indicate that she’s a warrior, but if we interpret [male graves] in that way, why not women as well?” [Becky Gowland, Durham U; in https://www.theguardian.com/science/shortcuts/2017/sep/12/does-new-dna-evidence-prove-that-there-were-female-viking-warlords]


Bias is not always obvious