

Liberty University

Operating the Silencer: Muted Group Theory in *The Great Gatsby*

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the School of Communication in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Master of Arts degree.

By

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who encouraged me from a young age to try hard in everything I do. If you had not raised me to work through the challenges in life I might never have graduated with my master's degree. Thank you!

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Abstract

This master's thesis examines gender and social roles seen in dialogue in the American classic novel, *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The researcher conducted a coding and rhetorical analysis to determine if elements of muted group theory were in the novel. Muted group theory was developed by Edwin and Shirley Ardener after their research indicated that a culture's values and social structure were voiced through rhetoric. The theory states that dominance in certain groups mutes, or silences, others from communicating effectively.

Five passages from *The Great Gatsby* were selected for this analysis. These passages highlighted dialogue between the main male and female characters in the book, and were of scholarly importance. The researcher created four research questions from which the study flowed. Results of the study indicated that some groups in *The Great Gatsby* were muted due to their gender, social status, race, or religion. Coding indicated that compliance and manipulation were the most common forms of muted group dominance found in the book. These results are closely linked to the reality of society in the 1920s, when the book was written, as F. Scott Fitzgerald is an author who wrote heavily from his own experiences and surroundings.

Keywords: *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, muted group theory, gender, dominance

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Chapter I

Introduction

Popular books, such as *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus* and *Men are like Waffles, Women are Like Spaghetti*, capitalize on the sexes' inability to understand why their counterpart acts and communicates differently. It has been documented in many studies that women and men communicate differently (Otnes et al., 1994; Smeltzer, 1986; Kapungu, et al., 2010); however, the question as to why they communicate differently is quite disputed. While pop culture seeks the answer to this question through self-help books, scholars have been developing and studying gender communication theories for decades, arriving at varying conclusions and views.

No matter who is searching for the answer, one thing is clear: communication is *not* meaningless discourse that only puzzles those in romantic relationships. It is an “activity basic to academic expertise and creativity” (Kramarae, 1989). Language and dialogue are important to theorists because they reflect the values and beliefs of a society. Even words that may at first glance appear meaningless in dialogue, give important clues about a culture and the communicator. For example, the word “like” when inserted into a sentence could mean “similar to,” or it could be a cultural reference that hints at the speaker’s “valley girl” roots. The label “valley girl” references individuals from the San Fernando Valley in California who have specific lifestyle habits and ways of speaking. This particular instance involves a certain amount of stereotyping, but theoretically, by studying the word “like” it may be possible to infer large amounts of information about an individual, because “our languages are traditions, containing inventions and stories about the creation and organization of the world” (Kramarae, 1989).

This study will expand scholarly findings on gender communication, by examining discourse elements of a classic American novel: *The Great Gatsby*. The researcher will conduct a qualitative study to determine if discourse elements of muted group theory are present in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Qualitative research methods are often defined as descriptions of particular situations, behaviors, people, and quotations from people (Newman, 1998). This type of research allows for theory to emerge from data; "it is not imposed on the data" (Patton, 1990). This critical discourse analysis will create a "wide angled lens" through which we can view language and gender in the text (Remlinger, 1995).

This study will examine interpersonal theory in the dialogue and surrounding text of passages in *The Great Gatsby*, in order to identify how discourse reflects society's structure. *The Great Gatsby* has been examined as a historical artifact before, but never in connection with muted group theory. With so many documented sources indicating a direct link between Fitzgerald's life and culture and aspects of the text, it is highly likely that this analysis will draw a connection between *The Great Gatsby* and the societal structure of the 1920s.

This is important because *The Great Gatsby* is used over and over again every year by high school teachers. Its influence and reach are felt as much, if not more, than when released in 1925. This study may strengthen the connection between interpersonal theory and literature by establishing the historical importance of *The Great Gatsby*.

Every decade of literary production can be traced to the intellectual images of the country at that time, because language use both reflects and reinforces social structure (Evangelia, 2010; Edelsky, 1976). This study explores an area of communication that has not been examined through the lens of muted group theory. As literature helps communicate social, ethical and spiritual values of a time period, it is important that we consider how communication is

portrayed in literature, and if muted group theory was embedded into dialogue representative of the 1920s (Konstantinos & Athina, 2009). Muted group theory examines how a culture's values are reflected in the way people are treated. Specifically, this theory examines groups that are marginalized and might not be allowed to contribute to society the same way a dominant group can. This theory will be discussed at length in the literature review.

Since language reflects climate, any reorganization in a culture's collective thought process and expectations requires a change in that society's language and syntax (Kramarae, 1989). This is why word usage evolves over the course of time. Although many studies have examined muted group theory in spoken dialogue, few have examined how this theory affects dialogue in novels. Fitzgerald himself studied dialogue, and often wrote about his character's tone of voice and speaking mannerisms. Examples of this can be seen in his books *The Last Decade*, *Tender is the Night*, and *The Great Gatsby* (Coleman, 2000). In fact, Daisy in the novel *The Great Gatsby* has an identity that is "almost entirely limited to the role she performs in conversation" (Coleman, 2000). *The Great Gatsby* can provide insight as to the likely power distribution in the author's culture and time period.

Almost every American has read (or pretended to read) *The Great Gatsby* in high school literature class. This novel is an unavoidable part of American literary culture. College Board includes the novel on its list of "101 Great Books Recommended for College-Bound Readers," and one scholar goes so far as to say "it is *the* novel of the 1920s" (Ruggieri, 2008; Cutchins, 2003). By 1991 alone, more than 300 critical essays had been written on varying topics in *The Great Gatsby*; a sum that is staggering when compared to the fact that "only Faulkner and Twain have received more attention" (Virágos, 1991). The reason for this is that not only does *The Great Gatsby* highlight important literary concepts and topics, such as Marxism, it also brings to

life many historical aspects of the 1920s era (Ruggieri, 2008). In fact, unlike many authors who strive for a backdrop untouched by their time period, “Fitzgerald liked to date his scenes by putting in them specific details his readers would associate with a particular year” (Mansell, 1987). Fitzgerald lived during a time when gender differences were a constant social and political topic of American society. The 19th amendment allowing women to vote was even enacted in 1920. This habitual infusion of 1920s events and influences into *The Great Gatsby* provides an excellent palate for a study on gender communication.

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction to the study. The second chapter is the Literature Review, introducing *The Great Gatsby* and F. Scott Fitzgerald, gender communication research, dominant and subordinate group research, and muted group theory. The third chapter is the methodology of the study. The fourth chapter will examine selected passages from the novel, focusing on four research questions:

RQ1: Are there elements of dominance in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*?

RQ2: If elements of dominance exist, what group(s) do they appear to be muting?

RQ3: If muted group theory does exist, how do women express themselves within the expectations of the dominant group in *The Great Gatsby*?

RQ4: What can be learned from this study about muted group theory as it applies to the work *The Great Gatsby*?

The fourth chapter also outlines the results of the study and its implications. The fifth chapter is a discussion of the findings, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The Great Gatsby and F. Scott Fitzgerald

F. Scott Fitzgerald has been called the “poet of borrowed time,” the “chronicler of the Jazz Age,” and the “dream dancer of the jazz age” along with a variety of other nicknames noting how closely his art mimicked his life and society in the 1920s (Kane, 1976; Guo, 2011). One critic said that Fitzgerald “used himself so mercilessly in his fiction” (Guo, 2011). Unfortunately, as is visible in his stories, this meant that Fitzgerald’s life was rather dramatic and filled with turmoil.

Fitzgerald was born in 1896 in St. Paul, Minnesota (Bloom, 2000). His parents were grocers and struggled to keep up with the “nice” area of town near which they lived (Bloom, 2000). He vividly remembered this part of his childhood, and disliked that “he was always the poorest boy, living in the richest neighborhoods and attending the most exclusive schools” (Rompalske, 1999). He began writing at a young age – long before entering Princeton University¹ – and never stopped. While at Princeton he met and dated Ginevra King, a woman whose likeness appeared in many of his novels, including *The Great Gatsby* as Daisy Buchanan.

In 1917 he left Princeton to join the army, and while stationed in Alabama met Zelda Sayre, the woman who would eventually become his wife in 1920 (Bloom, 2000; Frazier, 1974). Although she was indecisive about marrying Fitzgerald due to his unsecure financial situation, the two eventually married a month after his first novel was published (Frazier, 1974). They had a daughter, Scottie, about a year later (Frazier, 1974). Sadly, his wife Zelda struggled with mental breakdowns from 1929 on, and for much of their marriage, and, partially as a result of her

¹ Fitzgerald entered Princeton University in 1913 (Quirk, 2009).

medical bills, Fitzgerald constantly struggled with money problems² (Guo, 2011; Quirk, 2009). He was determined that his wife would always receive the best healthcare and, eventually, that their daughter, Scottie, would attend the best prep schools, no matter the cost (Donaldson, 1996). He lived lavishly, spending money on social outings with the likes of Shirley Temple, Hemingway, and other celebrities of the time (Foster 1964; Frazier, 1974). Although he had financial success as a writer in his 20s, it was mostly from the short stories he sold (Quirk, 2009). He did have some financial success in the 1920s from his novels, first publishing *This Side of Paradise*³ at the age of 23, and then *The Beautiful and the Damned*⁴, and *The Great Gatsby*⁵.

He moved to California to write for movies in 1937, and ended up working for big-name corporations, such as Warner Brothers and MGM (Quirk, 2009). Still, he never had a strong financial foothold due to this lifestyle of excess (Donaldson, 1996). In the 1940s he began to experience heart problems, and at the age of 42 he died of a heart attack.

Despite his poor financial situation during his lifetime, Fitzgerald's literature is widely considered some of the best of the American classics. Or, as one scholar said, "when sober, Scott Fitzgerald was a writer of magical talent" (Frazier, 1974). Many of his books currently sell more than 500,000 copies per year (Donaldson, 1996). His stories are filled with portraits of the lavish lifestyle he attempted to live; a lifestyle filled with drunkenness and parties, despite the fact that the prohibition era was at hand. During this timeframe a dependence on alcohol was thought by many to be a "moral weakness," and "a psychological flaw" (Irwin, 1987). As a result the government banned the consumption of alcohol and inadvertently created a subculture of rebel

² Zelda's 15-month stay in the sanatorium on Lake Geneva in the 1930s cost the Fitzgeralds \$13,000 (Quirk, 2009).

³ Published in 1920.

⁴ Published in 1922.

⁵ Published in 1925.

drinkers. “National alcohol prohibition in the United States between 1920 and 1933 is believed widely to have been a misguided and failed social experiment that made alcohol problems worse by encouraging drinkers to switch to spirits and created a large black market for alcohol supplied by organized crime” (Hall, 2010). This period of political disobedience was also highlighted by political activism thanks to the suffrage movement, and artistic rejuvenation with the popularization of jazz music and dance. The dramatic combination of these movements inspired Fitzgerald over and over again as he wrote.

The Great Gatsby was published in 1925 and examines the topics of the “American dream,” morality, the importance of social standing and the corruptible properties of wealth. Many critics consider it to be a “flawless novel” (Frazier, 1974). In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Caraway, a young man from Minnesota, moves to the New York City area after World War I to learn about the bond business. He rents a home next door to a man named Jay Gatsby who is famous for throwing lavish parties. As Nick begins to associate himself with Gatsby and those attending his parties, the darker side of high society is slowly revealed to him. The glamorous neighbors he has inherited are involved in extramarital affairs, bootlegging, and a thick web of lies.

The novel details several romantic relationships and extramarital affairs, but the main romantic tensions occur between Gatsby and Nick’s married cousin, Daisy Buchanan. Many scholars believe that Daisy is a combination of character traits and physical attributes found in Fitzgerald’s two main loves—his wife, Zelda, and his early love, Ginevra (Korenman, 1975). Caraway learns that Gatsby’s wild and lavish parties are mainly an attempt to impress Daisy and rekindle a relationship he had with her in the past, when he was too poor to marry her. Although the plan temporarily works, eventually Daisy decides to remain with her husband, Tom. Gatsby’s

heartbreak over the relationship ends abruptly when he takes the fall for a crime Daisy committed and is then killed as an act of revenge. After Gatsby's funeral Nick moves back to the Midwest to escape the society he has grown to loathe for its corruption.

The connections between *The Great Gatsby* and the 1920s are not simply thematic. Many elements of the novel are drawn from Fitzgerald's own life. Fitzgerald drew heavily from the faces and places famous during this time period. Readers of the time period recognized the character of Meyer Wolfsheim as a portrayal of Arnold Rothstein, a gangster famous for his involvement in organized crime (Levitt, 2012). One scholar goes so far as to say that for "those of us interested in social learning through vicariousness, Fitzgerald's novel is instructive" (Levitt, 2012).

Through the relationships in this book, Fitzgerald provides social commentary on the "self-made man," and the moral decay of a society that is bent on dishonestly displaying lavish wealth and a life of luxury. It was during this decade that President Calvin Coolidge announced that "the business of America is business," providing a glimpse into the common mentality of the time (Pinsker, 2000). The novel documents many cultural aspects of the 1920s; a fact that at the time of Fitzgerald's death led many editorialists to renounce the novel as an American classic and claim it "merely caught the spirit of an age" (Wrobel, 1995).

This novel is so respected by scholars as a classic piece of literature that it is studied in some context from almost every area of the social sciences. Cutchins and Steinbrink review the importance of the work in the traditional education system (2003; 1980). Hawkes connects *The Great Gatsby* to the world of politics, McAdams to business ethics, and Mansell highlights how the novel documents the Jazz Age in America (2009; 1993; 1987). Froehlich studied how *The Great Gatsby*'s patriarchal structure influences the characters' sexuality, and goes so far as to

claim that one of the main points in the book is that authentic love is unlikely in a patriarchal, capitalistic society (2011).

Gender Studies

In order to better understand the link between muted group theory and the novel it is important to review literature on gender studies. Studying gender communication differences today is much more complicated than it would have been a century ago, thanks to the present debate that allows gender and sex to be categorized as two (or more) separate variables. Some scholars believe that the concept of gender is defined by society and thus cannot be implicitly tied to an individual's sex. In fact, many scholars supporting feminist theory believe that only acknowledging two genders, male and female, does not provide a full scope of the human psyche (McElhinny, 2003). In 1994 at the World Conference for Women, attendees actually identified a total of five different genders⁶ (Payne, 2001).

Before embarking on any study examining the differences between men and women, it is imperative that the researcher(s) qualify what exactly is meant by these two categories. While the term "sex" defines the biological make up of an individual, it is suggested by some scholars that the term "gender" is affected by an individual's physical makeup, psychological development, socioeconomic status, and culture (Payne, 2001; Sultana, 2011). Other scholars believe that "gender is created through the communication of social expectations" (Reeder, 2005). Since this study examines discourse in literature, it would be impossible to determine if factors other than the character's biological sex play a role in the dialogue. Therefore, all references to gender in

⁶ The five genders referenced are "masculine male, feminine male, androgynous male or female, masculine female, and feminine female" (Payne, 2001).

this paper will be defined as the sex, or the biological make up of an individual, that places them in the male or female category at birth.

As a result of the gender versus sex debate, theories explaining gender communication differences vary widely from biological-only perspectives to psychological-only perspectives. Some scholars, including sociobiologists Rhawn Joseph, Robert Nadeau and Desmond Morris, believe that gender communication differences stem from days when men acted as hunters and women as gatherers (Bergvall, 2009). Others examine how men are more direct in their communication because they are task-oriented, whereas women are concerned more with an individual's emotional and social well-being, and therefore may be more tentative sounding and use intensifiers more frequently (Otnes et al., 1994; Samar 2007; Richmond 1987).

Some theories direct responsibility for gender communication differences to cultural roots, and even go so far as to categorize males and females as different cultures. From the time they are toddlers, children interact most often with peers of their own gender (Underwood 2009). Specifically the four to 12 age span tends to be heavily gender segregated (Maccoby, 2002). Some of this gender segregation is due to parental choice of activities, however, much of it is also natural when children are placed in contexts not coordinated by adults (Maccoby, 2002). This then results in culture differences, such as relationship expectations, group norms, and characterization (Underwood, 2009).

In English and other Indo-European languages, the sexes are distinguished by pronouns—he, she, his, hers—which surely facilitates children's learning to code themselves and others as to gender. In addition, there are distinctive ways of speaking to children that emphasize stereotypical qualities, such as saying to a

four-year old “that’s my sweet little girl” or “There’s my big strong boy.”

(Maccoby, 2000)

This gender segregation also continues into adulthood to a certain extent, as it is rare to find both sexes working in the same position, for the same pay (Maccoby, 2002).

Despite the multitude of competing gender communication theories, most researchers agree that there is evidence suggesting men and women communicate differently (Otnes et al., 1994; Smeltzer, 1986; Kapungu, et al., 2010). In some studies, for example, researchers have found that the female communication style is more “unsure, tentative and deferential” than males in the same study (Otnes et al., 1994; Smeltzer, 1986). Women also tend to utilize linguistic forms that are characterized by correctness, display sympathy, feature the use of qualifiers, and are longer than men’s linguistic forms (Otnes et al., 1994; Richmond 1987). In one study of college co-eds, men tended to prefer proactive and self-oriented communication styles, while females preferred reactive and other-oriented communication styles (Richmond 1987).

These differences have given rise to many theories attempting to explain the causes of gender communication differences, one of which is muted group theory. Muted group theory explains gender-communication differences as a result of dominant and marginalized groups in society. According to this theory, a dominant gender group creates discourse and discourse boundaries and expects all other groups to fall in line with these boundaries. Although the primary function of language is to transmit a message, this is not its sole function. A language system conveys more than word-meaning, it categorizes the structure and hierarchy of a society. In order to study *The Great Gatsby’s* language holistically, in this paper discourse is defined as spoken and written language as a whole, not just sentence structure or word choice. By

examining the novel in this way, discourse encompasses many methods of communicating, including thinking, acting, believing and valuing (Gee, 1999).

The cultural approach to gender communication theory is linked to muted group theory because, just as growing up in separate cultures can cause misunderstandings between two individuals, so can developing in peer groups of a different gender. Children in single-sex peer groups develop norms separate from those of the opposite gender (Maccoby, 2002). “Differences in the male and female styles will lead to awkward and disrupted interactions in which expected reciprocations may not occur” (Maccoby, 2002).

According to muted group theory, males are part of a dominant culture, whereas females develop in a subordinate culture. Dr. Deborah Tannen from the University of Georgetown studied miscommunication between men and women and found that the problems usually stemmed from “habitual differences in their interactive styles” (Maccoby, 2000). Men and women spend much of life learning or working in semi-separate atmospheres and this causes communication differences, according to Maccoby (2000).

One of the social norms that takes on an important role in female peer groups is harmony. Female children in task-oriented groups tend to have two agendas, finishing the task and also maintaining group harmony. Male children are more concerned with maintaining power in a group setting and not showing any signs of weakness (Maccoby, 2002). One reason for this may be that “girls’ friendships are typically more intimate than boys’ friendships” (Maccoby, 2000). These developmental factors do appear to have an influence on the general course of an individual’s life. “Women in positions of official authority are reported not to use their power to the same extent that men in authority typically do, possibly an echo of the greater use of

collective power by boy's groups in childhood" (Maccoby, 2000). It is also easier to predict same-sex communication outcomes in adults than mixed gender communication outcomes (Maccoby, 2000).

Some studies have found that an individual's age affects the way his or her gender is expressed in language. "With the onset of adolescence, more rigid views of gender reemerge as social pressures to conform to adult sexual roles increase" (Leaper, 2004). A perfect example of this is the concept of dating. As an individual enters their teen years they are traditionally expected to begin showing an interest romantically in the opposite sex, and are expected to express this through certain traditions, such as prom and the homecoming dance, and through certain types of language. Men are also expected to act more macho and show less emotion.

One common flaw of early gender-communication research is that it focused on only small segments of the population. "Most early research involved broad surveys of large urban populations" (Schilling-Estes, 2002). The generalization of one small sampling of women to the general population did not provide accurate data, as gender can easily be broken down into hundreds of sub categories based on race, economics, location and other variables. A study on a Detroit-area high school conducted by Eckert supported this idea when results found that "gender effects could be quite different in the different social groups" (Schilling-Estes, 2002). Through studying gender communication in different locations, scholars have discovered that theories based on access to power and differing social roles are normally more accurate (Schilling-Estes, 2002). "The writer who is usually considered to have created the most penetrating literary accounts of the American 1920's is F. Scott Fitzgerald" (Slater, 1973).

Dominant & Subordinate Group Interaction

Two linchpins of muted group theory are the ideas that 1) society is made of various groups or cultures who view life through a unique perspective, and 2) not all groups within a society are equal. These points are important because they contribute to a hierarchy within a society. “In the United States, gender, education, income, race, and increasingly, linguistic group are distinctive hierarchical social groupings” (Niut & Rosenthal, 2009). A hierarchy creates an uneven social system, through which some groups are dominant and others subordinate.

Dominant groups typically have more power, wealth and social status than other groups in that society (Niu & Rosenthal, 2009). They are also more apt to share their opinion, as it will most likely be the popularly accepted opinion of the time. According to Noelle-Neumann’s spiral of silence theory, individuals who do not share the opinion that is “popular of gaining favor” in their society are less comfortable expressing their opinion (Hayes, 2007).

The benefits of being part of a dominant group in society are many and include everything from perceived trustworthiness from other groups (Niut & Rosenthal, 2009) to increased career success. In the United States, some studies have shown that job applicants who have dominant group characteristics are more likely to be offered second interviews and jobs (Buzzanell, 1999). Politics is another area where it is easy to see the influence of dominant values (LaFever, 2008). The U.S. has had only one president who was a member of a racial minority. This may be because power is related to a culture’s hierarchy, and is typically unevenly distributed. This can also be seen in the connection between power and gender. “Power is directly related to gender with regard to the access, distribution and use of resources, which are unequally distributed between women and men (Sultana, 2011).

Group position is important in society because collective thought often plays a role in an individual's decision-making and views.

“The group's choice of identity management strategy is a function of the interaction among its status position, beliefs about the nature of group boundaries, the intensity of ingroup identification and the collective beliefs about the social system and differences regarding status, power and wealth” (Dumont, 2009).

As is the case with muted group theory, researchers' studies of dominant and subordinate groups are often focused on social justice, or advocacy for the underrepresented and underresourced groups in a society (Buzzanell, 1999). One reason it is important to study possible social injustices, such as muted group theory, is because “social and economic equality among the different racial groups is perceived as a precondition for developing a non-racial society” (Dumont, 2009). Identifying elements of muted group theory in the novel may provide insight as to the power distribution of the author's society in the 1920s.

Muted Group Theory

Muted group theory was originally developed by Edwin and Shirley Ardener, a husband and wife team from Oxford, England. This theory examines how dominant groups alone create and determine “the appropriate communication systems” of a culture (Burnett, et al., 2009). According to this theory, a language system does not serve all of a culture's voices equally (Griffin, K. Foss & S. Foss, 2004). The term “muted groups” refers to minority groups that are subordinates of the dominant group. Muted groups are not allowed or able to contribute to a culture's language in the same way that dominant groups are, according to muted group theory. This does not mean that muted groups don't contribute to culture, however, it does mean that their contributions may be outside the expectations of the dominant culture. For example, rap

music could be viewed as a way that muted groups have contributed to culture in a way that is unique. Although the term muted group can apply to any minority group in a culture. In this study the researcher will examine women as a muted group.

According to muted group theory, it may be necessary to restructure language so that minority groups are more integral in language creation and evolution. In 1985 Kramarae and Paula Treichler actually took this idea and acted on it by compiling a feminist dictionary that defines words differently than Webster's New International Dictionary. It also defines words not included in most other dictionaries (Griffin, 2004). It may benefit both muted groups and society as a whole if dictionaries defining the language of muted groups are created, or if language from muted groups is incorporated into mainstream dictionaries.

Muted group theory developed out of social anthropology studies of the 1970s and was adopted by feminist communication scholars to "expose male dominance in all its linguistic forms" (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002). Muted group theory was in many ways an opposition to the idea that the "woman's perspective" simply needed to be added to the already existing culture to even-out the gender playing field (Ardener, 2005). Muted group theory states that in societies where men are the dominant group, the language is encoded by and for men; so a women's perspective is not in existence, and women must operate within language barriers established by men (Kramarae, 1981). Muted group theorists seek to discover and create "equal access to discourse" (Spender, 1980).

Muted group theory is based upon the concept that discourse "reflects a world view" (Griffin, K. Foss & S. Foss, 2004). According to this theory, a discourse system that does not serve all speakers equally has the ability to dominant those who are not involved in its original

creation. According to Edwin and Shirley Ardener, the dominant group alone creates and determines “the appropriate communication systems” of a culture (Burnett et al., 2009). In the U.S., language is considered to be constructed by the dominant group: white, hetero-men of the middle-class (Kramarae, 2011).

Muted groups are those minority groups who are forced to use such a discourse system, but have little influence on it (Griffin, K. Foss & S. Foss, 2004). The term “muted groups” refers to subordinates of the dominant race, which in patriarchal societies includes women. As women are inherently and biologically different from men and have experiences unique to them, any language system created by men is going to inhibit their ability to express these unique experiences. Some examples of women’s only experiences include childbirth, abortion, motherhood and menstruation. “Women are a muted group in that some of their perceptions cannot be stated, or at least not easily expressed, in the idiom of the dominant structure” (Griffin, Foss & Foss, 2004). The speech of muted groups is “disrespected” and not allowed to affect policy-making (Kramarae, 2011). As a result, words utilized only by muted groups may eventually become unspoken and irrelevant (Kramarae, 1981).

Muted group theory provides a venue through which the world’s views and articulation of those views is conceptualized. It provides a glimpse into a culture’s underlying power structures through language (Kramarae, 1981). Scholars believe that four specific types of dominance exist in language: compliance, rebellion, withdrawal and manipulation (Foss & Griffin, 1992). Some examples of how language is biased can be seen through the use of titles. In the English language, titles often recognize men and woman in different ways. For example, all male names are preferenced by the title “Mr.” This is a term that indicates only the gender of the individual. Woman on the other hand, may be called “Mrs.” “Miss” or “Ms.” The first two titles

signify gender and marital status while “Ms.” identifies gender and possibly the woman’s political affiliation or mindset. These terms caused some communicators to initiate “inclusive” language campaigns with “non-sexist language items” (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002).

Muted group theory can also help identify “‘local truth’ rather than universal truth” (Schwab & Syme, 1997)). So although a culture may average a tendency towards one trait, the subcultures within may vary widely. By only diagnosing the average, researchers can unintentionally neglect entire populations. Consider the implications of muted group theory in terms of health care. A study conducted by Texas A&M that attempted to identify local population-based health concerns of physicians in rural areas. However, a lack of health professionals in these areas limited the application of the results (Ballard-Reisch, 2010).

According to Hilary Callan, male-dominated language often makes female groups appear incompetent and a “poor imitation of the male groups” (Kramarae, 1981). Because gender division is basic to most culture’s organized structure, research on muted group theory often concentrates on women, but this theory can be applied to any minority group, whether racial minority, economic class, age or other form (Kramarae, 1981). In fact, Edwin Ardener, who helped develop the theory, believed that it was applicable to his life at one point, because he saw his young self “as a ‘sensitive boy’ among ‘hearty boys’ in an all-boys London secondary school” (Ardener, 2005). In other words, intellectual language versus athletic language could be examined under muted group theory in certain social situations or cultures.

Some scholars support the idea that being a muted group also has benefits in society. Muted groups may have more perspective on a language system, and have “more complete social knowledge and experience,” and are able to develop communication strategies that allow them to

participate in dominant discourse (Burnett et al., 2009). Muted groups may have a better understanding of mixed-group communication than the dominant group (Kramarae, 1981).

Otnes, Kim and Kim conducted a study on the written communication of children to examine what, if any, types of communication differences naturally exist between males and females (1994). These researchers examined 614 letters to Santa Claus that were put into the U.S. Postal Service system in a large Southwestern city in 1990. After examining these letters researchers found that on average, girls wrote longer letters to Santa Claus (53.9 words on average to the boy's 42.9) and also used more elements that are considered polite (Otnes et al., 1994). Girls in this study also expressed more affection for Santa Claus than boys, and utilized indirect requests. Methodological flaws in this study include categorizing the children's letters as male or female based upon age and cues in the letters, as that requires a reliance on gender stereotyping.

A 2009 study conducted at a U.S. college examined how muted group theory affects and possibly helps create the perceptions college students from different social areas have on date rape. Results from this study showed that college students were often muted when attempting to convey thoughts on date rape because society has not accurately defined what date rape is (Burnett et al., 2009). Not only did the students have trouble describing the parameters of date rape they also felt that when date rape occurred it was rarely voiced. "Female students especially reported feeling muted" (Burnette et al., 2009). Flaws in this study lie in the unwillingness of individuals to openly speak about date rape, a conclusion that the study itself supported. If women feel muted when speaking about date rape it is likely they did not contribute to the study as vocally as their male counterparts did.

One theory that evolved from muted group theory is Campbell's theory of feminine style, which categorizes the characteristics of persuasion communication used by females, and dictates that women often use a different tone, persuasive means and organization of argument than men (Suzuki, 2006). According to Campbell women's communication style developed out of a need to express women's "attitudes and experiences of female audiences" (Suzuki, 2006). Suzuki also examined feminine style in an online debate section of the *Mainichi Interactive*, an online newspaper in Japan, in 2001. A total of 602 respondents showed that "women used inductive macro structure more frequently than men" (Suzuki, 2006). Inductive macro structure is defined as arguments trending from specific to general thoughts. One flaw in this study is that the findings of this study were exclusive to Japanese nationals and may not be convertible to other cultures.

Muted group theory can be viewed through all types of discourse, seating arrangement, body language, prestige and power and even religion (Ardener, 2005). "Seeing gender and language through a discourse lens has in one way united the two 'prongs' of early feminist gender and language study" (Litosselit & Sunderland, 2002). In the U.S. women are muted through male-controlled outlets, such as the political realm, the media, and the way that women's bodies are portrayed in the media (Burnett, et al., 2009).

Women are often considered a marginalized or "muted" group in a patriarchal society, so muted group theory maintains that women are forced to accept a male-crafted English language system for their discourse. A study conducted by Edelsky supports this idea. Edelsky had a group of middle class men and women attending a PTA meeting review certain language and assign gender characteristics to words and phrases. The responses indicated that language can reinforce socially dominant groups, as when woman use a phrase such as "oh, dear" they indicate to the

audience “dependence, passivity, neatness and many other facets of female stereotype” (Edelsky, 1976).

More evidence for this concept can be found in a study conducted by Southwestern University researchers. In this study, 60 undergraduates were surveyed on their opinion of cursing in athletic coaches’ speech. Results showed that men thought it was much more appropriate for coaches to curse at male athletes than female athletes (Howell & Giuliano, 2011).

As a result “for those who occupy a muted position in society, there is frequently an inherent contradiction in being a speaker. That being muted is not a feature of sex, but of power, can be readily illustrated” (Griffin, 2006). Power here is defined as the ability to “control the acts and minds of other groups” (Schriffin, 2003). Power is important because the power of dominant groups is often integrated into societal laws, rules, and habits (Schriffin, 2003).

The female gender is considered a muted group in America according to muted group theory. All references to gender and sex in this paper are categorized as the biological makeup they had at birth. According to muted group theory, female interests are not being represented as well as, or as often as, male interests in public forums (such as congress). This impacts the position of women in overall American society, and limits the status and influence that women are able to obtain. The male-domination of the English language is commonly categorized by feminist communication theorists as sexist, masculist, androcentric, and patriarchal (Spender, 1980).

Muted group theorists also believe that the concept of “equality” needs to be altered. Many individuals believe that the term equality when used in accordance with gender describes “women performing in the same way as men without any modification in the way in which men

themselves talk” (Spender, 1980). In essence, although there may be an understanding and agreement that gender inequality exists, many individuals think the solution to solving it is to ensure women have access to the same resources that men do, when in reality, solving the gender gap would involve the transference of power from the dominant group to the muted group. This does not mean the switching of power, but the elimination of any dominant group. “It is necessary that there be modifications in male language behavior as well as female” (Spender, 1980). “Tyranny emerges only when one sex (or group) has sole access to the legitimation of experience” (Kramarae, 1989).

Ardener argued that “under the scope of muted group theory, any conflict in language meaning was always resolved in favor of the dominant group” (Spender, 1980). This cycle of imbalanced resolution solidifies the dominant group’s position in society. So if this study points to the existence of muted groups in *The Great Gatsby*, this cycle may also need to be altered in order to resolve dominant groups in society. “In the hundreds of mixed-sex conversations that I have taped there are virtually no instances in which the females- at least to begin with- do not accept the male prerogative to legislate on language, and thereby to control and block women’s meanings and enforce their muted nature” (Spender, 1980).

Today muted group theory is still researched, although it is not considered as groundbreaking as when it was unveiled in the 1970s. Some scholars suggest that the theory’s success has caused today’s populations to be accepting of the existence of muted groups (Kramarae, 1984). Whether this is true or not, muted group theory has heavily influenced interpersonal theory surrounding gender communication. Whether a researcher follows a biological-only approach to gender studies, or a psychological and social approach to gender studies, muted group theory can be utilized to examine discourse in a culture. The Ardener’s

concept of “muted groups” can also be utilized in a variety of communication contexts. The study of this term and muted group theory may influence the direction of discourse creation in the future and possibly even the hierarchy of a society.

This review of *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and literature focusing on gender studies, dominant and subordinate groups, and muted group theory, allows us to understand the strong influence that culture and literature have on each other. We will now turn our attention to the methodology of the study in Chapter Three.

Chapter III: Methodology

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1990 women made up just over 51% of the U.S. population. Despite a majority share in the American population, according to muted group theory, women are currently being silenced by a male-dominated English language. Muted group theory is the concept that in most societies there is a dominant group that controls the creation and usage of discourse (Spender, 1980). This concept has been studied frequently in a business context by sociologists and communication scholars. It coincides nicely with other well documented gender related theories, such as the “glass ceiling” concept, which states that there is a barrier that “prevents or reduces the likelihood of the reaching top management levels or executive status in a firm” if the individual in question is a woman (Dimovski, et al., 2010). Muted group theory has been studied much less frequently in other areas of academia, however, such as literature. The purpose of this study is to create a framework helpful for future research on muted group theory in literature and written discourse.

This study examines the existence of muted group theory in the American classic novel *The Great Gatsby*, using a critical discourse analysis. A critical discourse analysis focuses on how social power, dominance and inequality are translated and reproduced in discourse. This type of study was selected because it seeks to “understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality,” which is also the purpose of muted group theory (Schiffrin, 2003). Muted groups are those that “live under the reality of the dominant group. They are required to know it, to operate within it and to defer to its definitions” (Spender, 1980). Theorists using this framework typically examine vocabulary for words that indicate hegemony, class differentiation, sexism, racism and discrimination in dialogue (Schiffrin, 2003).

This study will examine dialogue at the microlevel of social interaction, although the existence of muted groups can impact society as a whole. One reason for this is that “seeing gender and language through a discourse lens has in one way united the two ‘prongs’ of early feminist gender and language study” (Litosselit & Sunderland, 2002).

In this study the researcher will be examining one novel to categorize data from the language used, and qualify whether elements of muted group theory are present in the discourse. The novel selected for this study is *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, because it is widely considered an American classic, and is used frequently as part of English course curriculums. It also has appeared on many best classic English language novels lists.

This researcher will read five excerpts from *The Great Gatsby* and analyze the passages for language that could classify as dominant, a key aspect of muted group theory. Passages were chosen based on the researcher’s background in communication studies and English, an initial reading of the book, and consideration of scholarly research on different areas of this text. Many of the passages are popular among rhetorical scholars examining this text.

The researcher’s coding will be based on the 2011 Siemund and Dolberg content analysis of gender change in medieval English language and Golos and Moses’ 2011 content analysis of deaf characters in books.

Golos and Moses study focused on two research questions to determine how deaf characters were portrayed in one book. The book was coded by sentence based on pre-determined categories. These categories were made up of deaf characteristics or portrayed characteristics. The frequency of these codes was then recorded and analyzed. The researchers examined the percentages of coded topics found and used specific textual examples to further their analysis.

Siemund and Dolberg also conducted a coding-style study. They coded two historical documents to determine how gender-terms were distributed. This study looked at pronouns, demonstratives, adjectives, and numerals, by examining the text at the sentence level. The researcher's plan is to create a similar coding system and study that could be repeated when examining other novels and written discourse.

After examining literature about muted group theory it was clear that theorists believe characteristics of dominance create barriers that disallow all members of a society from expressing themselves equally. As a result this study will code *The Great Gatsby* for elements of dominance. Elements of dominance will be categorized by having one or more of the following categories: compliance, rebellion, withdrawal, or manipulation (Kramare,1981). Compliance in this study will mean conforming or yielding to another's wishes. Rebellion in this study will mean resisting another's wishes. The definition of withdrawal for this study will be to draw back or away from an individual. Manipulation will be defined as the management or influencing of another's actions.

The researcher will examine specific passages of text twice: once for phrases of dominance and once for singular words of dominance. Every word or phrase that manifest one of the established characteristics of dominance will be recorded and the results will then be tallied to show what percentage of words/phrases each passage has. If a word or phrase could indicate more than one of the characteristics of dominance it will be counted once for each characteristic during coding. For example the word "Holocaust" in Chapter Eight is associated with two aspects of dominance: compliance and manipulation. The word Holocaust falls under the category of compliance, as it defines an event in which people were dominated and treated poorly. It also falls under the category of manipulation, as the Holocaust involved the

manipulation of a subordinate group. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the word Holocaust would be coded once for each of those categories.

The researcher will also study some of the coded words and phrases to determine if, or how, dominance manifests itself in the passages. This textual analysis will expand the coding and provide additional details on the numerical data.

Each sentence will be studied for specific dialogue and descriptors that are characteristics of dominance. The data will then be analyzed according to the research questions listed below.

Research Questions

The overall research question for this study is whether or not elements of muted group theory are visible in *The Great Gatsby*. Although the term “muted groups” can refer to any minority group, this study examines the proposed role of men as a dominant group in America and women as a muted group. Four specific research questions will be examined in order to determine if muted group theory is present in the novel.

Muted group theorists believe that males have the power to “name” experiences. Since this theory contends that males are the dominant group in America, and control the English language, men would generally categorize experiences by adjectives that they, and they alone, deem appropriate (Griffin, 2006). For example, sexually promiscuous men are often categorized by positive terms, whereas sexually promiscuous women are often categorized by derogatory terms. “By one count there are 22 gender-related words to label men who are sexually loose-playboy, stud, rake, gigolo, don juan, lothario, womanizer, and so on. There are more than 200 words that label sexually loose women” (Griffin, 2006).

Another visible way of viewing muted group theory according to scholars is by examining common metaphors in a society. Metaphors such as “you hit the nail on the head,” or “the ball is in your court,” are based on activities that are more commonly associated with males than females. “Public discourse is shot through with metaphors drawn from war and sports—traditionally masculine arenas with their own in-group lingo” (Griffin, 2006). Theoretically, this type of lingo could be isolating to anyone not familiar with the associated activities. In order to examine this facet of muted group theory the researcher will explore how often dominance is found in *The Great Gatsby*.

RQ1: Are there elements of muted group dominance in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*?

RQ2: If elements of dominance exist, what group(s) do they appear to be muting?

RQ3: If muted group theory does exist, how do women express themselves within the power structure of the dominant group in *The Great Gatsby*?

RQ4: What can be learned from this study about muted group theory as it applies to the work *The Great Gatsby*?

Women have historically been excluded from contributing to mainstream media, whether in book format, newspapers, theater or other format. Although conscious efforts have been made to change this in the past 100 years, women have long been regulated to what muted group theorists label “back-channel” venues of self-expression (Griffin, 2006). Back-channel methods of communication involve passing down information through mediums such as folk stories. For this reason, the study examines the prevalence of women utilizing back-channel methods of communication in *The Great Gatsby*.

Another facet of muted group theory this study examines is the concept of the dominant group discounting the minority group's opinion. According to muted group theorists "women are queried, they are interrupted, their opinions are discounted and their contributions devalued in virtually all of the mixed-sex conversations" (Spender, 1980). As a result this study will observe and record if such events occur in dialogue from selected passages of *The Great Gatsby*.

Chapter IV: Results

The Study

Topics often researched in *The Great Gatsby*, and in the passages chosen for this study, include morality, money, social class separation, racism, and the concept of the "American Dream." For this study the researcher has chosen five passages from *The Great Gatsby* of scholarly importance. These passages are commonly referenced in the academic world via journals, books and general discourse, because they have had a lasting impact on society. They are also important moments in the book's plot line, as they introduce characters, set expectations for the reader, and deliver dramatic events.

These passages will focus on six main characters: Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, Daisy Buchanan, Tom Buchanan, Jordan Baker, and Myrtle Wilson. A variety of other characters come into play over the course of the novel, including Myrtle's husband George Wilson, but most act as support for plot elements. In fact, many of the minor characters that are introduced in *The Great Gatsby* are actually nameless and are only identified by physical description and a bit of dialogue. At one of Gatsby's famous parties, only the main characters are introduced by name, while the surrounding cast are "two girls in yellow," "three men, each one introduced to us as Mr. Mumble," and "a stout, middle-aged man, with enormous owl-eyed spectacles"

(Fitzgerald, 1925). Although each of these characters contributes to the plot through dialogue, Fitzgerald makes it clear from their introduction in the book that they are only supporting characters.

Although the book's title appears to indicate otherwise, Nick Carraway is the true main character of this novel. Nick is both the narrator of the story and a character in the story, so his thoughts influence everything throughout the novel. He is from the Midwest and moves to New York City to learn about the bond business and, presumably, then strike it rich. Through the acquaintanceship he has with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, he meets most of the other main characters and slowly begins to realize that members of the wealthy population in his area are not truly glamorous as he expected. Instead he becomes jaded after witnessing their constant dishonesty, and decides to move back to the Midwest at the conclusion of the book.

Jay Gatsby is Nick's extremely wealthy next-door neighbor, who is known around New York City for throwing lavish parties that include buffet tables, bars, a full orchestra, swimming, dancing and celebrity sightings. His party-life style is not a true symbol of who Gatsby is, instead each party is a planned attempt to "accidentally" end up in the same place as his lost love Daisy Buchanan, who lives nearby with her husband Tom. Although this scheme is never successful, Nick ends up reuniting Gatsby and Daisy, and the two begin having a romantic affair. This affair, through a long list of circumstances, leads to Gatsby's murder toward the end of the book.

Tom and Daisy Buchanan are a married couple who live in East Egg, the fashionable area of New York City. They are considered socialites, and by all appearances "have it all," and yet throughout the book both engage in an extramarital affair. Although at the end of the book they

end their affairs and determine to stay married, the narrator has little faith that they have changed morally.

Jordan Baker is a friend of Daisy who eventually becomes Nick's girlfriend in the novel. She is a professional golfer and Nick's "plus one" in many scenes in the book. Although Nick and Jordan date for some time, their relationship never has any substance and does not last long after Gatsby's death.

Myrtle Wilson is Tom's mistress in the book. Although she openly plans to become his second wife, Tom never appears to take her very seriously and even breaks her nose at one point when he does not like what she is saying. Myrtle is always focused on attaining wealth and rising in social status, two things she believes Tom will allow her to achieve. She is killed in a hit-and-run accident, of which her romantic rival Daisy is the driver.

An understanding of these characters is important to grasp when embarking on any study of *The Great Gatsby*, as Fitzgerald's complicated web of social interaction is fueled by back stories and sub-plots. Toward the end of the novel the many threads of interaction come together and create the road to Gatsby's death.

Passage One

One of the biggest confrontations in the book occurs in Chapter Seven, on pages 128-132. Main characters Nick, Tom, Gatsby, Daisy, and Jordan, gather at the Buchanan's home for a luncheon. The day is "broiling" and the luncheon party are fairly lifeless in an attempt to stay cool. Daisy begins to hint to her husband that she is in love with Gatsby, and he becomes increasingly suspicious in nature, and after deciding to proceed to the Plaza Hotel for refreshments, it is clear that the tension between Gatsby and Tom is about to boil over.

The group rents a suite and the tension between Gatsby and his rival for Daisy's affections, her husband Tom, reaches an all-time high. Despite the discomfort of the forced audience, Nick and Jordan, they finally openly address the "elephant in the room," the Daisy/Gatsby affair. Nick narrates "they were out in the open at last and Gatsby was content" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Shortly afterward, Gatsby tells Tom that "your wife doesn't love you...She's never loved you. She loves me" (Fitzgerald, 1925). To the discomfort of everyone else in the room, the two proceed to openly argue over Daisy's affections. Tom and Gatsby both attempt to tell Daisy what she must do. Tom commands her, "sit down, Daisy," and then, in a somewhat "paternal note," asks her to explain her affair (Fitzgerald, 1925). A few short sentences later, Gatsby entreats her to tell Tom "the truth—that you never loved him—and it's all wiped out forever," (Fitzgerald, 1925). She tries to obey both commands, but winds up confused and frantic, and finally cries "Oh, you want too much!...I did love him once—but I loved you too" (Fitzgerald, 1925).

This pivotal scene not only constitutes the main conflict in the book, it also causes serious repercussions for all the characters, as it leads to a hit-and-run car accident, and eventually, Gatsby's murder. Additionally we can see how all the characters interact and relate to one another, and mute others, if applicable.

Table 1

Dominance in Tom/Gatsby's Argument Passage

Elements of Dominance	Words indicating Dominance	Phrases indicating Dominance
Compliance	14	18
Rebellion	9	18

Withdrawal	12	8
Manipulation	16	7

In about 1,070 words making up this passage, 9.5 % indicate some element of dominance, a very high percentage compared to the other passages studied by the researcher. This may be because all the main characters, Nick, Jordan, Daisy, Gatsby and Tom, are gathered into one room for this passage, and are explosively interacting and reacting. This passage is also one of the few in which the main characters are not attempting to portray a certain façade. They are open and honest about their past, and the current feelings, which may reveal more open dominance than passages in which the characters are attempting to remain civilized and cultured.

Compliance and manipulation were the most commonly found elements of dominance in this passage, at 2.1 % and 2.9 % respectively. This is not surprising, since the main conflict in this passage involves two men fighting over one woman's affections and decisions. Elements of rebellion were also quite high at 2.5%. Withdrawal elements of dominance seemed to be least common as only 1.8% were found in this passage. This aligns with the plot, as the characters openly argue, and do not (or cannot) withdraw from the situation. Those who are dominated in this passage appear to accept and allow it.

Despite both declaring their love for her, Tom and Gatsby both also try to force compliance for their plan on Daisy. They also discount or devalue Daisy and Jordan's contributions to the conversation, interrupt them, and answer questions on their behalf. These types of behaviors mute much of what the women attempt to communicate. The narrator even

describes Daisy at one point in the argument by stating, “she interrupted helplessly” (Fitzgerald, 1925).

Both men use manipulation to “win” Daisy’s love, although Gatsby is just slightly more subtle about it. While Tom openly tells Daisy to “sit down” and explain the situation, Gatsby actually answers Tom’s question for her. The two go back and forth arguing their position until Daisy actually breaks in and contests in anger that Tom has treated her badly. To this Gatsby replies “that’s all over now...It doesn’t matter anymore. Just tell him the truth – that you never loved him– and it’s all wiped out forever” (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although in the spirit of love, Gatsby too is telling Daisy what she should do. Clearly both men feel that they are the dominant force in her life, and that she needs help making decisions.

Daisy appears to be used to the treatment because she does not seem frustrated that she’s having two other people speak for her. In fact, it is not until her husband admits in front of everyone to having had multiple affairs during their marriage that she speaks up. Yet, despite this slap in the face to her marriage, she looks to Nick and Jordan for assistance when she attempts to communicate her affair with Gatsby and her plans to leave her husband.

Both men in the scene discount Daisy as a less intelligent human than themselves, despite the fact that they are arguing for her affections. Tom at one point states, “the trouble is that sometimes she gets foolish ideas in her head and doesn’t know what she’s doing,” (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although this clearly dominating behavior seems commonplace as part of Tom’s macho character, Gatsby says something fairly similar just a few paragraphs later. “I want to speak to Daisy alone,’ he insisted. ‘She’s all excited now–’” (Fitzgerald, 1925). Clearly both men feel that they need to set Daisy straight through means of manipulation. As if to conform to these

commands, Daisy eventually becomes increasingly unsure of herself and finally states that she has loved both of them. It is as if she is so eager to comply to the two men in her life that she attempts to find a truce by stating that they both have a piece of her heart. Person believes that the portrayal of Daisy in academic literature is sexist, as she is typically maligned for her character flaws, instead of Gatsby being identified as placing her on an unobtainable pedestal (1978). Yet, in this passage we see that she is clearly not in control of her life, nor does she appear to be able to overcome the arguments of Tom and Gatsby.

Also in this scene, African-Americans are openly discounted and treated as a subordinate group. Tom, who by this point in the novel is clearly known for speaking his mind and doing whatever he feels like, equates interracial marriage to immorality.

“I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that’s the idea you can count me out...Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they’ll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white” (Fitzgerald, 1925).

In support of this concept, Jordan attempts to calm Tom down by stating “we’re all white here,” (Fitzgerald, 1925). No one disputes that interracial marriage is immoral, and Jordan’s comment clearly indicates that Daisy and Gatsby’s affair is less offensive because they are the same race. Based on these statements, it is clear that race separates characters in *The Great Gatsby*, and that this is viewed by the main characters as a positive thing.

In this same passage Tom calls Gatsby “Mr. Nobody from Nowhere,” another indicator that socio-economic status largely dictates the worthiness of a person in his eyes. He drives this

point home by interrogating Gatsby on his past, asking him specifically when he went to college, in an attempt to prove that Gatsby is less cultured than he pretends to be, and thus maybe, less attractive to Daisy.

Passage Two

In Chapter Two, pages 30-37, of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick attends a social gathering with Tom Buchanan, his mistress Myrtle, and an assortment of characters. As the group drinks and gossips it becomes clear that Myrtle believes Tom will someday leave Daisy and marry her. Myrtle's sister, Catherine, even tells Nick that "it's really his (Tom's) wife that's keeping them apart. She's a catholic and they don't believe in divorce" (Fitzgerald, 1925). This statement is as false as Tom's plans to marry Myrtle.

Myrtle then proceeds to tell the gathering that she made a mistake marrying her husband Wilson. As the whiskey continues to flow, and hours pass, she boldly claims she can say Daisy's name "whenever I want to!" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Tom abruptly ends her announcement by breaking her nose with his open hand.

Table 2

Dominance in Myrtle and Tom's Party

Elements of Dominance	Words indicating Dominance	Phrases indicating Dominance
Compliance	6	18
Rebellion	10	19
Withdrawal	6	13
Manipulation	2	8

The tone of almost everyone in this passage rings rather false. It appears that almost everyone at the party is attempting to portray a certain role, and many of them commence to do so rather dramatically. Myrtle is playing wife to Tom, and many times over attempts to prove she is financially and romantically in control of Tom. She plays the hostess to the party and pretends to be able to access Tom's money by making a list

“of all the things I've got to get. A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk bow for mother's grave that'll last all summer. I got to write down a list so I won't forget all the things I got to do” (Fitzgerald, 1925).

Despite her list, it's clear shortly afterward that Tom does not respect her, and will not even allow her to say his wife's name. Tom commands her to stop saying “Daisy,” and expects her to comply. When Myrtle begins rebelling by yelling Daisy's name and Tom quickly stops her by breaking her nose. This is a violent act forcing compliance with his wishes.

Tom's treatment of Myrtle in this passage is much more physically dominating than what we see in his passages with Daisy. Although he is condescending to Daisy, and often attempts to manipulate her or give her directions, he is much more so manipulative of his mistress. Although the passage only showed a .9 % of coded words indicating manipulation, breaking an individual's nose is a more obvious sign of dominance than most manipulative acts in the book, which are conducted verbally.

Myrtle's act of rebellion is common in this passage, as rebellion was the most commonly coded indicator of dominance, at 2.7 %. It was followed by compliance, at 2.2 %, which makes

sense because despite her attempts to act in control of the party, Myrtle complies to Tom's wishes. Words indicating withdrawal were recorded for 1.5 % of this passage. Most of those words or phrases were related to Nick, as he several times attempted to physically and emotionally withdraw from the party. Yet every time he "tried to go I became entangled in some wild, strident argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair" (Fitzgerald, 1925).

As with the other passages, there is a strong current of socio-economic dominance found here. Everyone is very openly concerned with money. Catherine details a trip to Europe in when she had "twelve hundred dollars when it started, but got gypped out of it all in two days in the private rooms" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Not only does she clearly tell exactly how much money she had, but she also claims to have hated the town as a result, because "we had an awful time getting back" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Clearly her lack of funds did not translate into good treatment by others.

Then Myrtle claims to hate her husband because he isn't "fit to lick my shoe," despite claims by her sister that she was "crazy about him" when they first met (Fitzgerald, 1925). Her main reasoning for hating him is that he had to borrow a suit for their wedding, and that they live over his business. Clearly her expectations for their marriage were heavily based upon a lavish lifestyle. Frugality disgusts her. As a result she withdraws and rebels after 11 years of marriage and becomes Tom's mistress.

We also see the constant use of servant's compliance in this passage to indicate Tom's financial status. Tom sends the janitor out for some "celebrated sandwiches," to impress his guests and Myrtle acts as though the only reason she ever fetches beverages for the party is because the staff members are all lazy. Staff members throughout the book are consistently used

as the main character's displays of dominance and wealth in society. Main characters do this by ordering the servants around, belittling them, and discounting them in dialogue.

Passage Three

A "death scene" that is commonly studied in *The Great Gatsby* is the "death" of the Gatsby/Daisy romantic relationship in Chapter Seven. The couple dated five years prior, and fell in love, but Gatsby was too poor to be a serious suitor to her. As a result, Daisy came to represent lost love that he needed to fulfill. She eventually marries another man (Tom Buchanan), and years later when Gatsby has made a fortune, he returns and attempts to re-establish their relationship. He begins throwing lavish parties in an attempt to draw Daisy to his home. When this does not work, he eventually uses his network of friends to coordinate their reunion. Throughout the novel Gatsby attempts to become the sole receiver of Daisy's love; and despite coming close, he is never successful. Daisy's husband and Nick have a verbal argument for her affections shortly before this passage, and Tom convinces Daisy to stay with him.

The demise of the relationship is signaled clearly in the beginning of Chapter Eight, on pages 142-148. Gatsby stands outside Daisy's home, waiting silently with bated breath for a signal that Daisy needs his help. After a hit-and-run car accident, and the public revealing of Gatsby and Daisy's affair, Gatsby believes that Tom may react violently to Daisy once in the security of their own home. Nick is on his way home for the night when he stumbles upon Gatsby "between two bushes," waiting outside the Buchanan's house to "see if he tries to bother her about that unpleasantness this afternoon. She's locked herself into her room, and if he tries any brutality she's going to turn the light out and on again" (Fitzgerald, 1925).

Unfortunately, instead of seeing the agreed-upon signal, Daisy stands in front of the window pane of her room “for a minute and then turned out the light” (Fitzgerald, 1925). This is the last moment in the book Gatsby and Daisy see each other before Gatsby’s death. This is a pivotal moment in the story’s plot because it provides insight into the themes often believed to be represented by Gatsby and his romance to Daisy; including the American Dream (Sutton, 1997).

Table 3

Dominance in Daisy/Gatsby’s Breakup

Elements of Dominance	Words indicating Dominance	Phrases indicating Dominance
Compliance	12	8
Rebellion	21	10
Withdrawal	21	6
Manipulation	34	4

The ending of Gatsby and Daisy’s romantic relationship foreshadows the end of the book. Gatsby is attempting to provide safety to Daisy, by standing outside her house and ensuring her husband does not harm her after an afternoon of dramatic events. Although Nick “disliked him (Gatsby) so much by this time,” he checks on Gatsby and Daisy and attempts to ensure both are safe and sound, just as he does around the time of Gatsby’s death in Chapter Eight (Fitzgerald, 1925). In the end of the passage Nick “left him (Gatsby) standing there in the moonlight – watching over nothing,” a similar setting to Gatsby’s death in which Nick speculates that Gatsby “must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream” (Fitzgerald, 1925).

About 4% of words coded in this passage indicated that manipulation, an element of dominance, was present in some form. This is due to the characters dealing with the after-effects of their dramatic day, and attempting to set everything right, according to their mindset and goals. Gatsby and Tom are both still attempting to be the dominant force in Daisy's life, and they continue to manipulate her in their own way: Tom through direct instruction and Gatsby via instructions that are veiled by concern for her well-being. Other elements of dominance coded in this passage were also fairly high. Rebellion was coded for 3.2% of words, withdrawal for 2.8%, and compliance for 2.1%.

As this passage unravels it becomes clear to Nick that Daisy and Gatsby are the suspects police are searching for in a hit-and-run accident. After Daisy accidentally runs over a woman named Myrtle, Gatsby tells Nick that they "got to West Egg by a side road...and left the car in my garage. I don't think anybody saw us, but of course I can't be sure" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although actually discussing his escape from a crime in this quote, this phrase is symbolic of Gatsby's real life. He is not the product of "old money," as he claims. He snuck his way to prosperity by taking part in illegal activities. His past is a bit shrouded and unclear. His peers are aware he has some association with Oxford University, but it's not clear for most of the book what that association is⁷. He carefully hides portions of himself to present a particular front, just as he carefully hides his car from police by driving down side roads. He is showing elements of manipulation in this passage; a characteristic of dominance that is found in 4% of the words in this passage.

⁷ In the book, Gatsby actually only attended Oxford University for five months when he was 19 as part of a military officers program.

When Nick helps Gatsby check on Daisy to make sure Tom has not harmed her, he sees a surprising scene. Despite a day that included a hit-and-run accident, the death of Tom's mistress, and a massive three-way lovers' quarrel between Tom, Daisy and Gatsby, the couple appear to be sitting and calmly getting along over dinner. In fact Tom is "talking intently across the table at her," in this passage (Fitzgerald, 1925). What's unique about this phrase is that it does not indicate a two-way dialogue, as it might appear. Instead, Tom is talking "at" Daisy, not to her. This could be interpreted as an act of withdrawal on her part. She's clearly not comfortable enough to dialogue with Tom about the events that have occurred during the day. She never tells Tom that she in fact was behind the wheel of the car that killed his mistress. Instead, "once in a while she looked up at him and nodded in agreement" (Fitzgerald, 1925). She is complying with Tom's decision on how to handle the day's tumultuous events.

"Daisy's potential relationship in the archetype of femme fatale-forms a central proscenium for a reading of Daisy as Siren" (Lukens, 1987). In this passage Gatsby stands staring at Daisy's house, firm in his belief that his vigilance is helping his love. He refuses to move from his position as watchdog outside the Buchanan mansion, even though Nick tells him that the Buchanans appear to be just fine. Gatsby declares he will wait "all night, if necessary. Anyhow, till they all go to bed," and then does so "eagerly" (Fitzgerald, 1925). He is as riveted by Daisy as the sailors in mythology are by sirens.

It is an interesting typecast, because sirens are not human. They are destructive monsters who hide their brutality behind a beautiful, human face. In the *Odyssey*, the area before the sirens "is piled with boneheaps/of men now rotted away, and the skins shrivel upon them." Has Fitzgerald intentionally crafted a novel in which the main female character is not fully human? Or are these parallels only apparent to those studying *The Great Gatsby* decades after its

publication date? By creating a female character that is not characterized as “human,” Fitzgerald may have further muted Daisy from communicating in *The Great Gatsby*.

Passage Four

In Chapter Three, pages 42-49 Nick meets his West Egg, Long Island, neighbor, Gatsby, for the first time. After many nights of hearing and seeing Gatsby’s party guests come and go “like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars,” Nick is formally invited to attend Gatsby’s next party (Fitzgerald, 1925).

Upon entering the party Gatsby discovers that his host is nowhere to be found, and so he wanders aimlessly, embarrassed at his aloneness, until he spots Jordan Baker. Jordan and Nick engage in conversation with several party-goers, and learn that Gatsby’s reputation has preceded himself. He is a man of mystery who is rumored by party guests to have “killed a man once,” been “a German spy during the war,” and a “regular Belasco⁸” (Fitzgerald, 1925).

After drinking and exploring Gatsby’s home with Jordan, the two unexpectedly meet their host in his garden. Nick does not realize who he is speaking too, and the two men strike up a casual conversation based on their shared military background. When Nick comments that, “this is an unusual party for me. I haven’t even seen the host. I live over there...and this man Gatsby sent over his chauffeur with an invitation” Gatsby introduces himself, and then almost immediately leaves to take a phone call (Fitzgerald, 1925).

⁸ A Portuguese-Jewish theater producer, playwright, and director who lived in New York City and was famous in the 1890s and early 1900s. He was known for creating stars, and many people sought him out in the hopes that he would make them famous (Sheehy, 2010).

Table 4

Dominance in Gatsby's Party

Elements of	Words indicating	Phrases indicating
Dominance	Dominance	Dominance
Compliance	9	19
Rebellion	6	11
Withdrawal	4	10
Manipulation	7	13

There are about 1,540 words total in this scene, and overall 5.1% are showing elements of dominance. This high percentage is significant because the party guests in this passage represent high society at the time. This high percentage could correlate to the muting of groups in the 1920.

Although Jordan is not the stereotypical female archetype⁹, in this passage she is clearly expected to comply with the demands of the men around her. Her date's description in the novel emphasizes what role he expects Jordan to play in his life. He is namelessly described as "a persistent undergraduate given to violent innuendo, and obviously under the impression that

⁹ Jordan is a professional golfer by trade, and exhibits more masculine characteristics in the book than the other females.

sooner or later Jordan was going to yield him up her person to a greater or lesser degree” (Fitzgerald, 1925). Jordan’s date to the party expects submission from her physically and otherwise.

Another party guest also expects Jordan to comply with his demands, although not in the same fashion. “Owl Eyes,” is a drunken, middle-aged man whom Jordan and Nick stumble upon while searching for Gatsby. Owl Eyes “examined Jordan from head to foot,” and then asks her several questions and then either discounts her answer, or answers for her. Jordan does not seem bothered by her dismissal and instead “looked at him alertly, cheerfully, without answering” (Fitzgerald, 1925). This acceptance of dominating behavior manifests itself in the coding of this passage. Elements of compliance were coded 1.8% of the words and phrases studied. This is higher than any other type of dominance coded during Gatsby’s party. The other elements were coded as follows: rebellion, 1.1%; withdrawal, .9%; manipulation, 1.2%.

Owl Eyes is one of many characters in this passage who are not identified by a name. This group includes almost all partygoers that Jordan and Nick come into contact with, including Jordan’s date, “the undergraduate, twin “girls in yellow,” three men all identified as “Mr. Mumble,” a “man about my age,” and “a celebrity tenor” (Fitzgerald, 1925). Even Gatsby himself is not named when first introduced. These characters seem to be nameless because they represent as a whole the general attitude of society in the novel. They are carefree and do not appear to be made of any true moral or emotional substance. This nameless mass of people provides an important backdrop for any muting that occurs in the scene, because they represent the upper class’ actions throughout the book.

Since Jordan and Nick are meeting partygoers in this passage together, it is easy to observe how they are treated differently, and if they are muted. Gatsby's parties represent all things fashionable in the 1920s, and so this passage provides a glimpse into privileged society at the time. Gatsby's symbolic solitude is strengthened in this passage, as few of the partygoers seem to know him, or care to ever meet him. The guests do not know who Gatsby truly is, indicating his separation from society, due to his true socio-economic background, which eventually causes Daisy to leave him.

According to theorists, muted groups often respond to muting by utilizing back channel-methods of communication. This includes communication such as folk stories, gossip, and songs. A very obvious example of back-channel communication are the songs that slaves would sing in the fields that contained hidden messages inside them. The individual or group who utilizes lesser amounts of back-channel communication is considered dominant (Kollock & Blumstein & Schwartz, 1985). One back-channel method of communication that is commonly found in *The Great Gatsby* is gossip. This passage is full of women communicating through gossip. This is indicated by the body language of the characters in the passage. In this passage it is clear the characters are gossiping when they "leaned together confidently," and "bent forward and listened eagerly" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although men seem equally interested in the gossip, they do not actually engage in gossiping themselves.

Passage Five

Much is made of the general setting in *The Great Gatsby*, particularly the differences between New York City, the narrator Nick Carraway's hometown in the Midwest, and Gatsby's home in the West Egg neighborhood of Long Island. Just as each location has a unique personality and background, so do the characters who are represented by that area. In fact,

Gatsby's home is described early on as a "colossal affair," foreshadowing the dramatic romantic affair that Gatsby maintains in the book (Fitzgerald, 1925). Such an unmistakable tie between characters and location has led many scholars to study the descriptions of New York City, Long Island, and the Midwest found in the book (Barrett, 2006; Steinbrink, 1980; Goldsmith, 2003; Wilson, 2012; Axelrod, 2002).

One scholar goes so far as to state that the settings within *The Great Gatsby* mimic the author's personal experiences. "The lure to the East represents a profound displacement of The American Dream" (Steinbrink, 1980). A dream that Fitzgerald himself shared when he moved from the Midwest to Great Neck, New York (Rompalske, 1999).

The passage analyzed by the researcher is from Chapter One. Pages 5-7 shall be studied for the existence of muted group theory. In this section of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick describes the new neighborhood he has moved into in West Egg, New York. He is content to live in an "eyesore" of a home, because he has a view of the water and the "consoling proximity of millionaires" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Nick's home lays near the homes of central characters Gatsby and Tom and Daisy Buchanan. His description creates parameters around both the neighborhoods mentioned and the characters introduced. His descriptions of the setting bleeds into the introduction of the main characters, tying the two concepts closely together from Chapter One.

In this passage Tom, Daisy, and Nick interact for the first time, providing an early glimpse into each character's personality and position within their social circle.

Table 5

Dominance in the Introductory Setting of The Great Gatsby

Elements of	Words indicating	Phrases indicating
Dominance	Dominance	Dominance
Compliance	8	8
Rebellion	4	8
Withdrawal	8	4
Manipulation	8	7

Scholars have connected the setting in *The Great Gatsby* to everything from traditional American values to genitalia (Steinbrink, 1980; Levith, 1979). One scholar has subsequently written that the work has been “psychoanalyzed” to the point of ridiculousness (Virágos, 1991). Although it seems highly unlikely that Fitzgerald was intentionally connecting the setting of his book to such a wide range of topics, there is clear evidence that he was painting more than just a backdrop when detailing the locations in *The Great Gatsby*. In fact, Fitzgerald “constructed” the text, and told his editors he planned for the novel to be “a consciously artistic achievement” (Tanner, 1965; Levith, 1979). This makes it clear that any indication of dominance in this passage is likely a result of Fitzgerald’s carefully planned symbolism.

The book has four main settings: East Egg, Long Island; West Egg, Long Island; New York City; and the Midwest (Samuels, 1966). This passage focuses on depictions of East and West Egg, in which most of the book's action occurs. In a total of about 1,050 words, this passage showed that 2 %¹⁰ of the passages' singular words indicated one or more elements of dominance. Most commonly these terms of dominance reflected compliance, 1.5 %, or manipulation, 1.4 %. The rebellion and withdrawal aspects of dominance were coded in 1.1% of words and phrases in this passage. These reflections of dominance do indicate the existence of muted groups. Specifically, this passage shows that some characters are muted due to their socio-economic status.

The very first sentence of this passage clearly indicates that social boundaries have been established and that these boundaries may cause embarrassment or happiness, depending upon which side you fall. "I lived at West Egg, the – well, the less fashionable of the two" (Fitzgerald, 1925). The way the narrator pauses before describing his neighborhood is an indication of embarrassment and a desire to withdraw from the situation. Nick is defensive sounding, qualifying his descriptor of the neighborhoods by then stating "though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them" (Fitzgerald, 1925). It is clear from this follow-up that the narrator is uncomfortable, and wants to separate himself from his neighbors. We see this over and over again in this passage as he builds to his first interaction with main characters Tom and Daisy Buchanan. He essentially sets the reader up to understand that he is not on the same playing field as Daisy, Tom and Gatsby, his neighbors who are the other main characters. This is an important theme that continues throughout the book. Nick never seems to be exactly on the same page as his peers, and may be socio-economically muted.

¹⁰ Although not a particularly high percentage, it was on par with some of the results discovered in Moses and Golos 2011 study.

In fact, Nick's first introduction of Gatsby shows that the narrator did not necessarily expect to ever know "the great" Gatsby. "It was Gatsby's mansions. Or, rather, as I didn't know Mr. Gatsby, it was a mansion, inhabited by a gentleman of that name" (Fitzgerald, 1925). There is nothing in this description to indicate Nick's potential familiarity, or even comfort with Gatsby. He appears to simply "know of" Gatsby, as most people know of their local politician or news celebrity. To "know of" someone is to indicate their importance socially, while also indicating the opposing individual's lack of importance, as they do not simply know the "celebrity" at hand. It is in this passage we begin to see a very clear indication that there are lines and boundaries inhibiting some characters. This introduction is clearly indicating that there are dominant and submissive roles, symbolically and physically, divided by homes and neighborhoods in the book.

The narrator is further divided from those living near him by the description of his house as a "small eyesore," that was "squeezed" between mansions that are expensive to rent (Fitzgerald, 1925). The verb "squeezed" indicates that his house, and symbolically Nick, were not comfortable in the neighborhood. Gatsby's mansion next door has a "spanking new" tower; another descriptor that indicates dominance and physical discomfort to others in order to create compliance and submission (Fitzgerald, 1925). We can see this represented in the coding, as compliance was the most commonly coded dominance element in this passage, at 1.5%.

The "palaces of fashionable East Egg" are separated from the narrator and Gatsby's homes by a bay, an interesting geographic separation, as by the end of the book the only person who appears to have truly been close to Gatsby is Nick, whose house is the closest in proximity (Fitzgerald, 1925). No matter how hard Gatsby tries, he is never able to cross the distance

between him and the other characters and establish a lasting place in their lives. All other houses, and thus characters, are defined by their proximity to Gatsby's mansion (Dahl, 1984).

Fitzgerald, like many authors before him,¹¹ drew inspiration for his settings in the novel from architecture that was popular or common in his time period. Architecture and location in this passage appear to help bolster each character's role in the novel. "The specific styles of his buildings, both individually and in their carefully developed counterpoint, embody basic aspects of his characters" (Dahl, 1984). For example, the Buchanan's home is described in this passage as a classically structured "Colonial mansion, overlooking the bay" (Fitzgerald, 1925). The home has bright, airy windows that are "wide open to the warm windy afternoon," and sits close to the beach and water (Fitzgerald, 1925). Many descriptors of Gatsby's house reflect a dramatic, slightly gothic mansion that is intentionally showy. By contrast the Buchanan's house appears to blend the outdoors and indoors thanks to large French windows, a sunny front porch, sun dials, and "burning" gardens (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although this description appears to be very welcoming, it is also very grand and filled with indicators of brightness. The Buchanan's home represents the shining epitome of what someone from the upper social class should have achieved.

Such a backdrop also helps set Gatsby up as a "drowned sailor" and Daisy as a siren of sorts for Gatsby, in the fashion of the mythological sirens found in Plato, Aristotle, and Shakespeare (Lukens, 1987; Settle, 1985). Her home is described in terms that create the illusion of an alluring and impressive image that portrays steady wealth, potential happiness, and safety, all things extremely desirable to both the narrator and Gatsby. Both Gatsby and Nick have been

¹¹ Including Irving, Poe, and Hawthorne (Dahl, 1984).

bent on a quest of sorts to discover their place in life through wealth and relationships. Like sirens of Greek mythology, Daisy is unattainable, and ultimately, deadly.

Chapter V: Discussion

Discussion

Research Question One

RQ1: Are there elements of muted group dominance in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*?

This question was answered with a resounding *yes!* All passages studied by the researcher indicated that elements of muted group dominance were present. At least 2% of all words in the five passages studied contained an element of muted group theory dominance, and some passage indicated that as many as 9% of the words did.

The most common element of dominance in the five passages was compliance, which indicates that the groups muted in *The Great Gatsby* accept their forced limitations in dialogue. It appears that the muted groups in this novel attempt to work within the confines of the dominant group, not against them. For example, when women were muted by being ignored or discounted they never responded to the muting in anger. This is especially visible in any type of argument in the book that occurs between male and female characters. Even after one of the most dramatic and visible moments of muting in the book, little reaction occurs from the muted group. In this particular instance Tom Buchanan does not like what his mistress is saying and so “making a short deft movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand” (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although an extremely violent form of muting someone, the reaction to this occurrence is “women’s voices scolding,” (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although there are many people in this scene, most characters continue about their business as though there were not “bloody towels upon the bathroom floor” (Fitzgerald, 1925). In fact, Nick and a man named Mr. McKee arrange to have

lunch together while Myrtle and her sister clean up the mess from her broken nose. Clearly no one in this scene believes that Tom did anything illegal or irreproachable. Myrtle herself does not even break off her relationship with him.

Manipulation was the second most frequently occurring element of dominance. When dominant groups are not overtly discounting a subordinate group in dialogue, they are often using manipulation instead. Sometimes this manipulation is very obvious, as is typically the case with Tom Buchanan. Gatsby's manipulations are veiled by concerns and caring, but are manipulations nonetheless.

Women do not appear to be viewed as equal partners in the conversation, and are often muted and manipulated by men cutting them off or stopping them from talking altogether. When Jordan and Nick meet "Owl Eyes" at one of Gatsby's famous parties he asks Jordan "What do you think?" and then proceeds to tell her that she need not bother answering as he already knows the answer to the question (Fitzgerald, 1925). In a similar fashion, later in the book Tom is seen "talking intently across the table at her [Daisy]," indicating that Daisy's role in the conversation was to listen and obey, not add to the conversation.

Manipulation can also be seen frequently in the book when the characters attempt to portray themselves as wealthy. Gatsby, Tom, Myrtle, and Daisy all at different points in the book flaunt their wealth and the social status it provides them. During Gatsby's first introduction with Nick he brags about having recently purchased a hydroplane and invites Nick, who at this point is a complete stranger, to try the plane out with him. In Chapter Two Myrtle's sister tells Nick she lost "over twelve hundred dollars" on a trip to Monte Carlo (Fitzgerald, 1925). Myrtle attempts to show she is wealthy by changing her clothes constantly, and buying items or talking

about buying items in every scene she dialogues in. In *The Great Gatsby* social status and power are largely derived from wealth, and in most relationships in the novel, the individual controlling the money is dominant in the relationship. The subordinate individual is muted and expected to comply.

Rebellion and withdrawal were the least commonly seen dominance elements in the five passages studied. As both of these require action on the part of the subordinate individual or group, they may be less common because muted characters appear to typically work within the confines of the dominant group's expectations.

Research Question Two

RQ2: If elements of dominance exist, what group(s) do they appear to be muting?

Results for RQ2 showed that several distinct groups are being muted in *The Great Gatsby*. Although the researcher was focused on gender when conducting this study, gender was not always the criteria for a group being muted. Three groups were obviously muted in different passages of *The Great Gatsby*: females, African-Americans, and those not considered part of the wealthy socially elite.

Females in *The Great Gatsby* were muted by male characters in the novel. Typically this muting manifested itself in dialogue by female character's comments being completely ignored, or discounted. This muting did not, however, seem to surprise or bother any of the female characters. Many times women in *The Great Gatsby* were ignored when speaking, or had a male character answer questions addressed to them. Despite these findings, there was not one recorded time in which the female characters acted angry about this treatment. Women did not fight the expected dominance of their male peers. This explains why withdrawal was one of the

consistently lower percentages of dominance found in all five passages. Women did not leave situations physically or withdraw emotionally because they accept the muting as standard, expected treatment.

Socio-economic muting is almost as prevalent in *The Great Gatsby* as gender muting, and appears to be an equally accepted part of society for the characters. Almost everything the characters do in the book involves money; they rent suites at the Plaza Hotel and order drinks and snacks from the servants there for fun. They have nannies to watch their children so they can attend parties in these suites. They change outfits multiple times per day, and choose their taxi based on its appearance. Their actions show that if you cannot afford a certain lifestyle, you cannot be part of the main characters' circle of friends. Dominance in the book is established based on wealth, and characters who were not born with it, such as Myrtle and Gatsby, spend huge portions of their time trying to pretend they were.

Gatsby is so desperate to pretend he had a wealthy upbringing that he claims to be an orphan, as his living father is not rich. Tom, who is suspicious that Gatsby's wealth background is fictional, attempts to mute him by calling him "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere," and "a common swindler who'd have to steal the ring he put on her [Daisy's] finger" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Gatsby's importance in society is so tied to his wealth in fact, that Daisy would never consider marrying Gatsby until he could support her lavish lifestyle. Although seemingly shallow, none of the characters appears to think badly of Daisy for this, including Gatsby. He even openly admits that "she only married you [Tom] because I was poor and she was tired of waiting for me" (Fitzgerald, 1925). This treatment is expected and understood as OK by all the characters because wealth is so important to them.

Racial muting in the book is so prevalent that non-white characters almost always have a servant role. As one scholar put it, “the greatest amount of stereotyping in Fitzgerald's writing involves African Americans, who are portrayed mainly as servants and comic characters” (Margolies, 1997). In dialogue this is apparent because they almost never contribute anything to a conversation; they simply accept instructions and comply with their superiors. Nick’s narration also indicates African-Americans are not in the same class as the main characters. In fact, his narration is almost inhuman toward this muted group at times. For example, on page 55 he states,

"a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish Negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry" (Fitzgerald, 1925).

There were also potential instance of religious muting toward Jews and Catholics. A minor character in Chapter Two discounts Catholics, and blames the denomination for Tom and Myrtle’s inability to marry. Then, a very unflattering description of a minor Jewish character in the book indicates that the narrator did not view Jews on the same level as him.

"A small flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half darkness" (55).

Research Question Three

RQ3: If muted group theory does exist, how do women express themselves within the power structure of the dominant group in *The Great Gatsby*?

Muted groups in society have two options when participating in dialogue; they can dialogue within the expectations of the dominant group, or they can work around them. Women in *The Great Gatsby* almost always worked within the dominant group’s expectations. They did

not express anger at being muted and instead seemed to expect the treatment. This is why compliance was the most commonly found element of dominance in the five passages examined.

The only instance in which women did not work within the confines of the dominant group in *The Great Gatsby* was when they utilized one specific form of back-channel communication. The researcher found that women within *The Great Gatsby* sometimes participated in back-channel methods of communication in order to share information with other members of their group. The back-channel method women used in *The Great Gatsby* was gossip.

Three of the five scenes examined contained instances of women using gossip. Almost always, the gossip was about the status of someone else's romantic life, or financial holdings. Before Nick and Jordan meet Gatsby at his party, they hear ridiculous stories about the man from his party guests. In the end, none of the gossip turns out to be accurate about Gatsby, but it does cast the first shadow over his reputation as a privileged man from the upper class. At Myrtle's party, again the gossip is off-base, indicating that Daisy is Catholic and that she is keeping Tom from marrying his mistress, when in fact, she is not catholic and is planning to leave Tom. However, these incorrect statements give Nick a chance to understand the dynamics of the double life that Tom is living.

Men in *The Great Gatsby* are willing to listen to gossip, but don't start it or contribute. This is important, because according to muted group theorists, gossip is a back-channel method of communication that groups take part in because they are muted. So this could be evidence supporting that idea that men in the novel are not muted, and therefore, perhaps do not need to utilize back-channel methods of communication.

No other back-channel methods were used by women in the passages examined for this study. The passages studied did not uncover any evidence that socially, religiously, or racially muted groups participated in back-channel methods of communication. This is true in part because none of the main characters are racially diverse.

Research Question Four

RQ4: What can be learned from this study about muted group theory as it applies to the work *The Great Gatsby*?

This study legitimized using muted group theory as a lens through which to analyze approach literature. Elements of muted group theory dominance were found in every passage of the novel, creating an expectation for muting within the book. This affects all aspects of the novel. Every character is on one side of the muting, and is impacted by it. Settings and belongings play into muting, especially socio-economic muting. A clear understanding of the prevalence of muting in *The Great Gatsby* would allow students and scholars reading the text to better categorize data they may be analyzing. No matter what passage of the book is studied the effects of muted treatment are evident.

While the study indicated findings of muted group theory, the most interesting discovery that the researcher found was the expectation of muting by characters. Characters in the story, both the muted characters and the dominant characters, did not act as though the muting of groups was an unusual, or even, unjust action. This may reveal Fitzgerald's mindset when he wrote the novel in the 1920s. The concept of muted groups was not yet documented, and although both the suffrage movement and race-relations were important movements in the time

period, Fitzgerald would have been part of the dominant group in society at the time, and therefore may not have realized that his own actions toward certain groups were inhibiting them.

Additionally, muting may have been accepted in the book, because women in the 1920s did not typically inhabit the same roles in society of men. In the 1920s women had just gained the right to vote, and were becoming more politically active, but had not yet entered the workforce in droves as they would during World War II. Even the most modern-thinking of women during this period would have been used to gender expectations, and probably muting. Fitzgerald may have painted an accurate social picture of the 1920s with his novel *The Great Gatsby*.

The expectation of muting drastically alters the type of dialogue within the text. If the characters are compliant to the expectations of the dominant group, there will be less conflict in general, and less friction in dialogue. It may also cause friction to occur in a different fashion than traditional dialogue, such as back-channel methods of communication.

Although the researcher focused on muted dialogue in the novel, there were elements suggesting that physical muting was present as well. The narrator first brings this concept to light by describing the settings for the novel. The setting clearly shows that the character's homes are separated from each other by natural barriers (a bay, location, ect...), and this mimics the social pyramid that causes separation of the characters through the book. Then the characters take part in violent actions that physically silence their subordinate. Daisy runs over Myrtle, her husband's mistress, in a car just as Myrtle runs at the car "to speak to us" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Tom breaks his mistress' nose so she will listen to him. A coding of physical muting in *The Great Gatsby* could reveal interesting additional information on muted group theory in the novel.

Most importantly, the results assembled from this study validate that literature does mimic society, and because of this, that interpersonal theory can be used as a lens through which to study novels. By connecting interpersonal communication and literature, a more thorough understanding of literature as a historical artifact can be achieved. This is extremely important in novels that become part of a society's culture, such as *The Great Gatsby*, as they are studied over and over again for their mastery of language.

Limitations

One possible flaw in muted group theory is that it only acknowledges the differences in gender communication, and does not acknowledge the many similarities the two sexes have when communicating. It also does not acknowledge the possibility of "language shaping gender;" the idea that male and female characteristics are influenced by language, and not necessarily muted (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002). Nor does this theory address the tendency of woman to use more "correct speech" and "higher prestige" pronunciations, which would create gender communication differences that do not derive from muting (Kramarae, 1981). This may stem from biological gender differences as some studies show that girl's neurological systems are more mature at birth and possibly more predisposed towards linguistic processing (Kramarae, 1981).

By the same token, labeling language as "sexiest" does not allow room for the interpretation of words, which can be construed differently (sarcastically, literally, ect...) depending on the situation (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002). Some researchers also find fault with muted group theory because it does not recognize that males and females utilize language differently. For example, women may be perceived as tentative in their communication style because their use of language is more socio-emotional and more focused on expressing concern

for the listener than males, who appear to be more task-oriented (Otnes et al., 1995). Other researchers claim that men do not intentionally dominate language, and that muted group theory skews this reality (Burnett et al., 2009).

As muted group theory theorists often examine gender differences, many scholars studying muted groups have constructed their arguments from a feminist point of view. While this is neither right nor wrong, it does cause a skew on research materials available on the topic. As a result, many citations in this study are weighted by what some consider to be a controversial point of view. This can make the results of any study on muted group theory less impactful with audience members who do not share a feminist point of view.

The Great Gatsby as a text also presents limitations, as the narrator slips into other characters' skin and describes their thoughts, so there is less natural dialogue than most books. In the book he even states "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Nick is both the narrator and a character in the story; which makes his narration more tentative than the typical author who has a "privileged position outside the fiction's frame" (Coleman, 1997). His narrative from two years after the event is "not far removed in time and emotion from the events he narrates" (Halliwell, 2012). His first-person narration is also a somewhat inconsistent narrator, providing differing accounts of several situations at different points in the novel. For example, Daisy's hair is described as both blonde and dark in the work. Some critics believe this unreliable narration is the manifestation of Fitzgerald's own confusion (Boyle, 1969).

The dialogue in *The Great Gatsby* is unorthodox because Fitzgerald has not crafted the typical form of character interaction. Although never addressed, his narrator is able to know what

other characters are thinking and feeling. He essentially leaves his own skin and becomes other characters. “like the narrator of *Gatsby*, he was “within and without” (Fussell, 1952). Possibly this is because the narrator is functioning “as a structural device and an author’s therapy,” meaning Fitzgerald is infusing the narrator with his own thoughts and perception (Samuels, 1966). This unusual narrator voice may simply be a reflection of Fitzgerald’s attitude toward his books, as one critic called him “simultaneously engaged in and detached from his subject” (Bettina, 1963). Nick is more than just a character; he is a character writing one story while discovering his own (Samuels, 1966). Nick is “discovering *Gatsby* in the act of writing about him” (Samuels, 1966). “Perhaps it is primarily to achieve a sense of loneliness, to create a distance between his characters and nature and God, that Fitzgerald employs artifacts in imagery” (Bettina, 1963).

Because this story is not simply interactions between characters, but a story full of symbolism, categorizing elements of muted group theory was more difficult than anticipated. What may appear to be dominant at first, could have an entirely different meaning symbolically. Additionally, dominance does not always indicate a muted group, so it was important that the researcher carefully examine the dialogue and surrounding text to ensure a correct interpretation of elements of dominance.

Dialogue is not an element that stands-alone. In real-life it is coupled with nonverbal interactions and history, and *The Great Gatsby* is very similar. Each passage of dialogue was greatly influenced by the surrounding text and descriptions. It became clear early on when formulating the study that I would need to examine more than just the verbal interaction of the characters. So the passages grew in length.

By better understanding the limitations of this study, future research can be conducted in a way that is even more influential to the field. These limitations can be seen as problems to the researcher, but they also provide interesting potential avenues of further study.

Recommendations for Future Research

More extensive research on this topic would be required to make a conclusive statement on the results. The book clearly delineates separate roles in society for different groups of people. Any study on muted group dominance in *The Great Gatsby* will quickly identify the obvious racial differences in treatment by the characters. In one of the novel's most explosive scenes, Tom Buchanan compares the moral decay of all society to "intermarriage between black and white," to which one character quickly attempts to calm the situation by saying "we're all white here" (Fitzgerald, 1925). It is clear from this dialogue alone, that race is a defining barrier between people in the book, a topic that could easily be expanded into its own study.

In order to further increase the validity of these findings, more than one coder should read *The Great Gatsby* and look for elements of muted group theory in the same passages. This would help eliminate coder-error, and ensure that the results could be used as a strong argument in scholarly research.

Christian scholars specifically could conduct a similar analysis on women in the church to see if they have been muted. Such a study could examine specific denominations and time periods. In the Bible, Jesus Christ constantly sought to hear the voices of the less privileged, so a study on muted group theory could allow Christian scholars to discover how to better hear muted voices. The connection between Christianity and muted group theory has not been studied to date, and would expand muted group theory to a new, highly relevant area of study.

Of the two studies used as a pattern for the researcher's coding, Siemund and Dolberg chose to study specific parts of speech, while Golos and Moses chose to examine sentences as a whole (2011; 2011). This coding of *The Great Gatsby* revealed that there are positives to both methods. Examining sentences holistically, as the researcher of this study did, allows the researcher to gain a larger understanding of the relationship between word choice and the plot. However, a sentence-level study includes conjunctions, such as "but," and "or," as well as words such as "the." These words typically do not add much value to whether a word or phrase contains an element of dominance, however, they do add to the overall word count of a text. Therefore, a future study on muted group theory in *The Great Gatsby* may reveal larger amounts of dominance if the researcher excludes "throw away words" that do not normally contribute meaning to the document.

Studying Fitzgerald's other novels in a similar manner would help shed even more light on the existence of muted group theory. All his novels were published in the between 1919 and 1941, so many of the same elements that influenced his first novel were still potential influencers in his last. A comprehensive study conducted in a similar manner to this one, on all Fitzgerald's novels would reveal strong indicators as to what and how dominant groups affected Fitzgerald's life.

A similar study conducted on other texts and media could reveal helpful information to further validate the results of this study and the existence of muted group theory in society. Speeches, movies, news articles and radio transcripts from the 1920s would all be excellent potential media for a study of this nature, as would novels of the same era by other authors. Hemingway was a contemporary of Fitzgerald who had a close connection to *The Great Gatsby* author. If his novels showed similar results as this study it would support the connections

between *The Great Gatsby's* social structure and America's at the time. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was known to support the suffragette movement, lived around the same time period as Fitzgerald, but may have written from a different point of view on muted groups. A study of female authors from the same era would provide additional insight into the expectations for muting.

Other Observations

While the methodology and results provided from this study will certainly assist all researchers in the further study of muted group theory, Christian scholars in particular will find this thesis helpful, as Christians have been, and may currently be, a muted group in society. Further research on muted group theory could assist Christian scholars in understanding how Christians have been or are muted in society, and how they have overcome this muting. For example, it is arguable that in response to mainstream media muting, Christians have developed their own forms of media, including Christian television and radio stations. An understating of what dominance elements are typically exerted on Christians could allow Christian scholars to assist in reshaping church culture.

Conclusion

This study was more involved than the researcher originally expected for several reasons. First, it was difficult to isolate the passages of dialogue from the surrounding text. Several times the researcher expanded the passage-length of what text was studied in order to ensure the coding was an accurate depiction of the situation. The meaning of a word or phrase can be easily misconstrued if not considered next to the adjoining text, so the original passages were expanded to include appropriate surrounding text.

Secondly, the narrator in the novel cuts out a lot of potential dialogue by explaining emotions and situations. For example, pages 15-16 include a description by Nick of a group of four people, and speculation on their thoughts. Fitzgerald made the choice to use the narrator in place of dialogue that would reveal the characters' thoughts. "I couldn't guess what Daisy and Tom were thinking, but I doubt if even Miss Baker, who seemed to have mastered a certain handy skepticism, was able utterly to put his fifth guest's shrill metallic urgency out of mind" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Passages of this type are common in *The Great Gatsby*, as Nick switches from main character to omnipotent narrator. As a result, some interesting passages in *The Great Gatsby* had no dialogue in them at all, eliminating them from potential examination in this study. In fact, one scholar said that "in the memory of many of its readers, *Gatsby* exists as a series of magnificent descriptions" (Coleman, 2000). The positive side of this, however, is that through F. Scott Fitzgerald's unique narrative approach we are able to more clearly understand the author's voice, and feelings on specific topics.

Thirdly, this study combined two areas of academia: communication studies and English. The balancing of these two academic areas created an interesting and complimentary dynamic, but did present challenges at times. It was imperative that the researcher carefully select sources for the study in order to ensure that the works cited section supported both areas. This challenge resulted in a works cited section that encompasses many academic areas, to include math and science. The impact of researching *The Great Gatsby* from varying areas solidified its place as an American classic and brought the many factual elements of the story to light.

The combining of different types of scholarly research paints a clearer picture of who F. Scott Fitzgerald is, and how his novel has and is impacting society. Through this study, it is clear that elements of dominance occur frequently through *The Great Gatsby*. While this dominance

does seem to point toward the muting of specific individuals or groups, the passages analyzed are less supportive in providing evidence that gender is the main reason for this. There are many passages in *The Great Gatsby* that clearly show women are being discounted, however, based on this coding of the text, that theme is not as prevalent throughout the entire book as another muted group. In fact, this study did not uncover a large number of “back channel” methods of communication for female characters. Although female characters often use gossip as a means of communicating, this appears to be the only back-channel method of communication women in *The Great Gatsby* participate in.

What appears to be more prevalent than gender-muting in *The Great Gatsby* is the theme of muting by social class. Servants and lower-class individuals in *The Great Gatsby* are constantly being discounted, ignored, and forced to comply by the upper-class characters. Ultimately, it is extremely clear how important social standing is when Tom Buchanan attacks Gatsby’s upbringing in order to prove to Daisy that Gatsby is below her. Tom is banking on the expectation that social class standing is more important to Daisy than her feelings for Gatsby, and it appears that he is ultimately correct, as Daisy does not leave her husband.

Ultimately this study helps reveal not only the mindset of a famous and classic American author, but also the social atmosphere of America in the 1920s. Based on the book’s popularity when it was first published, and the heavy historical ties to factual events, it is clear that Fitzgerald has painted an accurate picture of social-strife in the 1920s. This image is further enforced every year when thousands of high school and college students begin reading the novel for course work. By gaining a better understanding of themes found in *The Great Gatsby* researchers can not only decipher the mood of the time period, they can also better instruct

students on how language may have been constructed differently than it is today, and why this occurred.

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