



A Quantitative Analysis of Directives in Disney Princess Films

By

KAREN EISENHAUER

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APPROVED BY:

Advisor (Agnes Bolonyai)

Director of Graduate Programs

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Abstract

KAREN EISENHAUER. A Quantitative Analysis of Directives in Disney Films. (Under the direction of Agnes Bolonyai)

Children's animated films provide ideologies about gender that are presented to children and their parents as innocent and "safe." However, construction of "goodness" in these movies often rely on normative sex-role stereotyping, especially for women (England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek 2011; Junn 1997). Studies in child development have shown that children use these films in playing with and constructing their gender identities (Baker-Sperry 2007, Coyne et al. 2016). Little is known, however, about the specific ways in which they present *language* as gendered, and what children who watch these movies repeatedly are drawing on as a possible model for their own stylistic performances of gender. To address this, my research focuses on applying quantitative language and gender methodology to analyze speech in Disney Princess films. In this study, I focus on directives, defined by Searle (1975) as a speech act which gets a hearer to do something. Directives have been decisively correlated with intersections of gender, power, and politeness in previous studies (e.g. Aronsson & Thorell 1999; Goodwin 1980, 1983 1990, 1998; West 1990). I quantify directive use in these films through methodology previously used to analyze real-life speech communities, focusing mainly on mitigation and aggravation strategies. Results suggest that gender, urgency, and power dynamics all play a significant role in determining mitigation strategies applied to directives. Qualitative analysis reveals that gender and power are closely intertwined as they affect directive use. Men generally tend to mitigate less than women, and, additionally, their direct and aggravated displays of power are ratified by unmarked compliance. Women, on the other hand, mitigate more heavily even in positions of power, except in the case of villains. Domestic situations uniquely qualify "good" women to enact authority through bald directives. These findings quantitatively triangulate previous observations about sex-roles in children's films and confirm the legitimacy of using linguistic methodology to examine media artifacts.

1 Introduction

Disney Princesses are an undeniable cultural phenomenon. The Disney Princess Line of films, spanning back to 1937 and collected as a single marketable entity in 2001, is the single top-selling media franchise of all time (Orenstein 2006). These movies are often viewed repeatedly by children (Mares 1998), and related merchandise is marketed aggressively at young audiences (Giroux 1994, Wilde 2014), giving Princesses a robust cultural life outside the silver screen. Princesses also stand out from other children's media because of their pop culture reputation for reproducing gender stereotypes – a reputation not well-placed, as there is strong evidence that Disney Princess movies are powerful pedagogical tools for teaching young children gender roles (Cook & Main 2008, Forman-Burnell 2009, Giroux 1994, Wilde 2014).

Both academics and more casual cultural critics tend to agree that Princesses are culturally significant. This is evidenced by a now-decades-long conversation in critical academic journals and in newspapers, blog posts, and television. However, this conversation is at times discordant, some attacking Disney Princesses as role models (e.g. Orenstein 2006, Pandey 2001) while others defend them (Do Rozario 2004). With few exceptions (England et al. 2011, Junn 1997, Towbin et al. 2004), academic analyses of Disney movies tend to be qualitative, which contributes to the argumentative nature of the discourse. Additionally, no previous studies are linguistic in nature, leaving the unanswered question of whether language is utilized along with plot and animation style to construct normative versions of gender on screen. This is an oversight given current understandings of language as a cornerstone of identity construction (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992).

This study fills the research gap by analyzing Disney movies using quantitative language and gender methodology. This paper is part of a larger study that quantitatively examines a suite of gender-linked discursive features as they appear in Disney Princess films, including compliments, apologies, insults, questions, and terms of address. Previous papers from the project (Fought & Eisenhauer 2016a, 2016b) have proven the validity of this approach. Here, I examine directives, which are a speech act that prompts an addressee to perform (or cease performing) an action (Ervin-Tripp 1976, Searle 1975). Directives have a unique position in language and gender research because of their complicated relationship to power (Vine 2004, Davies 2003, Tannen 1994, Wodak 1995), solidarity (Blum-Kulka 1990), and politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987). By applying established linguistic methodologies to Disney movies, this study can bring important quantitative context to the existing conversation about gender portrayals in children's media. Additionally, the following results expand the scope of language and gender research into entertainment media to help further our understanding of how cultural discourses of gender circulate in modern American society.

2 Background

Gender Performances and Ideologies

This study pulls from the tradition of third wave feminist theory, which assumes that we aren't born being inherently male or female – rather, we “do” our genders through contextualized “gendered practices,” including language use (Butler 1990, West & Zimmerman 1987). The premises of this framework are best understood in historical context. When language and gender research began, scholars considered linguistic variation between genders as a product of men's inherent cultural dominance over women (e.g. Lakoff 1972). This “first wave” approach

considered women's language to be intrinsically powerless, and in some cases, deficient to men's language. Later, in the "second wave" approach, language differences were theorized as the product of separate-but-equal male and female "cultures" (e.g. Tannen 1990). In this imagining, men's language was not more powerful, but it *was* based in practices of dominance and hierarchy; women's language was dichotomously characterized as collaborative and communal. In both waves, linguistic production was considered an immutable product of the binary gender difference. However, meta-analysis of second-wave studies reveal that there are actually very few statistically significant gendered differences in language use; in fact, intra-gender diversity tends to exceed inter-gender variation (Cameron 2007). "Third-wave" researchers theorize instead that variation in language use is indicative of gendered *performance* rather than gender per se – that is, that speakers draw on gendered repertoires of linguistic, discursive, and social features through which they index their specific gender identity (Bucholtz 1999; Cameron 2005, 2007; Coates 2008; Eckert 1989, 2014; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992).

Language and Gender research distinguishes itself from other critical fields through methodologies that concentrate in part on granular, quantitative analyses of linguistic features. This tradition began with Robin Lakoff's foundational 1973 work *Language Woman's Place*. Lakoff identified a number of linguistic features characteristic of "women's language," including specific lexical items, phatic communication strategies, tag questions, directive mitigation, and hyperbole (Lakoff 1972). Although not founded on empirical research, her observations spurred decades of researchers hoping to quantitatively substantiate or deny her claims (e.g. Cameron, McAlinen, & O'Leary 1988). Other discursive features have also been explored in some detail, including talkativeness (e.g. James & Drakich 1993), compliments (e.g. Holmes 2013), interruptions (e.g. Edelsky 1981), and broader patterns of politeness and impoliteness (e.g. Mills

2002). The general (though by no means universal) conclusions of the first and second wave align feminine speech with collaboration, emotiveness, and powerlessness. Men have been studied much less but existing studies support masculinity's associations with hierarchical dominance and less overt expressions of intimacy and emotion (Kiesling 2002, 2005).

The third wave approach continues examination of specific discursive features. However, third-wave findings, which are obtained through close observation of *in-situ* gender performances, trouble the broader conclusions posited by earlier authors. Johnson & Finlay (1997) found, for example, that masculinity can include the performance of traditionally feminine "gossiping." Coates (1999) has found that women in homosocial bonding moments may use decidedly "unfeminine" discourse features in performing "backstage talk." Additionally, the burgeoning field of queer linguistics foregoes reliance on binary sex differences completely (e.g. Leap 2011). Many of these scholars still rely on quantitative and qualitative analyses of the discursive features suggested by earlier scholars, but their findings urge us to re-think gender as a more mutable, fluid category.

The rejection of the gender binary and of the cultural essentialism that characterized the first two waves of research have prompted scholars to re-conceptualize new approaches about how language and gender are linked. Bucholtz (1999), Johnson & Finlay (1997), and others suggest that performances change depending on the position of speakers and/or communities in relation to dominant ideologies of gender - and that constructions of gender must necessarily be either created by or in reaction to "available gender identities" (Kiesling 2005). Research by Nicolas Palomares (2004, 2008) has further suggested that linguistic performances of these available identities vary depending on "gender salience," or how much a speaker is inclined to identify with their gender group rather than idiosyncratically. In highly gender-salient situations

(as in a gender-stereotypical conversation topic), speakers rely more heavily on ‘prototypical’ gender-linked linguistic features. Palomares has also found that gender salience disproportionately affects speakers who already identify with stereotypically gendered traits. People also rely on gender stereotypes and ideologies to *interpret* the function of other speaker’s utterances in a gendered way (Mulac et al. 1998; Mulac & Lundell 1986; Mulac, Lundell, & Bradac 1986). By re-contextualizing older findings in these ways, modern scholars have been able to account for previously unexplainable variation across results (e.g. Mulac et al. 1998). In sum, there seems to exist a three-way interaction between a speaker’s gender identification, specific speech context, and larger cultural ideas of gender, all of which contribute towards a speaker’s linguistic performances and interpretations. It is the last of these three components – the “cultural discourses” of gender – that inform the current study.

The concept of “cultural discourses” initially arose in the work of Foucault (1972) but has been applied to the realm of language and gender research by Scott Kiesling (2005):

Cultural discourses... are culturally shared ways of thinking, doing, making, evaluating, and speaking. These discourses are similar to ideologies in that they describe unquestioned background assumptions that people of a culture share. However, discourses are more than ideology, even though they encompass it; discourses include social practices, artifacts, processes, and even desires. (p. 697)

Kiesling has found in his studies that in the all-male homosocial setting of the college fraternity house, men rely upon cultural discourses of hegemonic masculinity to construct local identities. Men both utilize ‘masculine’ speech tropes (i.e. ritual insulting, externalized conversation topics, bald commands) and interpret/comment upon others’ performances through the lens of these discourses. Other studies have found similar reliance on gendered discourses in all-female groupings (e.g. Goodwin 1994).

Kiesling (2005) pointed out in his study that cultural discourses are “reflected in, and created by... performances, and in widely shared cultural performances such as literature and film.” (p. 696). He supports this through observations of cultural reference points for homosocial desire in the fraternity, including films like *Stand By Me*, *Star Trek*, and *The Lord of the Rings* (p. 702). His observation that discourses are partially created by media has gone unchallenged by other scholars. However, although third wave studies have diligently turned their attention to the enacting of gender discourses in interpersonal contexts (e.g. Bucholtz 1999, Johnson & Finlay 1997, Kiesling 2002, 2005) little to no linguistic attention has been paid to the larger cultural artifacts which supposedly help create these contextual identities.

Gender, Language, and Media

Film and television are powerful tools of socialization. As mediums, they are certainly pervasive: in 2015, 99% of American households had at least 1 television, and 80% of Americans watched TV every day (US Department of Labor 2016).¹ Analyses of TV and movies consistently show that popular media contain stereotypical gender roles and ideologies (e.g. McArthur & Eisen 1976). Sociologists have also shown that consumption of mainstream media is correlated with more traditional ideals of gender roles (Frueh & McGhee 1975, Williams 1981), as well as children’s perceptions of bodies (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde 2008), occupations (Herrett-Skjellum & Allen 1995), and relationships (Hafferkamp 1999). This begs the question of whether media is also influencing the way we interpret and perform language in a gendered manner.

¹ The average time spent watching television is 2.8 hours per day. The average time spent socializing per day is 41 minutes. (US Department of Labor 2016).

Research suggests we should be paying attention to children's movies in particular. First of all, media may be the first interaction a young person has with people of a race, region, class, or sexuality outside their immediate speech community. Second, as Rosiana Lippi-Green (1997) points out, children's media tends to be short, and consequently relies heavily on cultural shorthand to establish character (p. 81). This constraint comes with a distinct freedom to manipulate the medium past the point of reality. Animator Tim Burton explains:

Precisely because of their assumed innocence and innocuousness, their inherent ability – even obligation – to defy all conventions of realistic representation, animated cartoons offer up a fascinating zone with which to examine how a dominant culture constructs its subordinates. As non-photographic application of a photographic medium, they are freed from the basic cinematic expectation that they create an 'impression of reality'... (Burton 1992, cited in Lippi-Green 1997, p. 85)

Neither reliance on shorthand nor the ability to create fanciful characters are necessarily problems alone. However, as Pandey (2001) argues, when children's films moralize, they tend to "uphold mainstream values by according positive attributes to characters who function as prototypes of the dominant culture, where simultaneously ascribing negative values to characters from non-mainstream social groups" (p.6). For example, Disney's heroes and heroines tend to look hetero/cis-normatively beautiful, whereas villains tend to be 'queered' in some way – in fact, Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) was modeled after the real-life drag queen Divine (Li-Vollmer & LaPointe 2003). Lippi-Green (1997) found that this pattern holds linguistically – regardless of the movie's fictional setting, heroes and heroines overwhelmingly speak Standard American English whereas villains are more likely to speak a non-standard dialect (Lippi-Green 1997).

Sociologist Jillian Hinkins (2007) claims that these ideological links can play a dangerously powerful role in passing societally dominant values from one generation to the next:

Certainly animated film produced for children can provide a window for examining societal structures and cultural practices by the adult audience, whilst at the same time instructing and guiding children in regard to an understanding of themselves and their place in the society that they inhabit. Indeed, implicit and explicit ideologies in children's animated film are likely to inform both adult and child audiences, promoting certain beliefs and assumptions and shoring up idealized goals and expectations. There is also a sense in which explicit and embedded ideologies are being knowingly transferred from one gen to the next. In this way, children's film can provide a sense of continuity and of clarification, performing a pedagogic function with regard to a myriad of issues. (Hinkins 2007, p.1)

Hinkins argues that parents actually encourage the pedagogical function of children's media that supports their own views of the world. Pedagogical effects may be further magnified because children tend to watch films repeatedly in their homes more than other demographics (Mares 1998), and repeated viewing increases children's comprehension of media (Crawley et al. 1999). All this confirms what Giroux (1994) has said about animated films: they "appear to inspire at least as much cultural authority... for teaching specific roles, values, and ideals as do more traditional sites of learning" (p. 23).

Despite its demonstrable pedagogical implications, linguists haven't paid much attention to representations of identity-linked speech patterns in cartoons. The most notable exception is Rosiana Lippi-Green's *English With an Accent* (1997), who precedes me in using quantitative linguistic measures to examine Disney films. However, her work was done through impressionistic coding of dialect rather than by counting specific discursive features. A few fine-grained sociolinguistic analyses have been carried out on children's films (Azad 2009, Pandey 2001); however, these approaches focus on regional and ethnic dialect representation rather than on gender. To my knowledge, there has been no comprehensive attempt to analyze the way gendered language use is constructed in children's media, nor any comparison to real-life language and gender findings.

Disney Princesses

Disney Princesses are the obvious place to start when discussing gender representation in children's movies. The princess character has a history dating back to the 1800s in America as a way of teaching young girls to be generous, docile, and feminine (Forman-Burnell 2009). It was Walt Disney, however, who jump-started the princess's role in pop culture with his groundbreaking animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937). The princess as a character has since exploded in popularity, with Disney leading the way. Today, young girls tend to use the princess character to play with each other in imaginary games (Cook & Main 2008).

Disney capitalized on Princess's increasing relevance in the early 2001 by creating the Disney Princess Franchise (also known as the "Princess Line"), tying together many of its most popular princesses into a single brand. The Princess Line is worth now \$4.1 billion, making it the highest-selling entertainment franchise in the world (outperforming even other Disney franchises, including Mickey Mouse). Some academics have pointed out that in addition to being smart marketing, this unification has interesting ideological ramifications. The Princess Line works to unite all official characters under a 'princess ethos' (Orenstein 2006), thereby keeping royal role models from as far back as 1937 relevant to new generations (Do Rozario 2004, Forgacs 1992, Stover 2013). In fact, princess films are so effectively linked to feminine gender performance that in recent years, Disney has been actively trying to disguise their princess movies with neutral titles and male co-stars (think "Tangled" and "Frozen") in order to get boys to associate with the films (Wilde 2014).

The high visibility of Disney Princesses along with their obvious 'role model' status has put them under a fair amount of scrutiny from both academia and pop culture. Subfields that have researched Disney include media studies (e.g. Gillam & Wooden 2008, Junn 1997), gender

studies (Brydon 2009, England et al. 2011, Martin & Kazyak 2009), marketing (e.g. Cook & Main 2008, Wilde 2014), sociology (e.g. Forman-Brunell & Eaton 2009), psychology (e.g. Coyne et al. 2016), cultural studies (e.g. Giroux 1994, Giroux & Pollock 2010), and social work (e.g. Towbin et al. 2004). It also seems like saying “princess” is the magic word to turn any journalist or blogger into a critical gender researcher: a Google search on “Disney Princess, Gender” returns 21,800 news articles from 2016 alone, including titles such as “Disney Princess Principles Shut Down Gender Stereotypes” (Teen Vogue) and “Alecia Keys Refuses to Let Her Sons Watch ‘Sexist’ Disney Movies” (Glamour).

The vast majority of academic analyses of Disney is qualitative or literary in nature. While qualitative research lends important analytical lenses to media interpretation, it can still only provide part of the picture. Even the most rigorous qualitative scholars using the same lens to interpret the same scene in the same movie may come to completely different conclusions.² Triangulating these analyses with quantitative research on a broader scope can serve to improve the validity of Disney scholars using more interpretive frameworks (Konecki 2008).

The quantitative research that has been done on Disney Princesses has generally come to the consensus that Disney’s portrayal of women is traditionally-minded and limiting. Researchers working to quantify sex-role stereotyping in Disney have generally found that

² For example, in speaking about Ariel’s marriage scene from *The Little Mermaid*, Do Rozario (2004) says: ‘...Ariel and Jasmine, who choose to marry their heroes, do so not simply to obtain husbands, but as an exercise of their regal prerogative, irrevocably changing the status quo by choosing a consort contrary to accepted norms.’ (p. ???)

Whereas Stover (2013) contends:

The film initially posits Ariel’s fascination with land as cause for leaving the ocean, but in the style of backlash politics, it eventually channels her struggle for independence and autonomy into the more traditional, narrow goal of choosing a husband. The narrative commandeers her desire into a desperate teenage romance... (p. ???)

Here we see Ariel’s marriage proved as either as empowering or oppressive through rigorous analysis. While both interpretations are valid, the variance provides some exigence for quantitative triangulation

princesses adhere to traditional feminine roles, such as passivity (Junn 1997), helplessness (Towbin et al. 2004), open affection (Junn 1997, England et al. 2011) and being valued for conventional beauty over other traits (Towbin et al. 2004, Lippi-Green 1997, Junn 1997). Women in Disney tend to end up in domestic and/or romantic roles, such as mother or wife (Lippi-Green 1997, Towbin et al. 2004). Men, on the other hand, are physically strong/dominant (England et al. 2011, Towbin et al. 2004), assertive (England et al. 2011, Towbin et al. 2004), and sexually aggressive (Junn 1997). In all of these studies, sex-roles were tallied based on viewer interpretation. Since many of the gender role performances discussed in the literature are in fact constructed linguistically, examining specific gender-linked discourse markers can produce a more rigorous understanding of gender-role portrayals in Disney. Particularly, out of the qualities listed above, passivity, domesticity, assertiveness, dominance, and aggression are all traits that may be partially constructed using commands and directives; and so, to thoroughly understand these tropes, we must understand how directives are used discursively.

3 The Current Study: Directives and Gender

Directives are commonly defined as a speech act in which a speaker attempts to get a recipient to carry out or to refrain from some action (Ervin-Tripp 1976, Searle 1976, Goodwin 1980). Searle (1976) included directives in one of his five basic types of speech acts; academics since then agree that directives are a prominent part of interaction that “constitute a very basic way in which tasks and everyday life get organized” (Goodwin & Cekaite 2013). Researchers have consequently studied many aspects of directives, including syntactical variation (e.g. Ervin-Tripp 1976, Weigel & Weigel 1976), turn-taking sequences (e.g. Goldschmidt 1998, Goodwin 2013), pragmatics (e.g. Hernandez & Mendoza 2002), politeness (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1987, 1990;

Ervin-Tripp et al. 1990), and the social construction of power or authority (e.g. Labov & Fanshel 1977, Kendall 2002, Tannen 1994, West 1990). Directives (though not by that name) are also researched by non-linguistic fields interested in task completion and group dynamics (e.g. Fitch 1994, Kendall 2004, Thomson & Moore 2000).

The taxonomy and analysis of directives has historically been rooted in Brown & Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness. They conceptualize directives as a Face Threatening Act (FTA), given that they encroach on the addressee's agency. Brown & Levinson draw a comparison between speech that is "bald on record" – in this case, a direct command or bald imperative - and speech that is mitigated through either positive or negative politeness strategies. Ervin-Tripp (1976) foundationally adapted politeness theory for directive research by classifying directives on a linear spectrum based on the directness of their syntactical forms. However, Aronsson & Thorell (1999) critiqued Ervin-Tripp's approach on the basis that politeness cannot be equated solely to indirectness, because it ignores positive politeness strategies that emphasize solidarity over deference. Theirs and other recent studies have therefore expanded Ervin-Tripp's analytical framework to more generally encompass forms of *mitigation*, wherein the speaker lessens the force of the directive through embellishments and paralinguistic features. These can include soft or whispering tones, hedges ("open the window *a little*") and endearments ("shut the door please *dear*") (e.g. Holmes 2013). Others still have expanded to include forms of *aggravation*, wherein the speaker stresses the imposition or social distance implied in the directive (e.g. Aronsson & Thorell 1999; Goodwin 1980, 1988, 1990; West 1990).

Differences between directive forms provide speakers ways to create and reflect their identities and their relationships with interlocutors. Ervin-Tripp (1976) found that directive forms vary primarily depending on the power and solidarity of those involved. Labov & Fanshel (1977)

points out the sense of this variation: because directives threaten a recipient's agency, bald or aggravated commands necessarily imply that the speaker may legitimately impose upon another. Mitigations, on the other hand, downgrade the force of the act and subsequently allow for the recipient to reject the request with less awkwardness. The effect of power relationships on directive use has been found in many contexts, including parent-child relationships (e.g. Blum-Kulka 1990), working-class industrial environments (e.g. Weigel & Weigel 1985), white-collar offices (e.g. Pearson 1988, Vine 2004), and classrooms (e.g. Davies 2003, Holmes 2013). This relationship with power makes directives an interesting point of concern for language and gender scholars, who have been historically fascinated with the relationship between authority and masculinity on one hand and powerlessness and femininity on the other (e.g. Mills 2002)

The most well-known studies on the intersection of directive use with gender have been conducted by Marjorie Harness Goodwin (1980, 1988, 1990, 2001). Goodwin observed groups of African-American children in play on Philadelphia streets, and concluded that when coordinating group activities, boys tended to organize themselves hierarchically and that leaders used bald imperatives to address their 'subordinates.' Boys also tended to use aggravated forms to emphasize their leadership status, often asking others to perform tasks on a whim. Girls, on the other hand, tended to use mitigated directives, and more generally emphasized group collaboration over hierarchical organization. The tendency of young girls to mitigate emphasize group solidarity and de-emphasize power difference through their directive use has been observed classroom interaction as well (Davies 2003).

Gender differences also appear in adult contexts. West (1990) found, for example, that when female doctors give orders to their patients, they tend to mitigate their commands as a means of minimizing the power difference between themselves and patients; male doctors, on the

other hand, use bald commands and aggravation techniques that emphasize their institutional power. Parenting techniques have similarly observable gender differences: fathers are more direct, less polite, more judgmental, and more action oriented, where mothers are indirect, polite, and compromising (Bellinger & Gleason 1982, Engle 1980, Gleason & Greif 1983). Many researchers have paid attention to the interaction between gender and institutional authority, and have found that women tend mitigate orders to their subordinates and downplay their own institutional power (Case 1998, Coates 1995, Holmes 2013, Tannen 1994, Wodak 1995). It may be the case that gender of the recipient is salient; Leet-Pellegrini (1980) found that when one speaker in a dyad is assigned expert status, that speaker tends to use more ‘dominant’ styles of discourse, *except* in the case where the ‘expert’ is a woman and the non-expert is a man. It’s important to remember that these patterns don’t necessarily translate to the relative powerlessness of femininity compared to more masculine styles (Tannen 1994). Rather, we see a pattern of women in positions of power using mitigation techniques to pay attention to their interlocutor’s face and minimize status differences in play.

Directives, and authoritative language in general, is highly contextual. Gender may be just one of many aspects of identity indexed through directive use. Goodwin, for example, found that in situations where girls knew more than boys – as in the playing of a jump-rope game – girls tended to index their authority more strongly their gender by using direct imperatives. She also found that in urgent or dangerous situations, all genders used bald imperatives (Goodwin 1988), suggesting that external context may at times be more salient than identity performance. Several scholars have argued that context is so important that factors such as status, authority, and the task at hand supersede the analysis of gendered directive use in any meaningful way

(Jones 1992, Vine 2004). However, the trend of women using mitigation to perform their gender across contexts seems too robust to ignore.

Additionally, the nature of this study requires us to consider not only the reality of gendered performances but also the *perception* of those differences, since perception is a part of discourse and can influence how we interpret other's identity performances (Mulac et al. 1986, 1988). Children, for example, perceive of both parents as good deal more direct and authoritative than themselves (Goodwin 1988), but perceive of fathers as being more authoritative than mothers (Aronsson & Thorell 1999). Adults also tend to view women as powerless, which Elinor Ochs (1995) theorizes is based on the association between feminine power and motherhood. The conflation of women's language with powerless language has also existed in the language and gender field since its inception, with challenges to that conflation only becoming mainstream in the last 10-20 years (Cameron 2005, Swann 2002).

A powerful illustration of Americans' perception of feminine directive styles came in 2015 when Google executive Ellen Petry Leanse published an online article encouraging women to eradicate the word "just" from their professional lives, commenting that it was a "subtle message of subordination, of deference" (Leanse 2015). The article gained over three million views in less than a month, and spurred similar think pieces encouraging women to stop using "please," "sorry," and other hedges and mitigation techniques (e.g. Holmquist 2015, Hewlett 2015, Reiss 2015). An app was even released at the end of 2015 that targeted a female audience: titled "Just Not Sorry," it underscores hedging techniques in an email as if they were typos (Cauterucci 2015). The amount of conversation that Leanse created with her think piece suggests that the perceptual tie between femininity and mitigation/minimization is extremely salient in modern America.

Previous quantitative studies about Disney have touched on the topic of directives, though none have done so consciously or linguistically. England et al. (2011) categorized Disney characters based on personality traits and plot points. They found that a top trait in both men and women was “assertiveness,” which they describe as “insistence upon a right or claim, the action of declaring or positively stating...includes polite assertiveness with a hint of aggression.... A strong, direct assertion of a position or idea” (559). Although this was a top trait in both princes and princesses, the researchers found that much of the assertiveness princesses showed was towards animals. They provide the following analysis:

This suggests a fairly submissive and limited way of being assertive, as if they could not assert themselves with other adults, but only when they were mothering, or with those who had less power. The women did tend to be assertive about their fathers’ attempts at controlling them. Interestingly, the prince characters did not often have a father figure to assert themselves against. Further, those princes with parents were not controlled in the same way those princesses were. In contrast to the earlier films, the middle and current films had princesses who were more assertive than in earlier films, and these princesses were assertive towards both people and animals. (563)

England et al. also found that women were significantly more likely than men to be “nurturing,” described as “direct interaction... often shown as mothering...involving prolonged touching and attention in a soothing manner... or lending care and help in a loving way to either animals or people” (559). Women are also significantly more likely to be “tentative:” “an experimental manner, uncertain, cautious, seen in behavior or speech” (559). The researchers, particularly in the case of assertiveness and tentativeness, may have heavily relied on intuitions of linguistic mitigation and aggravation in directives and other speech acts in order to ascertain these impressionistic categories. This suggests that gender may play a role in the mitigation and aggravation of directives in Disney films, and that directive use may in turn be a part of the traditional gender roles demonstratively present in princess movies.

My capstone explores these possibilities by looking in-depth at the ways directives are constructed in Disney Princess films. I ask the following questions:

1. Do the ways in which characters in Disney Princess movies produce directives vary significantly according to their gender?
2. If there is a difference in directive production between genders, how does the difference relate to other potentially salient factors (e.g. institutional power dynamics and contextual urgency)?
3. How does context-specific directive use in Disney Princess films (e.g. parent-child interactions, in workplace settings) compare with real speakers' directive use as analyzed by previous scholars?
4. Do the gendered patterns of directive use in Disney Princess movies change over time?

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