

Department of English

Karen Eisenhauer • MA in Linguistics

Email : kreisenh@ncsu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Agnes Bolonyai

Background

- Interaction with **children's media** has been shown to influence children's perceptions of occupations, relationships, bodies, sexuality, and **gender roles**.
- The **Disney Princesses** are the highest-selling entertainment franchise in the world. Their popularity, along with Disney's encouragement of multiple viewings and multimodal engagement in media, make them important pedagogical tools in childhood acquisition of normative gender roles.
- The national discourse on Princesses as "Role Models" is heated, but tends to be **qualitative**. Using linguistic methods, we can lend a **quantitative voice** to this debate.

Directives and Gender

- Directives are a speech act that "try to get another to **do something**"
- Directives can be **mitigated** (the force lessened) or **aggravated** (the force strengthened)
- Young girls tend to use mitigated forms, and young boys tend to use bald and aggravated forms
- Similar gender differences arise in professional settings
- In **urgent situations**, the strategic differences between genders is not significant

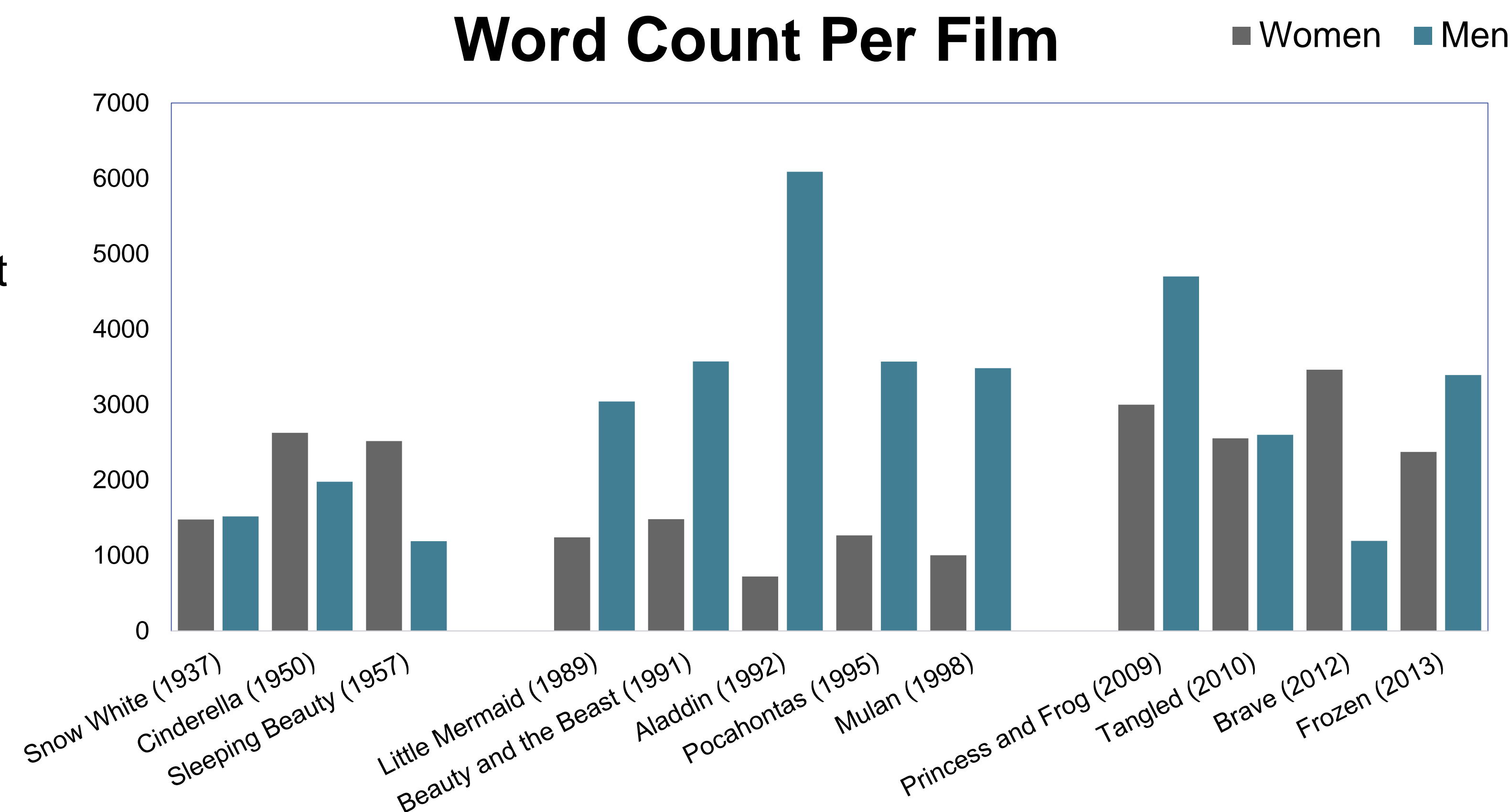
Do Disney characters' use of directives vary according to their gender?

How does Disney's linguistic representation of gender compare with real American speakers?

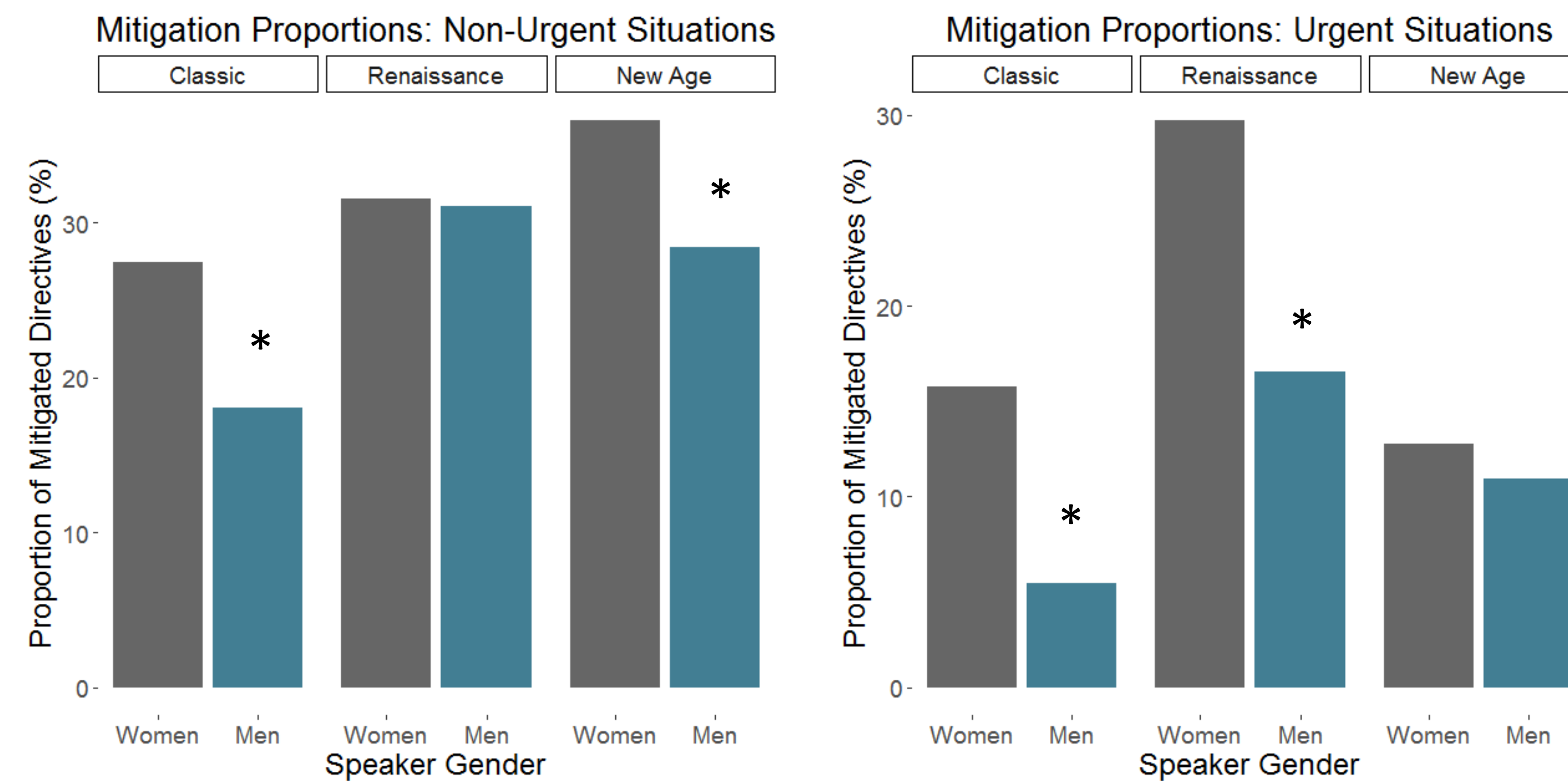
Dataset



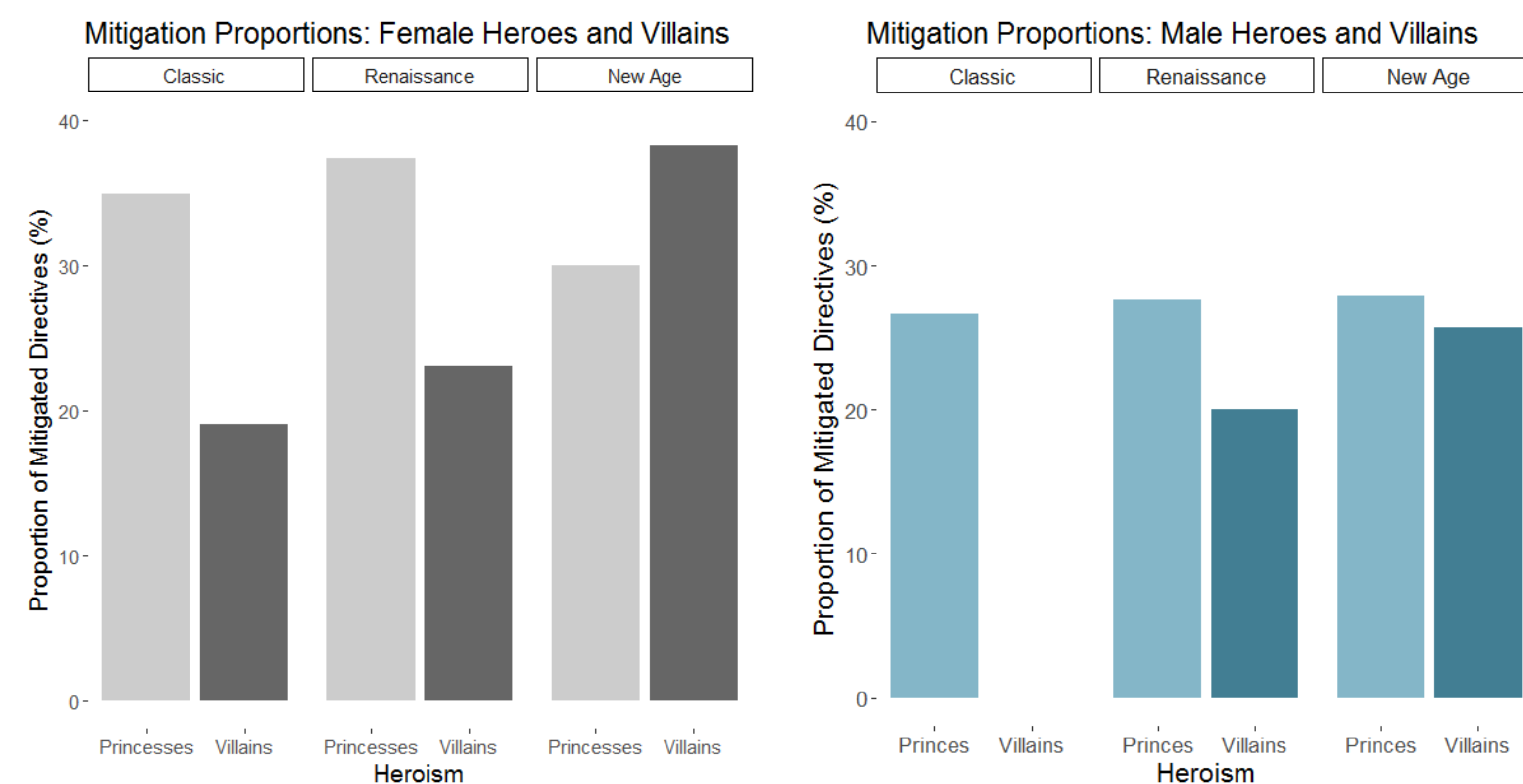
| Classics Era 1937-1959 | Film | Year |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | Snow White | 1937 |
| | Cinderella | 1950 |
| | Sleeping Beauty | 1959 |
| Renaissance Era 1989-1999 | The Little Mermaid | 1989 |
| Beauty and the Beast | 1991 | |
| Aladdin | 1992 | |
| Pocahontas | 1995 | |
| Mulan | 1997 | |
| New Age Era 2009 - | Princess and the Frog | 2009 |
| Tangled | 2010 | |
| Brave (Pixar) | 2012 | |
| Frozen | 2013 | |



Results: Mitigation Rates and Urgency



Results: Mitigation Rates and Heroism



Analysis

- Men tend to speak significantly more** than women in Princess films, despite the fact the movies are 'for girls.'
- Speaking roles tend to be male** unless there is a 'reason' for femininity, such as motherhood or feminized profession.
- Women in classic films mitigate at significantly higher rates** than men in both urgent and non-urgent settings.
- The discrepancy between **heroes and villains** tends to be **higher between women** than between men, suggesting a potential correlation between mitigation and good femininity.
- New Age films resist trends**, suggesting Disney's gender representations are currently evolving.

Results: Total Collected Directives

| Gender | Classics | Renaissance | New Age |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Man – Man | 183 | 513 | 187 |
| Man – Woman | 46 | 211 | 197 |
| Male Giver | 229 | 724 | 384 |
| Woman – Man | 70 | 142 | 184 |
| Woman - Woman | 160 | 49 | 185 |
| Female Giver | 230 | 191 | 369 |

Future Directions

- Explore the relationship between directives and **power**
- Analyze the nuance of **queer-coding villains** in Disney
- Expand analysis to **other gendered discourse markers** such as apologies, questions, and conflict talk
- Triangulate quantitative findings with **qualitative critical discourse analysis**

References

- Coyne, S. M., Linder, J. R., Rasmussen, E. E., Nelson, D. A., & Birkbeck, V. (2016). Pretty as a Princess: Longitudinal Effects of Engagement with Disney Princesses on Gender Stereotypes, Body Esteem, and Prosocial Behavior in Children. *Child Development, 87*(6), 1909-1925.
- England, D. E., Descartes, L., & Collier-Meek, M. A. (2011). Gender role portrayal and the Disney princesses. *Sex roles, 64*(7-8), 555-567.
- Ervin-Tripp, S. (1976). Is Sybil there? The structure of some American English directives. *Language in society, 5*(01), 25-66. X
- Fought, C. & Eisenhauer, K. (2016, November). *A Quantitative analysis of gendered compliments in Disney and Pixar films*. Paper presented at New Ways of Analyzing Variation, Vancouver, Canada.
- Giroux, H. A., & Pollock, G. (2010). *The mouse that roared: Disney and the end of innocence*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Goodwin, M. H. (2008). *The hidden life of girls: Games of stance, status, and exclusion*. John Wiley & Sons.
- West, C. (1990). Not just 'doctor's orders': Directive-response sequences in patients' visits to women and men physicians. *Discourse and Society 1*, 85-113.
- Williams, T. (1981). How and what do children learn from television?. *Human Communication Research, 7*(2), 180-192.