The gendered use of discourse markers in Duck Dynasty

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Abstract

Discourse markers are used in American Southern English; however, it is unclear whether or not gender variation occurs in the use of discourse markers. This thesis investigates this issue by studying a speech community in Western Monroe, Louisiana, through the show *Duck Dynasty*. With data collected from this television show, this thesis investigates both the gender variation that occurs in the use of discourse markers in American Southern English as well as how politeness strategies in language use guide this gender variation. Through the data collected, I am able to conclude that several gender variations occur due to differences in how men and women from Western Monroe employ politeness strategies to deal with face-threatening acts.

Acknowledgments

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A note on abbreviations:
I use several abbreviations throughout this paper for the sake of conciseness. FTA stands for face-threatening act, which I define in the paper below. Additionally, when I am specifying the season, episode, timestamp, and person from the show Duck Dynasty I am quoting from, I will use the following notation [S00:E00, 0:00, Person]. Therefore, if I was quoting Phil from season 1 episode 1 at 5:00, the notation would be [S01:E01, 5:00, Phil].

1. INTRODUCTION

American Southern English is the dialect of English spoken in the American South. Among the many states that make up the American South is Louisiana, a coastal state not only affected by American English but also French and Caribbean creole languages (Nagle and Sanders, 2003). American Southern English is defined by several features: the "Southern" phonological shift of vowels, regional vocabulary (such as "y'all"), and grammatical differences (such as the use of the phrase "fixin' to") (Nagle and Sanders, 2003) (Bailey and Tillery, 1996).

The aspect of American Southern English that I will study in this paper is discourse markers. Discourse markers are "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk," which are connective, optional, and semantically significant (Schiffrin, 1987). In this paper, I will study approximately ten discourse markers used in American Southern English: I mean, y'know, well, huh/uh, oh, yeah, alright, look, etc. I will analyze the use of each discourse marker through the lens of face theory.

Face theory comes from the idea of "losing face." Each person has a face which they want to maintain to preserve their social status (Brown and Levinson, 2006). Therefore, I will view language acts through the manner in which they help a person maintain their face or threaten the face of others. The actions that people take to preserve face are also known as "politeness."

Gender variation can occur in language use (Coates, 2015) (Podesva, 2007) (Eckert, 2014); however, it is not clear whether or not the use of discourse markers is affected by the gender of a speaker. This thesis explores how the use of discourse markers in Western Monroe, Louisiana, may or may not reflect differences in how different genders perform politeness.

To do this, this thesis analyzes data from ten episodes of the television show *Duck Dynasty*. The data contains ten different discourse markers that were most prominent throughout the show, and this thesis applies face theory to the data to understand how gender variation does or does not occur.

In section 2 I will provide an overview of the background research necessary to understanding the data and the discussion of the data present in this thesis. In section 3 I will describe the methodology for collecting data, and in section 4 I will present the data collected. In section 5 I will discuss the results of my data, and in section 6 I will draw conclusions from this data as well as make predictions on the significance of this data moving forward.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Language and gender

Gender as a social factor that impacts language use has been studied extensively (Coates, 2015) (Eckert, 1989) (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003). In the social construct that is the gender binary, language use is not a symptom of gender but rather a method through which people construct or perform their gender to others. The use of language is not the only way that people construct the gender binary; "the gender binary is maintained by the continued 'doing' of gender – every time a person uses a single-sex restroom, he or she is reproducing that binary. In

other words, the gender binary is a cultural accomplishment, not a natural order, and often requires coercion" (Eckert, 2014, p. 530). Therefore, gender variation in language should not be considered through the lens of a biological human occurrence but rather an action, subconscious or conscious, taken to present a certain image to others. Additionally, gender variation should be analyzed to determine how this variation constructs the gender binary or subverts it in some way.

Furthermore, when analyzing gender variation in studies, because gender is being performed through language acts, it is expected that there will be situations in which there is not a significant difference between the language of men and women. For example, a woman in a more masculine job or role may use language in a way that's more associated with masculinity. This does not mean that that woman will use masculine language in all aspects of her life; in fact, if she lives in a very traditional household, she may use more feminine language off the clock. In this scenario, the ambition or hard work of a business woman, although performed by a woman, is considered masculine since those traits are typically associated with men. On the other hand, in the particular northern Louisianian society that is the focus of this paper, femininity is associated with the household because those traits are usually socially assigned to women. What defines masculine or feminine language use will vary depending on the social context of each situation, but generally there are a few (outdated) stereotypes that people generally adhere to when constructing their gender identity.

Masculine	*Feminine*
More aggressive	Not too aggressive
Not emotional	More emotional
More active	More passive
More objective	More subjective
More ambitious	Home oriented

Table 1. Gender stereotypes (Ambarita, 2020, p. 26)

Along with these stereotypical personality traits, people also have a preconceived notion of how women or men use language. When it comes to the production of speech, women are expected to have higher pitch and to speak quieter. Contrarily, men are expected to be louder or use harsher intonation (Drager et al., 2021) (Podseva, 2007) (Zimman, 2013). These preconceived notions do not come strictly from the biology of people but instead the perception of politeness, which is a key area of linguistic research related to gender variation. For example, women who speak loudly are considered rude. On the other hand, men are expected to be loud. The politeness of a person is contingent on the gendered expectations we have for that person.

Therefore, while general trends might show that men speak louder than women, this is probably caused by the social pressures of politeness rather than any inherent feature of men or women (Ambarita, 2020).

Politeness is, generally, behavior that reduces conflict. In the context of language use, politeness is a "contract of conversation" that maintains cooperative communication without conflict (Ambarita, 2020, p. 22) (Leech, 1985) (Brown & Levinson, 1987) (Lakoff, 1973). Although politeness can be analyzed specifically through the lens of verbal communication, nonverbal aspects of language use such as tone can also be a factor in polite communication. To define politeness, there are five maxims of politeness that people generally abide by:

1. **The maxim of wisdom**: Reduce the loss of others and increase the profit of others in an interaction   (Ambarita, 2020, p. 23)

An example of this maxim would be a boss being polite (using less of a harsh tone) when asking a subordinate to do something. Although the boss is ostensibly giving an order as they are speaking from a position of higher power, they still try to maintain a friendly or cooperative atmosphere with their subordinate by being polite.

2. **The maxim of generosity**: Reduce profit of one's self or increase loss

                                                                        (Ambarita, 2020, p. 23)

When planning a hypothetical houseparty, it would be considered rude for Susan to offer Mary's house as a location for the houseparty without having asked Mary. However, it would be polite for Susan to offer their own house up to Mary as one potential location for the houseparty, therefore complying with the maxim of generosity.

3. **The maxim of prais**e: Increase the praise for others and decrease the criticism of others

                                                                        (Ambarita, 2020, p. 24)

Compliments are generally welcome in any social situation, but criticism can be seen as rude, especially when it is offered unprompted.

4. **The maxim of modesty**: Reduce self praise and increase self-criticism

                                                                        (Ambarita, 2020, p. 24)

Too much self-praise results in a perception of being arrogant or self-absorbed. However, self-criticism is generally associated with humility or modesty, which are positive character traits.

5. **The maxim of sympathy**: Sympathize with others   (Ambarita, 2020, pp. 24–25)

Sympathizing with others validates or creates a sense of respect for their own emotions while also casting the sympathizer in a positive light. At a funeral, it would be rude to ignore the grief of family members of the deceased as it would be seen as disrespectful or callous.

Ambarita's maxims of politeness are closely related to the study of gender variation in linguistics. As seen in Table 1, stereotypical feminine traits are associated with emotion or passivity, which goes hand in hand with the maxims of sympathy, modesty, or generosity. When it comes to performing gender, women are expected to be more polite (Holmes, 2013) (Lakoff, 1973). Therefore, it is possible that in certain social contexts women will engage with language in more polite ways, causing gender variation.

For example, an analysis of four case studies found that politeness was used to enact gendered identities. One transwoman used specific polite expressions of gratitude that were more "feminine" to help express her identity (Chalupnik et al., 2017). In an interaction between two men, they use frequent curse words and do not adhere to the maxims of sympathy or modesty; instead, they engage in what becomes a seemingly competitive performance of masculinity (Chalupnik et al., 2017). Although these are only some of the case studies reviewed, they show a clear connection between the construction of gender through language use and politeness. To analyze how language is specifically used to create politeness, gender variation in each aspect of language should be analyzed. In this paper, discourse markers will be the focus of analysis.

2.2 Face theory

In order to understand face theory, it is important first to understand what face is. The term "face" comes from the idea of "losing face" or maintaining social status. Face is something therefore that is desirable, adds to social status, and can be attained through certain social interactions. Conversely, face is also something that can be lost or threatened by these same interactions (Brown & Levinson, 2006). Therefore, face theory means that all language use can be interpreted through the lens of how people maintain their face or avoid threats to their face.

In order to maintain face, the wants of people can be divided up into two categories: positive face and negative face. As defined by Brown and Levinson, negative face is "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" and positive face is "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (2006, pg. 62). For example, a positive face is when a person dresses up because they want others to give them compliments or to be envious of their appearance. However, a negative face would be when someone dresses up in a uniform for work to avoid facing conflict for being out of uniform. Although both scenarios involve a person dressing in an outfit because of their face, the motivations behind dressing up in the scenarios are vastly different due to the differences in positive and negative face.

Given that face is something that is maintained, there are also actions that are "threats" to face. These acts, which may be committed through language use, are known as face-threatening acts. According to Brown and Levinson (2006, pg. 67-8), face-threatening acts to negative face include:

Verbal acts that predicate a future act of person A and put pressure on person A to commit the act through:
1. orders and requests
2. suggestions and advice
3. reminders
4. threats, warnings, or dares

Verbal acts that predicate a future act of person B towards person A which puts pressure on person A to accept the act of person B and to incur a debt:
1. offers

2. promises

Verbal acts that predicate a desire of person B towards person A, giving person A reason to believe they must take action to defend from person B's desires:

1. compliments, expressions of envy, and expressions of admiration
2. expression of strong negative emotion to person A

Furthermore, face-threatening acts also exist for positive face as well as negative face. According to Brown and Levinson (2006, pg. 68), face-threatening acts to positive face are:

Verbal acts that show person B's negative evaluation of person A's positive face:

1. expressions of disapproval, criticism, ridicule, etc.
2. contradictions, challenges, or disagreement

Verbal acts that show person B's indifference to person A's positive face:

1. expressions of violent or out-of-control emotions
2. irreverence
3. bringing up bad news about person A or boasting about person B
4. raising of divisive or emotional topics
5. blatant non-cooperation in an activity
6. use of address terms in negative ways such as misidentification

Therefore, when considering how face affects language use, the minimizing of the above face-threatening acts is an important use of language.
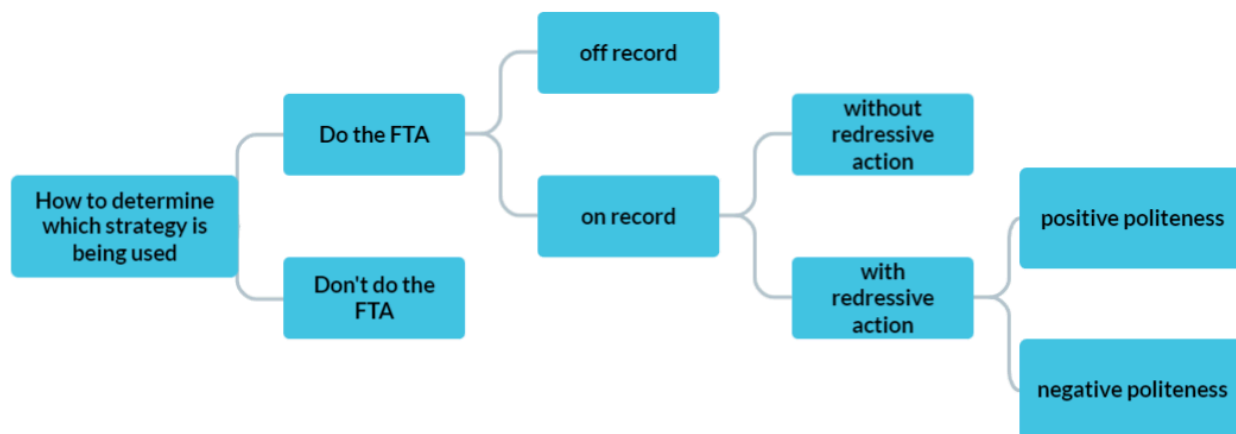

Figure 1. Circumstances determine choice of strategy adapted from Brown & Levinson, 2006, p. 69
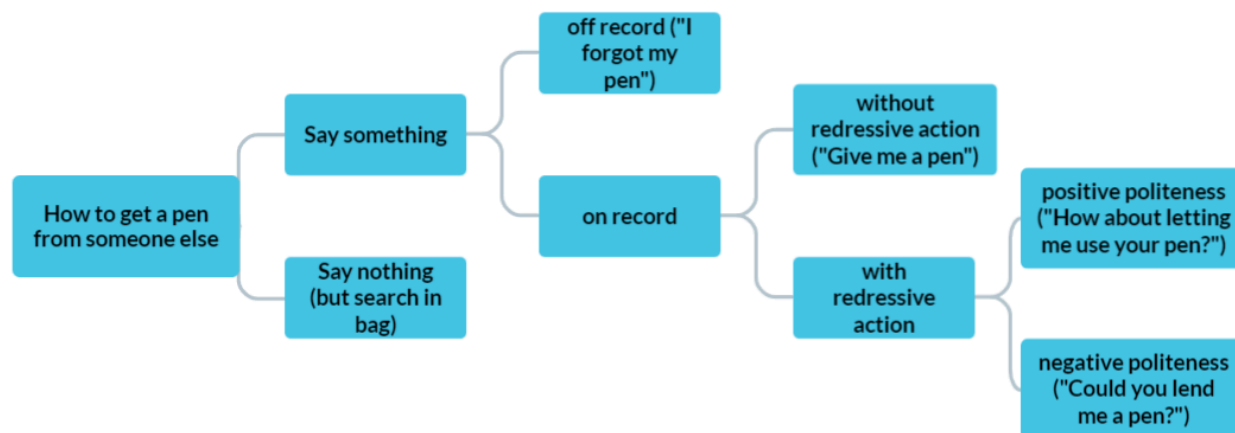
Figure 2. How to get a pen from someone else adapted from Yule, 1996, p. 65

2.3 Discourse markers

2.3.1 What is a discourse marker?

Defining discourse markers is tricky; even the title "discourse marker" can be contentious. In the past, discourse markers were referred to as discourse particles, but the syntactic meaning of "particle" did not match the use of discourse markers. From there a switch to the terminology "discourse marker" arose (Juker and Ziv, 1998). However, even now, there's a push to change the terminology from discourse markers to "discourse operatives" (Schourup, 1999). For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to this category as discourse markers.

For the sake of providing some context for this particular thesis, it is necessary to provide a working definition of discourse markers as well as their pertinent characteristics. For this purpose, I will define discourse markers as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" following Schiffrin (1987). Rather than attempting to define what constitutes an "element" or a "unit of talk," what is most important from this definition is that discourse markers are context-dependent that occur in relation to other parts of a conversation. There are three, generally agreed upon characteristics of discourse markers which are relevant to this paper's working definition of discourse markers.

First, a discourse marker must be connective. This means that a discourse marker's function is inherently to connect two different sections of "talk." For example:
(1) Person A: Do you also want to go to the park?
    Person B: *However, I do want to go to the park.
(2) Person A: Do you also want to go to the park?
    Person B: I mean, I do want to go to the park.
The scenario (1) is technically grammatically acceptable, but the use of the discourse marker is infelicitous because it does not properly connect the two phrases semantically. Conversely, scenario (2) is acceptable because the discourse marker is able to connect the two pieces of discourse semantically. However, this does not mean that the sections of discourse that are being

connected must be explicitly stated. Sometimes, a discourse marker can be referring to either an implied statement or underlying context that might be inferred from a different statement.

Second, a discourse marker must be optional. The optionality of a discourse marker happens in two separate ways: syntactically and semantically. In regards to syntax, discourse markers can be removed from a sentence without making it ungrammatical in any way. For example, both of the following two sentences are grammatical:

(3) I mean, I hope this sentence is grammatical.

(4) I hope this sentence is grammatical.

This occurs because, generally, discourse markers have weak clause association (Schourup, 1999) (Connolly, 1997). Additionally, discourse markers are also able to be removed from a sentence without making a sentence unintelligible. However, unlike with syntax, semantically there is a change in a sentence by removing a discourse marker (Schourup, 1999). Assuming that all language is communicative in some capacity, the presence of a discourse marker serves a communicative purpose. For example:

(5) We can try to make it work.

(6) Well, we can try to make it work.

Both sentences (5) and (6) are comprehensible, but the addition of the discourse marker "well" guides the listener to a more specific tone. In sentence (6), there is a greater sense of reluctance or hesitation from the speaker, but both sentences still convey the core message of "We can try to make it work." Therefore, discourse markers do add semantic meaning to the sentence, but their semantic meaning cannot be crucial for the sentence to be understood.

Third, a discourse marker must not affect the truth condition of a statement. For example, below are two statements with truth conditions:

(7) Additionally, she painted one of the best art pieces.

(8) Y'know, additionally, she painted one of the best art pieces.

The presence of "y'know" as a discourse marker does not affect the truth condition of sentence (7) in any way; instead, both sentences (7) and (8) have the same truth conditions.

2.3.2 Gendered use of discourse markers

Research has already been done on discourse markers to determine if and how the gender of a speaker affects discourse marker use (Escalera, 2009) (Ruiz-González, 2021) (Jegarlooei and Allami, 2018). One such study was conducted on thirty-six English-speaking children between the ages of three and five (Escalera, 2009). The study categorized the children's activity into eight categories: bargaining, disputes, demonstration, narration, roleplay, sound play, teasing, and local. The study then counted how frequently discourse markers were used by male and female children within each of these activities.

The study reached several conclusions that indicated gender variation in the use of discourse markers. First and foremost, the study found that while many activities did not have an explicit gender difference in the frequency of discourse markers, there were gendered differences in the frequency of performing certain activities, which affected how many discourse markers

each gender used. Furthermore, the study found significant differences between the use of discourse markers in the activity of "role play." Male speakers were far more likely to use "exchange" or "action" discourse markers as opposed to the female speakers (Escalera, 2009). Therefore, the study found that the semantic role of certain discourse markers was impactful to the gendered use of these discourse markers.

Additionally, Natalia Ruiz-González conducted a study in Granada, Spain, to study the use of one particular discourse marker: "vamos" (2021). Although "vamos" was originally a movement verb, it has now shifted to also serving as a discourse marker in many contexts. Initially, the study found a slight preference for women to use "vamos" as a discourse marker, with youth having a strong preference for using it. However, this study found that the gendered use of "vamos" was semantically dependent. For example, male Spanish speakers had a much stronger preference of using "vamos" when the discourse marker was being used for rectifying purposes (Ruiz-González, 2021). As evident by these two studies, the semantic value of a discourse marker seems to be intrinsically intertwined with the gender variation in its use.

2.4 What is Duck Dynasty?

Duck Dynasty is a show that centers the Robertson family, a Louisianian family that resides in Western Monroe. The family runs a duck call manufacturing company, which has, in under two generations, created extreme wealth for the family. The show focuses on the family's roots in duck hunting and living off of the swamp, the new and growing manufacturing company, and the family dynamics between three generations of the family. Although the show primarily focuses on Phil Robertson, the grandfather of the family and the creator of the duck calls the family sells, and Willie Robertson, Phil Roberston's son and CEO of the manufacturing company, the show also a range of female family members; the most notable female members of the show are Willie Robertson's wife, Korie Robertson, his daughter, Sabie Robertson, and Phil Robertson's wife, "Miss" Kay.

Because the entire family has grown up in the same town, attended the same schools, attends the same churches, and is generally of the same socioeconomic status, the Robertson family provides a well-matched group to gather data from. The primary differences between each member of the Robertson family are the age of each member and the gender of each member. Because of this, differences in data collected from the family can be isolated to age and gender variation rather than socioeconomic/community differences.

2.5 Hypotheses

Studies that have already been done on the gendered use of discourse markers indicate that there may be certain semantic uses of discourse markers that prompt gender variation. Therefore, when conducting further research on the use of discourse markers, the semantic context of each discourse marker will most likely be important to any gender variation. Previous studies have researched the use of discourse markers by children or in languages other than

English; however, this paper will primarily focus on if and how gender affects the use of discourse markers in response to face-threatening acts in West Monroe, Louisiana.

To conduct research on this area, the television show *Duck Dynasty* will be the primary source of data. Because the family that the show centers around has a very patriarchal structure, the primary hypothesis of this paper is that the use of discourse markers will reflect these gender dynamics. For example, women may be more likely to use discourse markers that soften the tone of a rebuttal or disagreement when speaking to someone of a perceived higher social status (a man). On the other hand, men will be more willing to use discourse markers that convey strong agreement or disagreement in the same social settings. If the results of previous research hold up in this study, then women are expected to be more polite in certain social contexts than men.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Choosing the episodes

Duck Dynasty is a show that consists of five seasons, with each season featuring twelve or more episodes. As it was unfeasible to collect data from every episode of the show, this research instead focuses on ten specific episodes from *Duck Dynasty*. Since the show usually focuses on the male members of the family, the ten episodes referenced in this paper were chosen based on the prevalence of female speakers in the episode or based on interactions between speakers of different genders that created interesting social contexts. Below is a full list of *Duck Dynasty* episodes used in this paper [see appendix for explanations regarding the selection of each episode]:

1. Season 1 Episode 5 "Redneck Logic"
2. Season 1 Episode 11 "Daddy's Got a Gun"
3. Season 1 Episode 14 "Winner, Winner, Turkey Dinner"
4. Season 2 Episode 2 "Driving Miss Sadie"
5. Season 3 Episode 1 "Duck Season Eve"
6. Season 3 Episode 6 "Let's Go Hunting, Deer"
7. Season 3 Episode 8 "Duck Be a Lady"
8. Season 4 Episode 1 "Till Duck Do Us Part"
9. Season 4 Episode 2 "So You Think You Can Date?"
10. Season 5 Episode 1 "Boomerang Becca"

These episodes were also selected from different seasons of Duck Dynasty, ensuring that, although it was not possible to collect data from every episode, data is collected from every season of the show.

3.2 Choosing the discourse markers

Just as collecting data from every episode of *Duck Dynasty* was unfeasible, it was also not possible to study every single discourse marker used throughout the show. Because of this, discourse markers were chosen based on how frequently they were used, the contexts they appeared in, and potential groupings of discourse markers that were used interchangeably. Below is comprehensive list of all the discourse markers and discourse marker pairings that I collected and annotated for this study:

(9) Huh/uh
(10) Yeah, Yep
(11) Alright
(12) Well
(13) Look
(14) I mean
(15) Y'know
(16) Oh

3.3 Factors affecting data collection

First and foremost, *Duck Dynasty* is a reality television show. Because of this, although the cast of the show is not reading directly from scripts, certain events that happen in different episodes are scripted to occur. For example, in S01E11, Willie goes hunting with his daughter Sadie's new boyfriend. Willie is clearly playing up the stereotype of an "overprotective father." However, while that part of the script may be scripted, the words Willie uses to convey this stereotype are not scripted.

Additionally, it was necessary to decide what data besides type of discourse marker and gender of the speaker was necessary to collect. For the sake of this study, speaker gender, gender of other participants of the conversation, type of discourse marker, if that discourse marker was paired with any other discourse markers, and the semantic context for each discourse marker was recorded. There were approximately 400 tokens of data collected for the ten aforementioned episodes of Duck Dynasty.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Data

Discourse Marker	Times used by female speakers	Times used by male speakers	Total times used
I mean	13	44	56
Y'know	11	27	38

Oh	20	48	68
Look	0	20	20
Well	32	43	75
Alright	7	34	41
Yeah	3	61	64
Huh/uh	0	8	8
Total	86	285	371

Table 2. Data collected from *Duck Dynasty*.

As seen in Table 2, I collected approximately 3 times as many tokens from male speakers of the show than women due to a difference in screen time (despite my efforts to minimize this disparity). However, by dividing the tokens collected from male speakers by 3, we can compare these results to the tokens collected by female speakers to accurately test if there is gender variation in the use of these discourse markers.

4.2 General findings

Based on the raw data, there were several preliminary patterns that appeared. One of the first discourse markers that showed gender variation was "oh." Although both men and women used the discourse marker, the way it was used varied. Women used "oh" slightly more than male speakers. Although I collected 48 tokens of men using "oh," when I divided this number by 3.3 (since there were 3.3 times more tokens collected from male speakers than female speakers), I found that men had 14.5 tokens of "oh" compared to the 20 tokens collected from women. Additionally, male speakers almost always used "oh" as a part of a phrase rather than a standalone discourse marker. For example, "oh yeah" or "oh boy" were phrases almost exclusively used by men, and these phrases made up the majority of male use of "oh." In most contexts where men used "oh," "oh" was used to lessen the impact of a mistake or disagreement in a conversation with another man.

(17) "Oh, I would."   Giving a contradictory opinion to another man [S01:E11, 6:49, Si]
(18) "Oh boy."   Expressing exasperation at a situation [S01:E11, 6:13, Si]
Contrarily, women used "oh" as a standalone often to indicate surprise (upon learning new information). There was no change in the use of the discourse marker for women dependent on the gender of their conversation partner. Of the 20 times women used "oh" in *Duck Dynasty*, 7 occurred in conversations with other women and 13 occurred in conversations with men.

Another set of discourse markers that was used equally by female and male speakers was "y'know" and "I mean." Members of the Robertson family used these discourse markers to

emphasize a statement or qualify an opinion. Both of these discourse markers also were used at the beginning, middle, and end of phrases by both genders.

(19) "Y'know, it comes easy if you weren't down there building the doggone thing."

[S01:E05, 3:21, Phil]

(20) "It's just like, y'know, I'm the man, you're the woman"   [S01:E05, 4:50, Kay]

(21) "I mean, you've got to meet the boy, y'know."   [S01:E11, 4:36, Si]

In (19), Phil uses "y'know" to emphasize his exasperation with the actions of Willie, who was "down there building the doggone thing." Miss Kay uses "y'know" in (20) to qualify that the statement that follows the discourse marker is something she believes to be common sense or noncontroversial. Si uses "y'know" the same way in (21) to present an opinion in a manner that shows the opinion he is delivering is not one that he wants to be controversial. I found the three ways that "y'know" appears above to be present for both male and female speakers, and the same uses applied to the discourse marker "I mean" in the data.

"Well" was another discourse marker used by both genders to display reluctance in a particular phrase, though it was used much more frequently by female speakers. All three of these discourse markers were also used quite often in the interview settings between the camera crew (outsiders to the community) and one member of the *Duck Dynasty* cast.

(22) "Well, I'm sure you're gonna like him."   [S01:E11, 6:02, Korie]

Korie says (22) in response to Willie's plan to intimidate his daughter's new boyfriend. Although she agrees to let Willie do whatever he wants, Korie uses "well" several times throughout the exchange to show her reluctance to go along with Willie's antics.

One discourse marker that showed very clear gender variation was the discourse marker "look." It was used exclusively by men within the context of *Duck Dynasty*, especially as a part of the phrase "look here." The most common contexts in which I found the discourse marker "look" were in the semantic contexts of interrupting others' conversations, strong disagreement, or rebuttal.

(23) "Alright, look here."   [S01:E11, 7:27, Willie]

(24) "Look here, hey, I wasn't all that bad."   [S01:E11, 12:30, Si]

In (23), Willie uses "look here" to interrupt a conversation the other Robertson men were having and tell them to be quiet. Si uses "look here" in (24) to strongly disagree with Phil's opinion about Si's childhood behavior.

There were no results in the data that showed female speakers on the show using any discourse markers to express strong disagreement or to cut others off.

5. DISCUSSION

The differences in the ways male and female speakers in *Duck Dynasty* use discourse markers is better understood when determining how different people choose strategies to minimize (or not minimize) the loss in different situations. These situations are impacted by gender of the speaker, gender of the other participants in a conversation, and the implicit hierarchy that exists between cast members.

There are several aspects of the hierarchy that are most impactful to the interactions between members of the Roberston family: gender, age, and activity context. The family runs in a patriarchal hierarchy where the women are expected to remain in the house and tend to the home while the men are expected to be the breadwinners of the family. Additionally, the family generally defers to the grandparents (the oldest family members) as having more authority in social contexts. Finally, activity context matters for the hierarchy that exists (primarily between the men of the family). For example, when the men are working in the warehouse, Willie as the CEO of the company has authority. However, when the Robertson men go hunting, the men who are better at hunting become implicit leaders, subverting the hierarchy that exists within the warehouse. The impact of age, gender, and activity context in determining the strategy each member of *Duck Dynasty* chooses when trying to minimize face loss.

In one instance, Phil Roberston (the grandfather) disagrees with the other Roberston men while building/repairing a piece of hunting equipment:

(17) "I mean, it can be fixed"   [S01:E05, 2:54, Phil]

Phil Roberston has several different strategies he could choose to employ in this situation that relate to the several different hierarchies at work in this scenario. Phil is the oldest in the group, so he has the most authority in the age hierarchy. There are no women in this conversation, so the gender hierarchy is not as much of an impact in this particular interaction. The activity context, however, subverts Phil's uncontested authority that comes from the age hierarchy because the particular activity the Roberston men are doing (building or repairing) is not Phil's best activity (e.g., he is better at hunting; see episode 5: "Redneck Logic"). Therefore, because Phil's authority is not uncontested in this context, he evaluates the following options for minimizing loss to his face while disagreeing with the rest of the men:
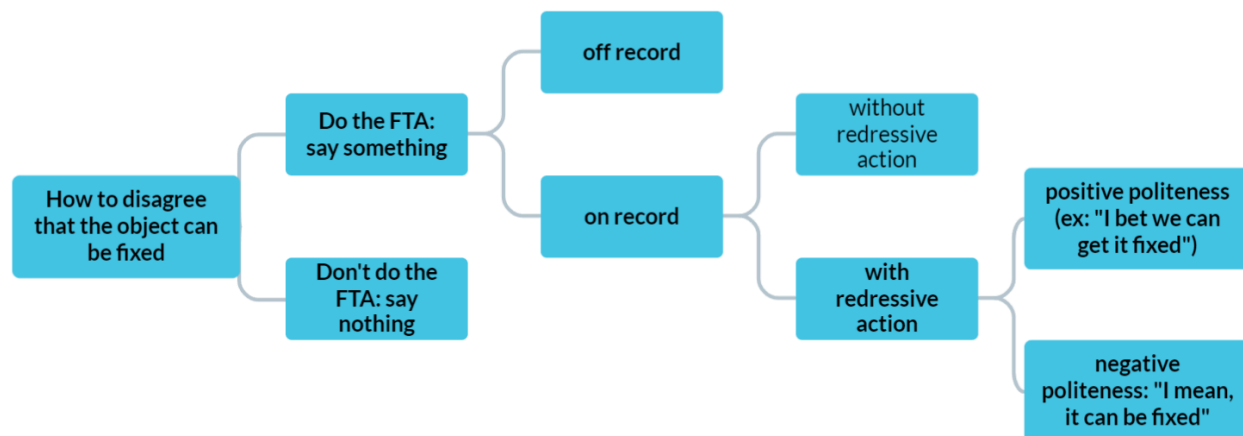
Figure 3. Circumstances determining Phil's statements, adapted from Brown & Levinson, 2006, pg. 69

Phil chooses to use negative politeness, which preserves the other men's negative face; that is, Phil focuses on not imposing his authority on the other men. If he had taken a friendlier approach that was meant to minimize the loss of positive face of the members of the conversation, he would be using the positive politeness strategy. Additionally, if his authority was uncontested and Phil did not want to preserve any face of the other men, he could have taken no redressive action and just said "it can be fixed" without any discourse marker. In this scenario, the discourse marker "I mean" acts as redressive action to perform negative politeness.

   However, there are some situations in which Robertson men employ a mix of strategies to both assert authority and to use positive or negative politeness. For example, when the uncle Si (the second oldest male in the family) is telling off the other men in the warehouse, he says:
   "Look here, don't get in on the nap, boys"
This sentence uses "Look here" which is an assertive use of discourse markers. This phrase alone seems to indicate that Si would be using no redressive action when performing a face-threatening act to the other men. However, the use of "boys" seems to be an example of positive politeness as it creates a sense of camaraderie or friendliness in Si's admonition of the other men. Therefore, statement by Si seems to be a combination of two statements or two possible strategies:
   (18) "Look here, don't get in on the nap"   No redressive action [S01:E05, 7:26, Si]
   (19) "Don't get in on the nap, boys."   Positive politeness [S01:E05, 7:26, Si]
The two strategies used could once again be a result of the hierarchies within the families. Si is one of the oldest in the family and therefore should have authority over the other men in the warehouse. This context would explain why Si might not need to use redressive action when addressing the other men. However, this interaction occurs in the warehouse, where Si is not the CEO or leader of the business. Therefore, it also makes sense for Si to employ a politeness strategy since he is not the undisputed authority in the situation. In addition to age and activity context, gender is another potential factor within familial interactions which did not affect Si or Phil's statements.

   However, in interactions between Korie Robertson and her husband Willie, gender dynamics are influential to the strategies Korie uses to minimize loss of face. When Sadie (Korie and Willie's daughter) gets her first date to a school dance, Willie gets upset that Korie and Sadie did not have him vet her date, thus "undermining" his authority in the household. In response, Korie says:
   (20) "I mean, it's not like they're getting married"   [S01:E11, 5:24, Korie]
Previously, Phil used "I mean" as redressive action to minimize the face loss to the other men he was talking to because he was not the authority in a particular activity context. For Korie, "I mean" is also a redressive action, but the use of redressive action is not caused by the activity context. In fact, because Korie is a homemaker and responsible for childcare, Korie should be

considered the authority in the activity context of parenting choices. However, the gender hierarchy within the Robertson makes it so that Korie is still not an authority over Willie even in activity contexts that should give her authority and thus she uses redressive action with discourse markers when disagreeing with Willie. Whereas Korie uses "I mean" as negative politeness (to not impede or overstep the authority of another person), she also uses positive politeness when subtly disagreeing with Willie's behavior.

When Willie first meets Sadie's date and decides to take him out hunting to test him, Korie says:

(21) "Oh no, babe, do not scare him"   [S01:E11, 6:07, Korie]

Instead of saying "do not scare him" as an order without redressive action, Korie adds "oh no" and "babe" to minimize the loss to Willie's face caused by her disagreement. Both of these discourse markers are meant to display the good relationship between Korie and Willie, implicitly showing that Korie is still on Willie's side even though she's chastising him in the moment. Thus, Korie uses a positive politeness strategy to disagree with Willie's actions.

Although Table 2 accurately displays the quantitative results of my data collection, I needed to perform a qualitative analysis of the tokens to understand why certain variation occurred. For example, the table shows that female Robertsons never used "look" as a discourse marker, but the qualitative analysis of the data shows that this occurred because "look" was used to express strong disagreement or to interrupt, which was not a language strategy used by women in the Robertson family. The discourse markers used by the Robertson women were used because they provided redressive action to FTAs.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The data collected from ten episodes of *Duck Dynasty* was able to find several gender variations: men exclusively used the discourse marker "look" or "look here" and women were more likely to use "oh" as a standalone discourse marker. While the other discourse markers were used by both men and women, the strategies to minimize face loss that women and men used throughout the show show additional gender variation in the use of these discourse markers.

Three social factors affected the familial hierarchy of the Roberston family: age, gender, and activity context. When Robertson men were using discourse markers, the gender of the other participants of a conversation affected what strategies for dealing with face-threatening acts they used. If the other participants were male, the male speaker would use age or activity context to guide whether or not they should use redressive action when performing a FTA. Conversely, they did not need to consider age or activity context when the other participants were female because the male speaker would implicitly hold more authority due to the patriarchal nature of the family. When a woman was the speaker in a conversation, redressive action was always used when disagreeing with male family members due to the familial power dynamics. Therefore, women did not use discourse markers such as "look" which were used to perform FTAs without redressive action. If I conducted the same research on a family without a patriarchal hierarchy, how would the results change? Perhaps women in this hypothetical family would be more

willing to perform FTAs, so the data would show no gender variation in the use of discourse markers. Despite this difference in strategies to use FTAs, Robertson men and women both used positive and negative politeness. Therefore, the source of the gender variation in the use of discourse markers seems to be a difference in how men and women deal with FTAs rather than any inherent properties of a discourse marker.

Since discourse markers can have many meanings (for example, "oh" can express surprise, disappointment, sadness, etc.), I expect that it will be difficult for linguists to find gender variation in the use of discourse markers with only a quantitative analysis. Luckily, I collected data on "look," which only has one use in the show *Duck Dynasty*, so I was able to see a clear gender variation. However, the other gender variations I found were only visible after doing a qualitative analysis of the strategies to minimize FTAs that each speaker used. Further research into how women that have different responses to FTAs use discourse markers might be more helpful in studying how variation in discourse marker use is tied to politeness strategies rather than gender. Additionally, since the gender variation in the use of discourse markers appears to be tied to politeness strategies, sociolinguistic research into how different politeness strategies are taught or learned (since both the Robertson men and women employed politeness strategies) could determine why all variation occurs in politeness strategies in the use of discourse markers.

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Appendix

Episode list:

1. Season 1 Episode 5 "Redneck Logic" - This episode is dominated by the female speakers of the show as it focuses on how the women of the family run a yard sale.
2. Season 1 Episode 11 "Daddy's Got a Gun" - The main storyline of this episode centers around one of the granddaughters of the family and her new boyfriend. Because of this, there is a lot of interaction between the granddaughter and her grandfather and uncles.
3. Season 1 Episode 14 "Winner, Winner, Turkey Dinner" - In this episode, a competition (cook off) between the male and female members of the family is the main plotpoint, causing lots of interactions between male and female speakers of Louisianian English.
4. Season 2 Episode 2 "Driving Miss Sadie" - One of the granddaughters, Sadie, is taught how to drive by several male members of the family. Additionally, one of the grandsons goes on a chaperoned date. Both of these events create different social contexts in which female and male speakers are interacting.
5. Season 3 Episode 1 "Duck Season Eve" - In this episode, the whole family goes camping and a disagreement occurs between the grandmother and grandfather of the family. This episode provides data from speakers of all age ranges, as the whole family is camping, as well as the context of a disagreement in the use of discourse markers.
6. Season 3 Episode 6 "Let's Go Hunting, Deer" - Two male members of the family teach their wives how to hunt in this episode. Once again, this provides data on different interactions between male and female speakers, including several members of the family who have not been featured in the show much up until this point.
7. Season 3 Episode 8 "Duck Be a Lady" - One of the granddaughters goes homecoming dress shopping with her dad supervising the dress choices. This episode provides one of the first interactions solely between a father and daughter in Duck Dynasty.
8. Season 4 Episode 1 "Till Duck Do Us Part" - In this episode, the family holds a wedding vow renewal ceremony for the grandparents. The wedding vow renewal ceremony shows how the different speakers of the show use discourse markers in a more "formal" setting.
9. Season 4 Episode 2 "So You Think You Can Date?" - The main events of this episode are that one of the male members of the family goes on a date and the grandfather tries to teach the granddaughters how to fish. The episode provides a

look into intergenerational interactions between speakers of English in Western Monroe.

10. Season 5 Episode 1 "Boomerang Becca" - This episode features the introduction of an adopted daughter into the family, the first unmarried adult woman. She is also the first woman to have a job outside of the family. Her unique social context within the family provides an avenue to collect more data on discourse markers.