'FECK OFF!'

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
IMPOLITENESS, LAUGHTER AND HUMOUR IN THE
BRITISH-IRISH SITCOMS *FATHER TED*, *BLACK BOOKS*
AND *THE IT CROWD*

By

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ABSTRACT

Despite the pervasive presence of linguistic impoliteness in many of Britain's most celebrated situation comedies, there has been little research on the relationship between impoliteness and humour in the sitcom. Likewise, while research has identified entertainment as an outcome of impoliteness, there has been little emphasis on humour.

The present research explores the relationship between linguistic impoliteness and humour in 54 episodes of the BAFTA-winning British-Irish sitcoms *Father Ted*, *Black Books* and *The IT Crowd* (Channel4).

In order to address earlier stylistic studies' over-reliance on researcher intuition in identifying humour, the study uses audience laughter as confirmation of successful humour uptake. Applying a triangulated impoliteness analysis using the frameworks of Spencer-Oatey (2000), Culpeper (2011) and Leech (2014), the study finds that impoliteness is prevalent in the sitcoms studied, with 151 impolite utterances per hour and an average of 2.5 impolite utterances per minute. Exploring the distribution of impoliteness strategies, the results show a clear preference for impoliteness that attacks freedom and personal qualities. Results also showed that character-led differences in impoliteness contribute to characterisation. Most importantly, the thesis finds a statistically significant relationship between utterances containing impoliteness and audience laughter responses, pointing to a relationship between impoliteness and humour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF IMAGES

1 INTRODUCTION

An old man sits in an armchair. He is wearing the attire of a Catholic priest but he is dirty and dishevelled. His knitted waistcoat is covered in various dark stains and what's left of his hair is in disarray. The chair in which he sits is tattered and on the wall behind him are myriad questionable stains in hues of brown and black. On the table beside him are various bottles of alcohol – most of which are empty.

A housekeeper, wearing a pinafore over a floral blouse, offers the priest a cup of tea from a delicate china teacup. Leaning close to him and holding the cup of tea before his face, she asks, "And what do you say to a cup?"

The priest shouts, "Feck off, cup!"

The audience laugh for 4.69 seconds.

Moments later, when the housekeeper has set the unwanted teacup beside the elderly priest, he picks it up and hurls it at her head, shouting, "Feck off!"

Had the cup hit her, it would likely have caused her significant physical harm. At it happens, he misses and we hear the cup shatter against the wall behind her.

The audience laugh for 2.37 seconds.

The studio audience watching this scene from the British-Irish sitcom *Father Ted* clearly find these maximally impolite utterances and actions from the notorious Father Jack Hackett amusing. That Mrs Doyle, the housekeeper, is an undeserving victim of his temper does not appear to hamper the audience's enjoyment of the interaction. It would appear that in this scene, impoliteness is functioning as a humour device, with the successful humour uptake being communicated through the studio audience's laughter. That the sitcom producers (director, writer, editor etc) have included the studio audience laughter response in the audio track of the episode suggests that they intend to cue the viewer at home into interpreting this scene as humorous, rather than frightening or offensive.

The impolite catchphrases that the series spawned ('feck off!' 'arse!' 'go on, go on, go on') (Wickham 2014:857) and the enduring popularity in British and Irish culture of Father Jack Hackett and the other impolite characters from *Father Ted* (Harrison 2015) point

towards a British-Irish cultural appreciation for humour derived from verbal aggression. However, no study has yet explored the relationship between linguistic impoliteness and audience laughter in the sitcom.

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between impoliteness, audience laughter and humour in British sitcoms, using data from *Father Ted (Channel 4, 1995-1998)*, *Black Books* (Channel 4, 2000-2004) and *The IT Crowd (Channel 4, 2006-2013).* Taking a pragmatic-stylistic approach, this study is the first large-scale mixed methods exploration of the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter in the sitcom and the first study to test the statistical significance of the relationship between impoliteness in dramatic dialogue and audience laughter response.

Impoliteness has been defined variously as "behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context" (Locher and Bousfield 2008:3), "prototypically non-cooperative or competitive communicative behaviour which destabilises the personal relationships of the interacting individuals" (Kienpointner 1997:259), and as "behaviour assessed by the hearer as threatening her or his face or social identity and infringing the norms of appropriate behaviour that prevail in particular contexts and among particular interlocutors" (Holmes et al 2008:196). For many years, the wealth of pragmatic research into politeness eclipsed the minimal interest in impoliteness (Toddington 2015:1). Only in the last two decades has research into impoliteness come to the fore where, in Western, English-focused studies, it is now the subject of numerous monographs (e.g. Bousfield 2008, Bousfield and Locher 2008, Culpeper 2011, Jamet and Jobert 2013, Kadar 2017, Culpeper et al 2017), the topic of a research group (Linguistic (Im)politeness Research Group) and the subject of a biennial conference (Linguistic Impoliteness and Rudeness Conference). The early reticence with regards studying impoliteness is surprising given the salience of impoliteness in society; Culpeper notes that, in spoken and written interaction, whether online, in person, in radio, film or television, "impoliteness is of great social importance. It is salient in the consciousness of the general public" (Culpeper 2011:xii). Indeed, in certain contexts, transgressions of politeness expectations are foregrounded against expectations of behaviour, as Culpeper states, "impoliteness casts a much larger shadow than its frequency of usage would suggest. Behaviours and expressions considered impolite are more noticed and discussed than politeness" (Culpeper 2011:131).

Impoliteness can have serious consequences. In the UK, television and radio media are regulated by the Office of Communications (Ofcom) who have the power to fine

broadcasters for the broadcast of offensive content to be unsuitable for the broadcast audience, time, and/or context. (Ofcom 2018). This offensive content can include linguistic impoliteness, such as the use of taboo terms, e.g. 'fuck' and 'bastard'.

Linguistic impoliteness can sometimes constitute criminal behaviour, the UK "the legal definition of antisocial behaviour in the UK revolves around consequences for the target – antisocial behaviour involves somebody acting 'in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress' (Crime and Disorder act 1998:1.1)" (Culpeper 2011:21). The Malicious Communications Act prohibits "the sending to another of any article which is indecent or grossly offensive, or which conveys a threat, or which is false, provided there is an intent to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient" (CPS 2018:np). This covers both written and online communication and is punishable by up to two years' imprisonment (CPS 2018:np).

Impoliteness is hugely important in modern culture, demonstrated by the British public's fascination in political scandals involving impoliteness, such as 'Bigot-gate' (Curtis 2010) and 'Plebgate' (BBC 2014). As Culpeper notes, "Impoliteness is an important aspect of social life, and indeed plays a central role in many discourses (from military recruit training to exploitative TV shows), discourses which are rarely described in detail" (Culpeper 2011:xiii). Indeed, the use of impoliteness on scripted comedy television is an area which has not yet been widely researched.

1.1 CONNECTING IMPOLITENESS AND HUMOUR

Although Culpeper (2011) has proposed that impoliteness can be entertaining, and in his 2014 monograph Leech states "there is little doubt that impolite behaviour can be entertaining as a spectator sport" (2014: 220), as Toddington (2015) notes, there have been few studies looking specifically at the humorous aspect of the entertainment potential of impoliteness. Though the high-level category of entertainment has been explored in relation to impoliteness in a number of television genres, they have mainly been docu-reality shows such as *Soldier Girls* (Culpeper 1996), *The Clampers, Car Wars, Soldiers to Be, Redcaps, Raw Blues* and *Boiling Point* (Bousfield 2008), talent competitions such as *American Idol* and *The X-Factor* (Culpeper and Holmes 2013) or quiz shows e.g. *The Weakest Link* (Culpeper 2005, 2011). Explicit comedy genres such as stand-up, sitcoms and sketch shows have been mostly neglected and the focus on

'entertainment' has meant that the specifically humorous potential of impoliteness has been ignored.

The lack of research into the relationship between impoliteness and humour is surprising given the inherent similarities in their definition. As illustration of this, I present Culpeper's (2011) definition of impoliteness with Brett Mills[1]' definition of incongruous humour:

> "Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered 'impolite' – when they **conflict** with how one **expects** them to be, how one wants them to be, and/or how one thinks they ought to be […]"
>
> (Culpeper 2011:23, emphasis added)

> "Humour is seen to arise from the **disparity** between the ways in which things are **expected** to be and how they actually are."
>
> (Mills 2005:83, emphasis added)

Both of these definitions rely on a conflict between expectations and experiences. That is, both humour and impoliteness are occasioned when we experience or perceive an action or utterance that contrasts with contextual expectations and cultural norms of behaviour. The example above from *Father Ted* is an illustration of this. Given the priestly occupation and age of Jack and the positive actions of Mrs Doyle offering refreshments, the audience would not expect a maximally impolite response and this gives rise to incongruous humour.

The most important point of similarity is that both impoliteness and humour are defined by their reliance upon an audience/hearer appraisal that what has occurred is contrary to expectations, built upon schematic knowledge of the world. In other words, there is a core departure between *the expected* and *the experienced.* Indeed, Dynel argues that "the incongruity theory of humour gives the best insight into the workings of humorous impoliteness from a linguistic perspective" (2013b:105). Neurological evidence supports this proposal; Shibata et al. (2014) conducted an fMRI study that found the area of the brain activated in joke processing is the same area activated in incongruity detection.

Though the exploration of impoliteness as a mechanism for humour in fiction in the field of stylistics is only now gaining momentum, there appears to be a cultural appreciation for impoliteness between fictional characters that has continued for centuries. 17th century audiences of William Congreve's plays "relished the moments of verbal chaos in

which the rules of good breeding were wilfully transgressed. […] For Restoration dramatists, staging conventionalised linguistic impoliteness constituted one of the richest sources of comic effects" (Mandon-Hunter 2013:95). Ofcom found in a 2016 study that even participants who did not like the use of taboo or offensive language were more willing to accept it if it occurred in a comedy programme. This suggests there is a link in the minds of the viewing public between offensive language and comedies.

Though there has been little research on the role of impoliteness as a humour trigger in the sitcom, Dynel's recent publications linking impoliteness with humour (2011b, 2012, 2013a, 2013b,) have exemplified the investigative potential of such studies. Dynel (2013) explores the use of impoliteness to trigger humour in the American TV series *House MD* and proposes the concept of 'disaffiliative humour', defined as "conversational humour which necessarily carries genuine aggression" (2013:112). Often, disaffiliative talk at the character-viewer level achieves humour for the viewer but it rarely achieves a visible humour reaction from the characters (2013:121, 135-136). In her study, she highlights how House's acerbic dialogue generates humour for the viewer. A possible criticism of this otherwise indispensable work is that humour is attributed to the series and particular instances of dialogue without the confirmation of an audience or second party. As a result, the selected examples of humorous disaffiliative exchange are not verified by any means other than the researcher's interpretation. Toddington's doctoral thesis (2015), which explores impoliteness and humour in the romantic comedy '*As Good as it Gets',* similarly suffers from an absence of humour uptake confirmation beyond that of the researcher's intuition. She argues that "the film's classification as a 'comedy' implies that we are being invited to view [the content] as humorous" (2015:5), but concedes that her analysis of humour is "in itself a highly subjective endeavour" (2015:5).

Research on the sitcom that *has* taken the laughter of the audience into account comes from Stokoe (2008), who explores interactional breaches and dispreferred adjacency pair parts in the US sitcom *Friends*. Stokoe's study does not explicitly set out to address the issue of *impoliteness* but many of the dispreferred responses (such as refusals, apology rejections etc.) arguably meet the criteria of linguistic impoliteness of Leech's (2014) impoliteness framework. Using the laughter of the audience to confirm the successful humour uptake of the material, she notes that these dispreferred responses function as a source of humour for the audience. This study represents an interesting development as no other studies have been found that combine an analysis of

dispreferred responses with transcribed audience laughter. However, the method of transcription used is far from ideal:

A: [HEH HEH HEH HEH heh heh heh [heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh]
A: HEH HEH HEH HEH heh heh heh heh heh [heh] heh
(Turns 28-29 and 41, Stokoe 2008:300-301)

The conventions of transcription that Stokoe uses were originally developed in the field of Conversation Analysis for single-speaker utterances within a conversation (Jefferson 1985) and thus the transcription of individual aspirated peals of laughter found in Stokoe's paper is not wholly representative of the sounds made by the hundreds of humans in the audience on the recordings. Additionally, these laughter bursts are difficult to objectively compare with regards to length and intensity.

Building on Dynel's (2013) work, I intend to explore impoliteness in relation to humour but to develop the methodology so that I am studying (1) material explicitly packaged as humorous but, as Stokoe (2008) does, (2) using audience laughter response to identify utterances that have succeeded in transmitting humour, while building on Stokoe's work by using (3) quantitative methods of recording laughter to allow for more objective comparison and (4) using binary presence/absence of audience laughter in order to allow for statistical testing.

The idea that audience laughter can be taken as a sign of the successful communication of humour is based upon social psychological research (e.g. Platow et al. 2005, Cialdini 1993) which finds a correspondence between humour ratings and audience laughter. As Lawson et al. state, "Audience members' unconstrained laughter is valid social proof of the humorous quality of material" (Lawson et al. 1998:244).

1.2 DATA SET

The data set consists of three British-Irish sitcoms broadcast by the UK broadcaster Channel 4. They are *Father Ted* (1995-1998), *Black Books* (2000-2004) and *The IT Crowd* (2006-2013). The data set consists of a total of 18 episodes from each programme – constituting 54 episodes in total and approximately 27 hours of data. Each episode was transcribed, resulting in 141,114 words of data, which I consider to be a small specialised corpus.

There are many reasons why I chose the sitcom as my data set, among them that the sitcom is (by its very name) a genre marketed as one of comedy. Sitcom is the only comedy genre that involves character-character interactions and (in the case of classic sitcoms) audible audience laughter. Also, it continues to be a popular genre of television. It was important to my study that the data set be likely to contain at least some impoliteness to enable a quantitative test of the association between impoliteness and audience laughter. Many US studies have shown the sitcom to be the television genre with the most impoliteness (Greenberg et al 1980, Potter and Ware 1987a, Potter and Vaughan 1997 and Glascock 2008). Thus, sitcom emerged not only as a genre likely to contain impoliteness and audience laughter but also as an area for which British data was lacking.

Impoliteness is a way in to understanding specific cultures: as Culpeper notes, "belonging to a social group is part and parcel of accepting the norms that constitute it […] impoliteness metadiscourse (e.g. condemning an impoliteness behaviour, upholding a rule) can be driven by the need to demonstrate one's orientation to a group and the norms by which it is constituted" (Culpeper 2011:132). Thus, adherence to the language norms that govern impoliteness in a particular culture can suggest an orientation to the dominant group's language ideologies. Breaking these norms can be seen as an act of rebellion and I will discuss the role of sitcom as a tool of social disruption in Chapter 2. Similarly, it has been argued that sitcoms are reflective of cultures – Mills argues that the sitcom "becomes one of the ways in which [a] culture defines itself" (2005:9). Indeed, sitcom content can provide clues as to shared cultural taboos and the dominant ideology, "the kinds of jokes which exist in sitcom reveal that nation's mass consciousness and the aspects and events of the world it deems acceptable to laugh at" (Mills 2005:8). Likewise, Dynel argues that when impoliteness provides disaffiliative humour in television, there is a potential for bonding between recipients over their shared cultural taboos which are being broken in the service of comedy (Dynel 2013:114).

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND METHOD

This research aimed to explore the use of impoliteness in the sitcom with particular emphasis on the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter in order to explore the humorous potential of offensive language.

In order to code content in the sitcom data set as constituting impoliteness, I applied three frameworks to the data set; Firstly, the Brown and Levinson-inspired framework proposed by Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008). This framework seeks to update Brown and Levinson's conceptualisation of positive and negative face (1978/1987) in replacing them with 'Sociality Rights' and 'Face'. Culpeper (2011:26) has praised Spencer-Oatey's framework for its use in empirical research and its application to a variety of non-Western cultures. Jonathan Culpeper's own (2011) conceptualisation of impoliteness is the second framework applied to the data set. This framework marks a departure from Culpeper's earlier impoliteness frameworks that had relied greatly on Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) politeness framework and differentiates between conventionalised and implicational impoliteness. Geoffrey Leech's (2014) impoliteness framework is a re-working of that proposed in his 1983 work and constitutes the General Strategy of Impoliteness which consists of 10 maxims for impoliteness with their associated speech acts and three additional categories of rudeness (the use of taboo words), banter (or mock-impoliteness) and irony (sarcasm). All 54 episodes in the data set were analysed according to the three impoliteness frameworks. Three frameworks were chosen in order to provide data triangulation but also to enable a comparison of the outcomes of applying three frameworks taking different theoretical standpoints to the data. The presence/absence of audience laughter during or following every utterance (even those not coded as containing impoliteness) was recorded in addition to the length of each laughter burst and (if more than one burst emanated from one utterance), the word that triggered the audience laughter.

This then allowed for:

1) The exploration of the prevalence of impoliteness, in order to establish how prominent impoliteness is in my British sitcom data
2) A comparison of the three frameworks' outcomes once applied to an extended data set within which I explored the most popular impoliteness strategies
3) The statistical testing of the strength of association between impoliteness presence/absence and audience laughter presence/absence
4) The testing of the most and least successful impoliteness strategies at generating audience laughter
5) The modelling (following Kantara 2010) of different characters' impoliteness 'blueprints' in an exploration of whether characters have individual impoliteness

styles and how this relates to their success at generating audience laughter and their enduring character identities.

It is perhaps worth noting that the impoliteness frameworks, humour theories and data set in this study emerge predominantly from Western scholarship and/or British-Irish culture. As such, this study does not seek to claim that findings of this research can be universally applied to all cultures. But this study uses data from British-Irish culture, as a starting point for the exploration of the humorous potential of impoliteness.

1.4 THESIS STRUCTURE

In **Chapter 2**, I provide a review of the relevant literature and in **Chapter 3**, I outline and defend my methodological decisions.

In ***Chapter 4: Prevalence of Impoliteness*** I report the results of the analysis of the prevalence of impoliteness, giving the average number of impolite utterances per hour and per episode, as well as the overall percentage of utterances that are coded by one or more of the frameworks as containing impoliteness. I give the results of the corpus analysis of taboo words using Ofcom's (2016) list of censored general swear words and in light of this, I discuss the response of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Request I placed with Ofcom regarding complaints made against the three programmes in the data set.

Chapter 5: Distribution of Impoliteness, explores how impoliteness strategies are distributed in my data set, as well as providing the first quantitative comparison of the outcomes of an extended data analysis using the impoliteness frameworks of Spencer-Oatey, Culpeper and Leech.

In ***Chapter 6: Relationship between Impoliteness and Audience Laughter***, I focus on the central argument of this thesis and report the results of the statistical testing of the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter. I also report the percentage of audience laughs that follow an impolite utterance and vice versa. I explore the impoliteness strategies that are the most and least successful at generating audience laughter.

Chapter 7: Characterisation and Impoliteness, analyses the dialogue of the protagonist characters from *Father Ted* and presents an impoliteness blueprint for each character made up of their strategy usage and their success at generating audience

laughter. Giving qualitative examples, I explore how each character's impoliteness blueprint contributes to the composition of their character.

Finally, in *Chapter 8*, I summarise the findings of the study and suggest areas for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

> "*That would be an ecumenical matter*. Yes, I can't think of any religious
> question that can't be answered by that. That's what I always say when
> people ask me questions. That's the great thing about Catholicism, it's so
> vague and nobody really knows what it's all about."
>
> - FATHER TED, EPISODE 2.3

2.1 IMPOLITENESS

Impoliteness has been described as parasitic upon politeness in two ways. Firstly, it is parasitic in its realisation because politeness is viewed as the unmarked, expected norm (e.g. in Terkourafi 2001) and impoliteness is an unexpected deviation from the norm of politeness. Secondly, it is parasitic in its theoretical tradition because "historically, the most prevalent and broadly applied models of impoliteness are those which are derived – parasitically – from the classic model of politeness espoused by Brown and Levinson (1987)" (Simpson and Bousfield 2017:165). On account of the theoretically parasitic nature of impoliteness, early explorations of the phenomenon (e.g. Culpeper 1996, Bousfield 2008), which functioned to carve out impoliteness as a new field of study, had to first lay out the field of politeness in order to introduce impoliteness. The field of impoliteness has since grown significantly and now functions as a related, but separate field from politeness. Thus, I will not seek to repeat the detailed outlines of the field of politeness as can be found in, for example, Eelen (2001) or Watts (2003). I give only the briefest of introductions to Brown and Levinson's politeness research, which is essential to the understanding of subsequent evolution of many impoliteness theories.

2.1.1 Brown and Levinson-Inspired Approach to Impoliteness

Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's [henceforth B&L's] classic approach to politeness (1978/1987), though widely critiqued (see Eelen 2001 for an overview), still

influences the field of politeness and impoliteness today. Indeed Eelen (2001:32) notes that "the names Brown and Levinson have become almost synonymous with the word 'politeness' itself". Brown and Levinson propose that divergences "from some highly rational, maximally efficient mode of communication" such as the conversational maxims proposed by Grice (1975) can be explained by politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987:55).

Brown and Levinson's conceptualisation of politeness, which they propose involves universals in the management of interactions, takes a 'face-based' approach. Adopting Goffman's conceptualisation of face (1967), B&L propose that "all competent adult members of a society have (and know each other to have) 'face'" which is defined as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [sic]" (1987:61).

In this theory, face consists of positive and negative face, whereby positive face concerns "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of by others) claimed by interactants" (1987:61) and negative face concerns "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (B&L 1987:61). Rational speakers will want their positive and negative face to be respected and upheld and, on the presumption of the mutual vulnerability of face, will seek to preserve others' faces in order to protect their own.

Some speech acts, such as an imperative/order, are intrinsically face threatening and these "Face Threatening Acts" (FTAs) (B&L 1987:60) will be managed in such a way that, unless the speaker is aiming for "maximum efficiency", he/she will try to "minimise the face threat of the FTA" (1987:60). The strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson for face threat management constitute one of the first taxonomies of politeness, and are shown in image 2-1 below:

Image 2-1- Brown and Levinson Politeness Strategies
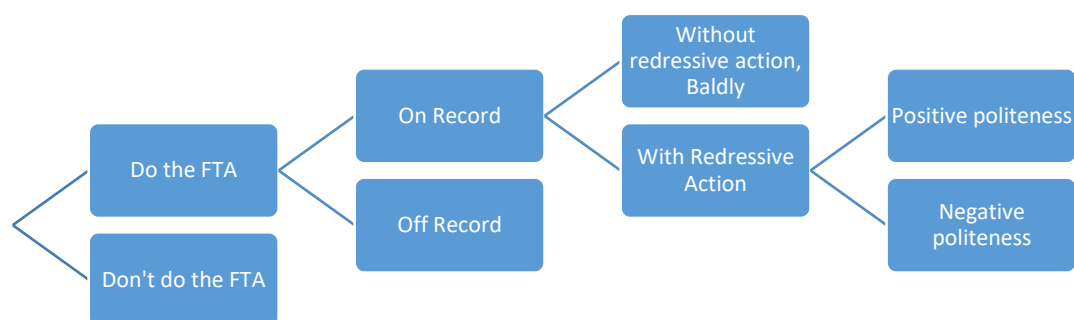
Brown and Levinson (1987:60)

Speakers intending to mitigate the face threat of an utterance can determine which strategy to use based upon the 'weightiness' of the FTA that needs to be communicated (see B&L 1987: 76–77).

Critics of B&L's model argue that Brown and Levinson over-state the universality of their approach to impoliteness (Gu 1990, Ide 1989), as well as neglecting situations where speakers aim to be intentionally threatening to face (Culpeper 1996). Bousfield defends B&L, stating that "despite the savaging that B&L have received in recent years, I genuinely believe that a work of such insight, magnitude and complexity still has a considerable amount to tell us" (2008:67). Indeed, several of the most influential impoliteness frameworks were developed as inversions or elaborations on Brown and Levinson's original framework. I will now briefly outline these approaches to impoliteness.

2.1.1.1   Culpeper (1996, 2003, 2005)

In 1996, Jonathan Culpeper published the paper *'Towards an anatomy of impoliteness'*, in which his research objective was to "answer Craig et al.'s (1986) call for a comprehensive treatment of face-attack strategies" (Culpeper 2011:7). Culpeper's 1996

framework defined impoliteness as "the use of strategies that are designed to have the opposite effect [to politeness] – that of social disruption. These strategies are oriented towards attacking face, an emotionally sensitive concept of the self" (Culpeper 1996:350).

Culpeper's unfamiliarity with Lachenicht's (1980) paper, which was published 16 years prior to Culpeper's and was the first to explore impoliteness as a subject of inquiry separate from politeness, makes the similarities between the two approaches all the more interesting. Lachenicht defined impoliteness as being "a rational attempt to 'hurt' or damage the addressee" (Lachenicht 1980:607, cited in Bousfield 2008:83) and like Lachenicht (1980), Culpeper conceived a framework of impoliteness by reversing the polarity of Brown and Levinson's framework. The result was five super-strategies for generating impoliteness:

(1) Bald on-record impoliteness
(2) Positive impoliteness
(3) Negative impoliteness
(4) Sarcasm or mock impoliteness (which includes the notion off-record impoliteness)
(5) Withhold politeness

Using extracts from *Macbeth* and docu-reality series *Soldier Girls,* Culpeper demonstrated that his impoliteness framework could be applied to the analysis of both fictional and non-fictional dialogue.

The "tremendous impact" of Culpeper's 1996 paper (Dynel 2013:163) is not to be underestimated. The paper led to "a flurry of academic research" which testified to the potential usefulness of impoliteness in the analysis of various types of discourse (Dynel 2015:335). Seminal though Culpeper's 1996 paper was, there have been a number of criticisms of the work, some of which are inherited from the source framework of Brown and Levinson (1987), "any weaknesses of that politeness model are (at least in part) carried over" to the impoliteness framework (Culpeper 2011:7). The central criticism of Culpeper's work is that the super strategies are concerned with "two unrelated criteria", namely "observing/flouting the Gricean maxims" (on-record and off-record) and "face orientation" which leads to the outcome that the strategies proposed by Culpeper are not mutually exclusive and so any one utterance can make use of more than one category (Dynel 2015:336). Furthermore, the dichotomy of positive and negative face is rendered

"superfluous" by the fact that "positive face orientation and negative face orientation merge in discourse" (Dynel 2015:336).

Retaining the basic structure of the framework proposed in 1996, Culpeper et al (2003) worked to remedy some of the weaknesses inherited from Brown and Levinson (Culpeper 2011:7). In particular, they addressed the issue of how impoliteness is used through longer stretches of discourse, how multiple strategies are combined and how interlocutors respond to impoliteness. In addition, they addressed prosody, looking in particular at intonation as a means of conveying impoliteness.

In 2005, Culpeper re-defined impoliteness, giving greater prominence to the role of intentions and intention recovery. Impoliteness, by this new definition, was more discursive and "is constructed in the interaction between speaker and hearer" (Culpeper 2011:38).

> "Impoliteness comes about when
> (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or
> (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs the behaviour as intentionally face-attacking,
> or a combination of (1) and (2)."
>
> (2005:38).

Though Culpeper later disregarded this emphasis on intentions and intentionality (see Culpeper 2011), the paper was one of the first to hypothesise a potential relationship between impoliteness and entertainment (2005:45). Using data from BBC quiz show *The Weakest Link*, Culpeper proposes that impoliteness can entertain via intrinsic and voyeuristic pleasure, as well as through audience feelings of superiority and safety (2005:45). The notion that audience perception of superiority generates entertainment is derived from the superiority approach to humour (see section 2.4.1). Though Culpeper spends little time exploring the humorous aspects of the data, his observation that "humour often involves impoliteness" (2005:46) suggests the possibility of the alignment of impoliteness and humour theories.

Culpeper's most recent framework for impoliteness (2011) adopts a hybrid conventionalisation-Gricean approach and is discussed in section 2.1.3.

2.1.1.2 Bousfield (2008a)

Taking a B&L-inspired approach to impoliteness in his (2008) monograph, Bousfield defines impoliteness as "the broad opposite of politeness, in that, rather than seeking to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs), impoliteness constitutes the communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face-threatening acts (FTAs) which are purposefully delivered:

(i)   Unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or

(ii)   With deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted."

(Bousfield 2008:21-72)

An important caveat to this definition is that in order for an utterance to be successful impoliteness, "the intention of the speaker to 'offend' (threaten/damage face) must be understood by those in a receiver role" (Bousfield 2008:72). Indeed, Bousfield claims intentionality is so important that "impoliteness does not exist where one, but not both of the participants (in a two-party interaction) intends/perceives face-threat." (2008a:72). Culpeper and Terkourafi (2017) argue that Bousfield's emphasis on intention is one of the limitations of his work. In particular, they argue that based on the empirical evidence from Culpeper (2011:50-53) and Gabriel (1998), it "it certainly clear that full intentionality is not a necessary condition of impoliteness" (Culpeper and Terkourafi 2017:203). Indeed, Culpeper's (2011) monograph further argues convincingly that intentionality is not needed in order for an act or utterance to be considered impolite.

2.1.1.3 Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008)

Spencer-Oatey's framework has been praised by Culpeper for being "broad, […] successfully deployed in empirical research involving various cultures" and for reflecting "research in social psychology" and having been "successfully applied to impoliteness" (2011:26). Taking into consideration the arguments of Matsumoto (1988), Ide (1989) and Mao (1994) who criticise Brown and Levinson's framework for inadequately attending to the face wants of non-western cultures, for failing to encompass group-centred social contexts, and for focusing on strategy within the assumption that there are neutral forms

in all languages, Spencer-Oatey proposes "a modified framework for conceptualising face and rapport" (Spencer-Oatey 2008:13):

> "I propose a modified [version of B&L's] framework for conceptualising face and rapport. I maintain that B&L's conceptualisation of positive face has been underspecified and that the concerns they identify as negative face issues are not necessarily face concerns at all. I propose instead that rapport management (the management of harmony-disharmony among people) involves two main components: the management of face and the management of sociality rights" (Spencer-Oatey 2000:13).

For Spencer-Oatey, face is defined similarly to Goffman's original conceptualisation, "face is associated with personal/social value and is concerned with people's sense of worth, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on." (2000:14) and sociality rights are "concerned with personal/social expectancies and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration, social inclusion/exclusion and so on" (2000:14). The personal/independent perspective of people's wants is addressed by quality face and equity rights. The social/interdependent perspective of wants is addressed by identity face and association rights (2000:15). Table 2-1 below gives the definitions of the two types of face and the two types of sociality rights that Spencer-Oatey proposes. These will be discussed again in greater detail in section 3.5.2:

Table 2-1- Spencer-Oatey's Framework

Face	Quality Face	"We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance etc."
	Identity Face	"We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend."
Sociality Rights	Equity Rights	"We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon, that we are not unfairly ordered about, and that we are not taken advantage of or exploited."
	Association Rights	"We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of

		relationship we have with them […] (e.g. not ignored on the one hand, but not overwhelmed on the other). They also relate to affective association-dissociation (the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests)."

Spencer-Oatey (2008:14)

Which strategy (if any) a speaker uses will be determined by three elements:

1) The speaker's rapport orientation (see below)
2) Contextual variables (such as relationship between participants, activity type in progress, content of the message)
3) Pragmatic principles and conventions which include the pragmalinguistic conventions and the sociopragmatic principles

(Spencer-Oatey 2008:33)

A speaker's rapport orientation is key in determining the types of linguistic strategies to be used. There are four rapport orientations that a speaker might hold (Spencer-Oatey 2008:31-32):

1) Rapport enhancement – where speakers seek to improve rapport between participants
2) Rapport maintenance – where speakers seek to keep the rapport at its current level
3) Rapport neglect – where rapport is not considered
4) Rapport challenge – where the speaker seeks to actively damage the rapport

Based upon the four rapport orientations, Spencer-Oatey proposes that there are three outcomes of rapport management:

1) Rapport is enhanced between speakers,
2) Rapport is maintained between speakers, or
3) Rapport is impaired/damaged

(Spencer-Oatey 2008:42)

For Spencer-Oatey, impoliteness occurs "when people hold a rapport-challenge orientation [and] they want to challenge or impair the harmony of the relationship" (Spencer-Oatey 2008:33). Impoliteness is achieved by "deliberately causing people to lose face" and deliberately impeding a hearer's sociality rights (Spencer-Oatey 2008:33).

Spencer-Oatey makes an important observation about the ascription of rapport orientation to speakers and the difficulty of ascribing intentionality to an interaction, "needless to say, people's rapport orientations are not available for open inspection. Unless people talk about them explicitly, they can only be inferred from their choice of rapport-management strategies […]" (2008:33). Thus, the hearer (or analyst) must use the available information in a speaker's utterance to make inferences about their orientation.

Linking with Watts' (2003) notion of politic behaviour, Spencer-Oatey notes that "some types of behaviour (e.g. a routine expression of thanks) may pass unperceived as an event when they are performed but give rise to negative relational outcomes (i.e. rapport is reduced) when they are not" (Spencer-Oatey 2008:43).

Spencer-Oatey's framework is applied by Culpeper in his 2011 monograph to the coding of his self-report data in which respondents recalled an incident in which they were offended. In his application of the framework Culpeper found that when quality face was challenged, participants' emotions were dominated with "self-conscious emotions" such as sadness, whereas when equity rights were challenged, "anger, an other-condemning emotion takes on increased importance" (Culpeper 2011:65).

2.1.2 Maxim Approach to Impoliteness

2.1.2.1 Leech 1983 and 2014

In his 1983 monograph, *Principles of Pragmatics*, Leech approaches politeness from a Gricean perspective. Like Lakoff (1973), he is interested in the regularity with which speakers depart from adherence to Grice's conversational maxims. He proposes that when a speaker does not adhere to Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) (1975), it may be that the speaker is instead adhering to what he terms the Politeness Principle (PP). The Politeness Principle states that speakers will "minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs" (Leech 1983:81) and this is achieved by following six politeness maxims; Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy.

Culpeper and Terkourafi suggest that a white lie is an example of an instance where the CP is sacrificed for the PP whereby the speaker is "sacrificing the maxim of quality in order to be Tactful" (2017:19). They note "It is these trade-offs that lend the PP

explanatory power: the CP accounts for *how* people convey indirect meanings, the PP accounts for *why* people convey them" (Culpeper and Terkourafi 2017:19).

In his 2014 monograph *Pragmatics of Politeness,* Leech reworks his Politeness Principle as the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP) which proposes: "In order to be polite, S expresses or implies meanings that associate a favourable value with what pertains to O or associates an unfavourable value with what pertains to S" (2014:90). Leech proposes that impoliteness is the opposite of politeness and outlines the General Strategy of Impoliteness (GSI) which he arrives at by inverting the GSP: "In pursuing the goal of impoliteness, S will express/imply evaluative meanings that are favourable to S and unfavourable to O" (Leech 2014:221). This is achieved by violating the maxims of politeness, to which Leech has added 4 additional maxims of 'Obligation to O[ther]', 'Obligation to S[peaker]', 'Opinion reticence' and 'Feeling reticence' (Leech 2014:91).

Though some have criticised Leech's proposal that impoliteness be viewed as the 'inverse' or 'opposite' of politeness (Leech notes Eelen 2001:98-100, Sara Mills 2003:124), and many of the more recent frameworks have done away with the reliance on politeness frameworks as a genus for the study of impoliteness (e.g. Culpeper 2011), Leech defends this position, stating that "the best way to start theorizing about impoliteness is to build on a theory of politeness, which is clearly a closely related phenomenon, in fact, the polar opposite of politeness" (Leech 2014:219). Further, he argues "Occam's razor proposes that we should not multiply entities beyond necessity. Applied to (im)politeness, this should mean: Let's see how far the entities (scales, maxims, etc.) of a politeness model can be adapted to apply to impoliteness." (Leech 2014:219).

The strategies of impoliteness are realised through violating the politeness maxims. Leech helpfully proposes the typical speech acts associated with the violation of such maxims, though it is possible for the maxims to be violated using speech acts not included in the list:

Table 2-2 - Leech's Framework

Label	Maxim Expressed as an Imperative	Typical Speech Acts
M1 Violation of Generosity	Give an unfavourable value to O's wants	Refusing, Threatening
M2 Violation of Tact	Give favourable value to S's wants	Ordering, Demanding
M3 Violation of Approbation	Give an unfavourable value to O's qualities	Insulting, Complaining, Telling Off
M4 Violation of Modesty	Give a favourable/high value to S's qualities	Boasting, being complacent
M5 Violation of Obligation to O	Give unfavourable/low value to S's Obligation to O	Withholding thanks or apologies
M6 Violation of Obligation to S	Give a favourable/high value to O's Obligation to S	Demanding thanks and apologies
M7 Violation of Agreement	Give an unfavourable/low value to O's opinions	Disagreeing, contradicting
M8 Violation of Opinion	Give a favourable/high value to S's opinions	Being opinionated
M9 Violation of Sympathy	Give an unfavourable/low value to O's feelings	Expressing antipathy to O
M10 Violation of Feeing Reticence	Give a favourable/high value to S's feelings	Grumbling, grousing

The ten maxims are joined by three additional categories to complete Leech's framework for impoliteness, and those are: rudeness (meaning taboo words), irony (termed sarcasm by other researchers) and banter (mock impoliteness).

Leech applies his framework for impoliteness (his ten impoliteness strategy maxims and the three additional categories, totalling thirteen categories) to dramatic dialogue in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* showing that the framework is useful for elucidating how

the protagonists use impoliteness. He notes that in opposition to what we would expect in real life, "fiction can supply instances where impoliteness is pervasive" (2014:224).

2.1.3 Conventionalisation Approach to Impoliteness

2.1.3.1 Culpeper (2011)

Moving away from his own earlier conceptualisations of impoliteness which relied on politeness framework inversion (1996), or intentionality (2005), in his 2011 monograph, Culpeper distinguishes between conventionalised and implicational impoliteness. In line with Terkourafi's conventionalisation approach to (im)politeness (2001,2008), Culpeper proposes that conventionalised impoliteness formulae "arise as a result of regularities of co-occurrence between unchallenged expressions and particular types of context" (Culpeper 2011:153). These conventionalised impolite expressions develop in specific discourses such as "army recruit training, interactions between car owners and traffic wardens, exploitative TV and so on" (2011:130). He notes that "impoliteness formulae vary according to three scales: degree of conventionalisation, the extent to which they are context-dependent or context-spanning and the degree of offence they are associated with." He hypothesises that "these scales are linked: more offensive items are more context-spanning and more conventionalised" (Culpeper 2011:153).

Culpeper gathered self-report data – asking 100 students to write an account of an instance when they were offended, as well as using data from exploitative television programmes. These instances of impoliteness were organised into groups with similar structural features in the style of pattern grammar (Hunston and Francis 2000). He then cross-referenced these with the Oxford English Corpus and only structures that were shown to lead to an interpretation of impoliteness by his informants were included in the final list. What Culpeper provides is the first extensive list of conventionalised impoliteness formulae, and while this comes with the caveat that it is not "a list of all English conventionalised impoliteness formulae", Culpeper proposes that the list includes "many very generally used English conventionalised impoliteness formulae" (2011:136).

Strategies include dismissals, as listed below:

- [go] [away]
- [get] [lost/out]
- [fuck/piss/shove] [off]

And personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)

- [the] [daft] [bimbo]
- [she] ['s] [nutzo]

(Culpeper 2011:135).

The full list is included in section 3.5.3.

The methodological benefits of the list of conventionalised impoliteness formulae that Culpeper provides are clear – unlike other frameworks which rely on the subjective analysis of the researcher, the conventionalised formulae follow linguistic patterns which remove some of the subjectivity inherent in qualitative analysis. For example, a linguistic structure either follows the pattern '[you] [are] [so/such a] [shit/bitch/hypocrite (etc)] or it does not.

Of course, as Culpeper notes, "many impoliteness events do not involve conventionalised impoliteness formulae at all" (2011:155). In the instances from his data that didn't use conventionalisation, "informants interpreted what was said (or done) or not said (or done) in a particular context as impolite, despite the fact that what was said (or done) was not 'pre-loaded' for impoliteness" (2011:155). This second part of his framework takes a more Gricean approach. Culpeper calls these instances Implicational Impoliteness which is comprised of three groups; form-driven implication, convention-driven implication and context-driven implication. Form-driven implications are those in which "the surface form or semantic content of a behaviour is marked" and this can include Gricean maxim flouts or violations. In Culpeper's data, 59% of reports of impoliteness were cases of implicational impoliteness.

Just as the conventionalised impoliteness formulae make the identification of impoliteness less subjective than other frameworks, the implicational part of Culpeper's framework entails more subjectivity on the part of the analyst on account of the need to pragmatically infer meaning in utterances.

2.1.4 Discursive Approach

The discursive approach to impoliteness has been important to the field of (im)politeness and yet is problematic for stylistic analysis. Discursive approaches to impoliteness, beginning with Eelen (2001), Watts (2003) and Sara Mills (2003), place emphasis on "the study of authentic (im)polite utterances […] in context" (Kienpointner and Stopfner 2017:60) and "the discursive struggle in shaping meaning" (Culpeper and Terkourafi 2017:18). For discursive theorists, "politeness does not reside in utterances themselves but is agreed upon or disputed by individuals in interaction with one another" (Sara Mills 2017:45). Discursive methodologies "tend to focus on the opinions and interpretations of interactants, as evidenced in their talk and their assessments of others' talk" (Sara Mills 2017:45). Given the emphasis on post-event analysis, the discursive approach is not viable for explorations of dramatic dialogue where interaction is between fictitious persons, as noted by McIntyre and Bousfield 2017:766. They identify that while discursive theorists discourage analysts from making "interpretative judgements from their own perspective" (McIntyre and Bousfield 2017:766), in consuming fiction, this is exactly what the viewer/reader is invited to do. Thus, the approach does not lend itself to the study of fiction.

2.1.4.1 Conversational Contract Approach

The Conversational Contract (CC) approach to (im)politeness (Fraser 1975, 1990 Fraser and Nolen 1981) proposes that all relationships between two people contain a *conversational contract* which establishes the rights and obligations of the speaker(s) towards one another. The contract is not static and can be renegotiated throughout a relationship and in different contexts. In part, it refers to conversational rules such as turn-taking and appropriate pitch, but also relates to conversational rights and obligations based on the relationship. This theory will be discussed in Chapter 7.

2.1.5 Taboo Words

Having explored impoliteness from a theoretical perspective, I now turn to the legislation and regulation of the presence of impoliteness in television. In the UK, television content is monitored by Ofcom (Office of Communications), a governmental regulatory body. In 2016, Ofcom published the results of an extensive study into the language that the general public in the UK find offensive. Combining interviews, a quantitative survey and

online discussion groups with 248 participants from across the UK (2016:2), the results were used to categorise potentially offensive words with regards to (1) how offensive they are and, (2) what censorship rules will apply to them. Ofcom's study places the 150 taboo words into two broad categories: Non-discriminatory and Discriminatory language (2016:40). The 47 non-discriminatory, or 'general' words are categorised into four categories according to their level of offence. The category to which a general non-discriminatory word belongs determines the broadcast time restrictions (i.e. before or after the 9pm watershed) as well as giving an idea of the severity of the sanctions that would follow dis-allowed broadcast.

Table 2-3 - Ofcom's List of General Taboo Words

Milder words (generally of little concern)	Medium words (potentially unacceptable pre-watershed but acceptable post-watershed)	Strong words (generally unacceptable pre-watershed but mostly acceptable post-watershed	Strongest words (highly unacceptable pre-watershed but generally acceptable post-watershed)
Arse	Arsehole	Bastard	Cunt
Bloody	Balls	Beaver	Fuck
Bugger	Bint	Beef curtains	Motherfucker
Cow	Bitch	Bellend	
Crap	Bollocks	Bloodclaat	
Damn	Bullshit	Clunge	
Ginger	Feck	Cock	
Git	Fecking	Dick	
God	Feckin	Dickhead	
Goddamn	Fecker	Fanny	
Jesus Christ	Munter	Flaps	
Minger	Pissed/ Pissed off	Gash	
Sod-off	Shit	Knob	
	Son of a bitch	Minge	
	Tits	Prick	
		Punani	

		Pussy	
		Snatch	
		Twat(s)	

(Table adapted from Ofcom 2016:44)

Allan and Burridge state that "being able to violate a taboo has shock value" (2006:27). Censors, in general, "claim to reflect and act upon the consensus of right-thinking people in their community" to protect viewers from harm (Allan and Burridge 2006:12) and this is reflected in Ofcom's use of the public's opinions to help identify potentially offensive words. Ofcom claims that the purpose of their organisation is to "set and enforce the rules that help protect viewers and listeners from harmful and offensive content on TV and radio" (2016:1). Clearly, Ofcom equate hearing offensive language to harm, though they never specify what that harm is.

Ofcom has the power to fine broadcasters who breach the broadcast code by broadcasting taboo words before the watershed (e.g. in 2008, Ofcom fined MTV Europe £255,000 for breaches including the broadcast of 'fuck', 'fuck you' and 'motherfucker' before the 9pm watershed [Bold 2008:n.p]). This act of penalising broadcasters who contravene linguistic (and other) codes could be seen as an act of "Aversive classical conditioning" (Jay 2009:153) akin to that found in child-caregiver relationships where taboos are internalised as a result of caregiver punishment. As Jay notes, "we learn about taboos through the socialisation of speech practices, which creates an oral or folk knowledge of swearing etiquette." (2009:154). Though what is taboo is not stable, Culpeper has shown that the three most offensive words in British English have remained stable over several years (2011) and Jay observes that "a set of 10 words […that…] has remained stable over the past 20 years accounts for 80% of public swearing" (Jay 2009:153).

2.2 Analysing Dramatic Discourse

Though traditional stylistic explorations of drama have focused on plays, Culpeper proposes that film dialogue can be analysed in much the same way as the differences between plays and films "relate primarily to the nature of the medium, not the dynamics of the dialogue" (Culpeper 1998:88).

One limitation of the stylistic analysis of play texts is that a play script can be interpreted in many different ways by many different practitioners, and the nature of live performance means that no two performances of the same production will be identical (Macrae 2014:254). As McIntyre notes, one way around this dilemma is to use filmed versions of plays which constitute "a permanent record of a particular production of the play [or text] in question, which, theoretically, all critics have access to." (McIntyre 2008:311). Likewise, television and film performances have the same permanence and so are useful objects of study.

Often, in television and film, the script of a scene is used for analysis. This too has problems as the delivery of a line by an actor may differ (even if only minimally) from the text printed in the script. To this end, in analysing the sitcom *Friends*, rather than using the official screenplay, McIntyre and Bousfield (2017:775) chose to transcribe the exact performance because "the screenplay differs slightly from the performance". This addresses Kozloff's (2000:92) observation that the performance of a script will *never* be an exact replication of the text that is written, but will be unique in its use of prosody, stutters, false starts, etc. that make it a product of the "unique alchemy of that script in the mouth, mind and heart of that actor".

2.2.1 Discourse Structure of a Sitcom

The discourse structure of standard drama is outlined in Short (1996:169) whereby there are two discourse levels: "the author-audience/reader level and the character-character level." Short notes that "the overarching level of discourse is that between the playwright and the audience. Character talk is embedded in that higher discourse, allowing the audience to 'listen in' to what the characters say." (Short 1996:169). This can be conceptualised as follows:

Prototypical Discourse Structure of Drama

Table 2-4 - Prototypical Discourse Structure of Drama

Addresser 1 (Playwright)	Message →	Addressee 1 (Audience/reader)
Addresser 2 (Character A)	Message →	Addressee 2 (Character B)
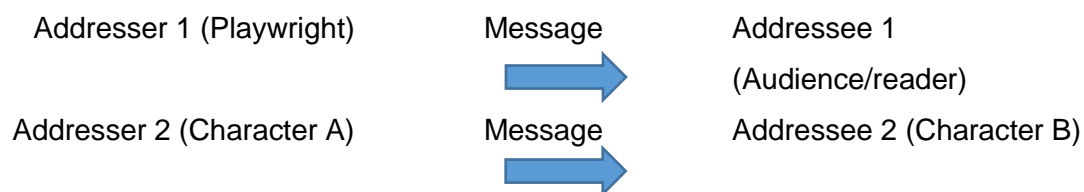
Short (1996:169-172) identifies that there can be instances, such as a play with a narrator, where there is a third level in the discourse structure. Similarly, the sitcom has an additional level of communication at work. The 'traditional' sitcom, i.e. one that uses audience laughter (whether real or canned), has a third level of interaction whereby the audience's laughter, applause, cheers, gasps etc. all function in giving the viewer at home information on how the material has been perceived by the assembled studio audience and/or how it has been designed to be perceived by the sitcom producers. This third level of the performance of a sitcom makes the analysis of the humour therein differ from the many humour theories which have predominantly focused on dyadic 'jokes' between two or more speakers in conversation or writing, e.g. Freud (1905), Suls (1972), Raskin (1985). As Mills notes,

> "Sitcoms are odd in that they often work for two audiences: the one in the studio laughing 'live' and contributing to the laugh track and the audience at home watching within the complex variables of the domestic space. […] In this way television sitcom undermines many of the theories concerning the ways in which jokes work and the social relationships they require to be effective." (Mills 2005:15).

The sitcom discourse structure can be conceptualised as follows:

Discourse Structure of Traditional Sitcom

Table 2-5- Discourse Structure of Traditional Sitcom

Addresser 1 (Playwright)	Message →	Addressees 1 (Studio audience AND viewer at home)
Addresser 2 (Character A)	Message →	Addressee 2 (Character B)
Addresser 3 (Studio audience [and/or sitcom sound editor/producer])	Message →	Addressee 3 (Viewer)
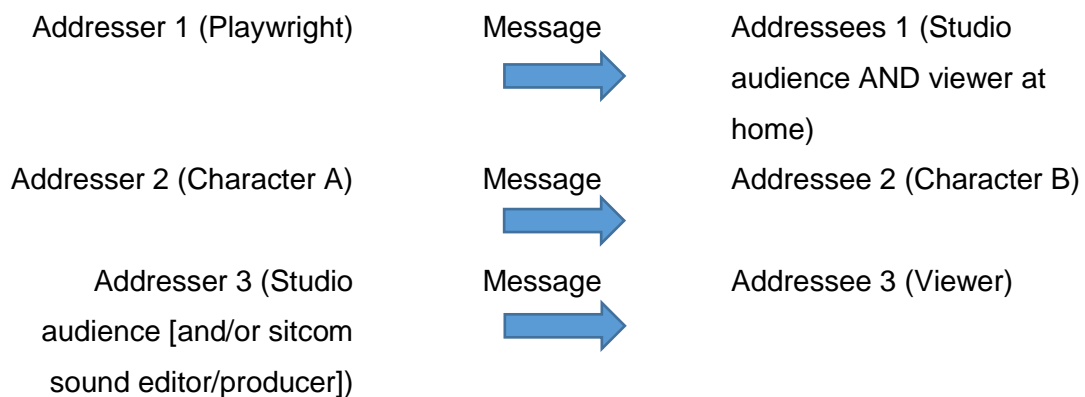
So, a message (e.g. 'Feck off') is communicated from addresser 2 (e.g. Father Jack) to addressee 2 (Mrs Doyle) with the same being communicated from addresser 1 (Linehan and Mathews, the writers) to addressees 1 (the live studio audience **and** the viewer at home). Finally, there is the third level in which addresses 3 (the studio audience **and** the

editors/directors/producers who choose to retain and broadcast the audience's responses) communicates their laughter response (laugh lasting 1.53 seconds) to addressee 3 (the viewer at home) with the message being 'this is funny', that is, signalling their comic intent (Messerli 2016) as well as marking the content as non-threatening and socially acceptable to laugh at.

2.2.1.1   Macrocosm and Microcosm in the Sitcom

Another useful way of conceptualising the discourse structure of drama comes from Burton (1980) who outlines the 'microcosm' and 'macrocosm' differentiation of dramatic discourse. The microcosm is the world of the play itself and the macrocosm incorporates the audience in the theatre viewing the performance (Burton 1980:177-178).

Jobert (2013) applies this conceptualisation to his analysis of BBC sitcom *Fawlty Towers*. Exploring the retention of realism, Jobert notes that when it comes to impoliteness "in the microcosm, virtually anything is possible" whereas "in the macrocosm, objective impoliteness is tolerated, provided the creative dimension of impoliteness is sufficiently clever to justify the abolition of traditional conversational rules" (2013:86). He notes that asides that are not heard by the target in the microcosm, but still communicate impoliteness in the macrocosm, preserve the realism of the series.

In sitcom, I propose that there are not two levels of discourse but three as the studio audience constitute the third level of discourse by acting as a filter between the characters onstage and the viewer at home. As such, I propose that in the sitcom, the studio audience function as the 'mesocosm':
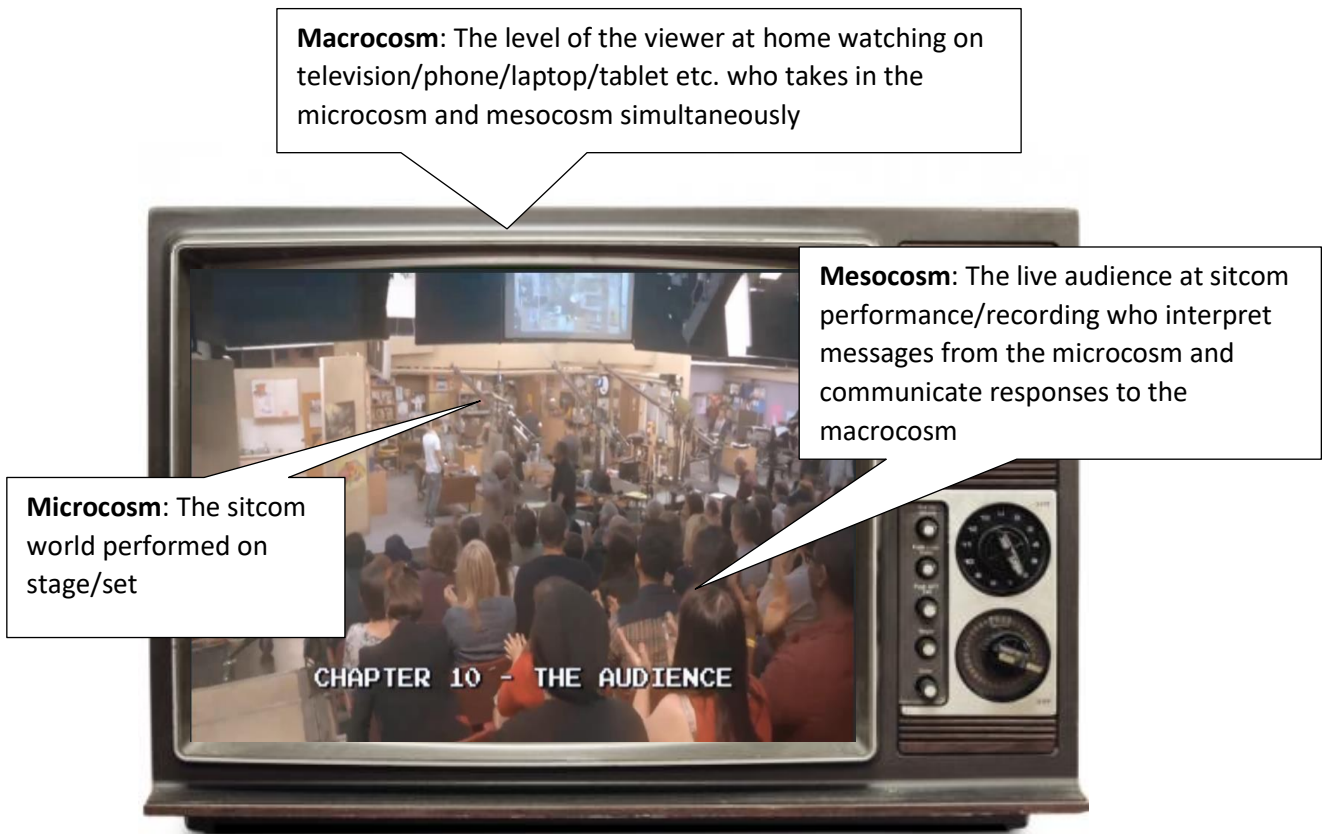
Image 2-2- Micro-, Meso- and Macrocosm on Television

(Image credit: Television set from iStock:nd, IT Crowd set from Channel 4:2014)

In this proposed conceptualisation, the mesocosm consists of the audience members present at the time of the sitcom recording, whose laughter and other responses are broadcast in the macrocosm. The macrocosm of the sitcom as broadcast on television, mobile device, laptop etc. is one in which the viewer at home can simultaneously take in the microcosm of the sitcom world, as well as the (heard, but not seen) mesocosm of the audience reactions (laughter, gasps, applause) which help to filter the content, cueing the viewer at home to interpret certain scenes as humorous.

2.2.1.2   Audience

Viewers of plays, films and television are often referred to as 'overhearers' (Toddington 2008:448). An overhearer is "an unratified participant who listens to (and usually also watches) and utterance (or turn) being performed in an ongoing interaction without the speaker's permission" (Dynel 2011a:1629). A problem with this term is that viewers of television and film *are* ratified, indeed, they are the intended audience of the discourse,

which is "designed for them first and foremost" (Dynel 2011a:1630). Instead of conceiving of the audience as 'overhearers', Dynel proposes that the viewer be conceived of as a ratified participant, or "recipient" (2011a:1629). In the case of the sitcom, both the studio audience and viewer are recipients. The researcher also has a place in Dynel's conceptualisation as a 'Metarecipient' (Dynel 2011a:1634) who "rather than merely enjoying a film as a regular recipient, will interpret chosen aspects of dialogues and polylogues or cinematic techniques, appreciating the means by which certain effects are engendered upon regular viewers" (2011a:1634).

Impoliteness in fictional character-character dialogue is thus not only for the hearer/victim, but also for the recipient, who is the true target of the scriptwriter(s)' words. This conceptualisation has a bearing on a number of features of sitcom dialogue with regards to a) the absence of victim response or metapragmatic comment causing problems identifying when impoliteness has taken place, b) the absence of mirth in the characters and c) the question of how impoliteness and humour function within the same utterance for different hearers. Dynel elucidates these issues in her conceptualisation of disaffiliative humour:

2.2.1.3 Disaffiliative Humour

On account of the multilevel nature of dramatic discourse discussed above, impoliteness and humour in drama can operate differently at different levels; "the two-tier discourse structure of a play means that interpretations of face-attack can be different for the audience than for the characters" (Toddington 2008:448). In many cases in scenes of impoliteness, the co-present characters do not show mirth, and yet mirth is found at the live audience and viewer levels. This relates not only to the discourse structure, but the audience and viewer as recipients – i.e. the intended interpreters of the impoliteness rather than overhearers. Dynel proposes the term 'disaffiliative humour' for such instances:

> Disaffiliative humour arises from the viewer's perspective, with little or no humour experience being present at the character's level. The speaker may indeed take malicious pleasure in displaying his [or her] superiority, but he [or she] does not intend to amuse anyone [except perhaps, themselves], whilst it is the film production crew [including the writers] that mean to amuse the viewer.
>
> Dynel (2013:121)

Dynel argues that even if an audience is "positively disposed" towards a character, they "will temporarily dissociate" from this character and find the impoliteness aimed at them humorous (2013:122).

Because of these different levels of communication of impoliteness and humour, often characters within the sitcom world do not display that they have been offended or amused. There are two reasons for the lack of reaction to impoliteness by characters in the microcosm, firstly because they can slow the plot and secondly because target suffering can impede viewers' humour responses by removing the safety of the play cue mind-set (Dynel 2013:109).

> "While, as typically defined, impoliteness depends not only on the speaker's production but also on the hearer's recognition of it, **the hearer's reaction may not be shown in fictional talk for the sake of humorous effects**. […] the target of impoliteness is just a formal requirement for the scriptwriters to achieve their aim […] to promote humour for the viewer's pleasure"
>
> (Dynel 2013:120, emphasis added).

Thus, impoliteness is potentially harder to code in fiction than when using participants, as reactions and metapragmatic comments from characters may not be forthcoming. This is one of the reasons that the discursive approach to impoliteness is mostly incompatible with analysis of sitcom dialogue and why intentionality-reliant frameworks may not be suitable. In the absence of metapragmatic comments from other characters, the analyst seeking to explore impoliteness and humour in dramatic dialogue must rely on frameworks of impoliteness and cultural knowledge in order to make judgements about whether impoliteness has taken place.

2.3 IMPOLITENESS AND STYLISTICS

Pragmatic stylistics can have symbiotic benefits for both stylisticians and pragmatists. The pragmatic analysis of impoliteness has much to offer the field of stylistics; "the value of theories and models of (im)politeness for stylistic analysis is that they can help stylisticians to explain interactions between characters, which in turn allows us to understand how fictional texts are likely to be understood by readers" (McIntyre and Bousfield 2017:759). Indeed, the exploration of impoliteness in fiction can also benefit pragmatics. As Bousfield notes, "the texts considered by stylisticians can be seen as

data with which to test particular approaches to pragmatics" (Bousfield 2007:209). McIntyre and Bousfield note that the findings of the application of pragmatic concepts to fiction can lead to results that are useful "in reassessing and revising pragmatic concepts and frameworks for analysis" (2017:759-60) as "fiction has a role to play in the development of linguistic models and analytical frameworks, including, of course, theories of (im)politeness" (2017:761). Pragmatic stylistic analyses have the potential to reveal plot and character, as McIntyre and Bousfield note:

> "The centrality of pragmatic violations and (im)politeness to fiction, […] is what makes fiction such a rich resource for study […] From a stylistic perspective, the application of theories, models and frameworks for the analysis of (im)politeness [to fiction] can be revealing of processes of characterisation and can also assist analysts in uncovering the locus of plot developments." (McIntyre and Bousfield 2017:780).

Just as McIntyre and Bousfield propose that impoliteness is used for characterisation and plot developments, Culpeper argues that "in drama, impoliteness is not thrown in haphazardly for audience entertainment: it serves other purposes. Conflict in interaction appears either as a symptom, or as a cause of, social disharmony and where there are tensions between characters we are more likely to see developments in character and plot" (Culpeper 1998:86). Jobert concurs that impoliteness use is not haphazard, he notes, *Fawlty Towers* "would not function if Basil were simply running around the hotel abusing the guests" (2013:86). Likewise, the restraint needed for some semblance of realism to be retained in the sitcom would be absent if impoliteness were thrown in at random. Crucially, however, impoliteness is used for developments of character and plot.

Classic theories of plot, such as Bremond (1973) and Todorov (2018 [1973]) approach plot as a series of events that transition from a state of equilibrium, through a state of disequilibrium and are resolved with a return to equilibrium. As impoliteness often occurs when characters disagree or dislike one another, it is likely that impoliteness will be found in the disequilibrium point of a narrative, at "times of interactional conflict" (Culpeper 1998:84). Impoliteness not only signals plot points but can be used for the furthering of plot. As Culpeper states, "in dramatic terms, impoliteness is particularly interesting because it generates the disharmony and conflict between characters which generates audience interest and often moves the plot forward" (Culpeper 1998:83).

In addition to providing plot, impoliteness can also be used to help create distinctive characters. Pragmatic analysis of a character's language can be a useful way in to

understanding that character; "a stylistic approach to understanding characters should – indeed *must* – explore the language that those characters themselves are presented as using" (Bousfield 2014:118). This is because "the style (or way) by which characters themselves interact reveal how we, within the cultural context in which we receive the information, are being invited to see, to understand, to appreciate, empathise, sympathise or antipathize with those characters" (Bousfield 2014:118). Impoliteness is one such element of a character's language that can influence interpretations about their personality. Bousfield notes that when characters do not use politeness, this is more noticeable (and hence foregrounded) than when they do. This allows readers or viewers to "infer character traits about [the speaker], or wider situational reasons for their behaviour" (Bousfield 2014:119).

Brown and Levinson (1987) claimed that their politeness strategies for mitigating FTAs were based on the options available a rational model person. The 'model person' "can act as a benchmark to help us assess fictional characters with regard to the types of linguistic behaviour that they might be expected to use schematically (such behaviour might include topics discussed, contribution to conversational control, speech/communicative acts performed and levels of commitment to (im)politeness)" (McIntyre and Bousfield 2017). In other words, part of the understanding of character can come from schematic deviations from language expectations and this includes the use of (im)politeness. It's important to remember that the model person does not exist. However, "assessing an individual's behaviour in relation to that linguistic ideal offers a mechanism for understanding the possible function of polite and impolite linguistic behaviour, especially where such behaviour deviates from the expected" (McIntyre and Bousfield 2017:765).

Characterisation can be approached using Culpeper's 2001 'control system' (Culpeper 2001:35). This approach proposes both a top-down and a bottom-up understanding of character, interpreting character based on pre-existing beliefs about the type of person a character might be ("prior knowledge" [2001:36]), and amending this based on character dialogue, both what they say (the "text base" [2001:37]) and how they say it (the "surface structure" [2001:37]). Prior knowledge involves "the application of top-down, schematically-held understandings of the types of individual with which we're presented" (Bousfield 2014:130). This links with schema theory (Mandler 1984) in that we may have schemata for how a particular person will look and behave based on their job, race, age, gender etc.

Pragmatic-stylistic research has shown that (im)politeness analyses can be useful in elucidating characterisation. Simpson (1989) explored how changes in the (im)politeness strategies of the student and the teacher in Ionesco's *The Lesson* signals changes in status, as the once deferential teacher comes to linguistically dominate the student. Leech (1992) likewise examines the characterising effects generated when characters violate his Politeness Principle (PP) in the play *You Never Can Tell*. Culpeper (1996) applied his impoliteness framework to the analysis of extracts from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1996:364) and, in Culpeper (1998), analysed excerpts from the film *Scent of a Woman*, stating that (im)politeness analysis can aid in uncovering "how characters position themselves relative to other characters" and "how they manipulate others in pursuit of their goals" (Culpeper 1998:83). In fiction "we are more likely [than in real life] to interpret [impolite] behaviour as a message from the author about an aspect of the fictional world which will be of future consequence" (Culpeper 1998:87) and, I would add, an aspect of the fictional *character* which will be of future consequence.

More recent work has expanded on impoliteness as indicating character traits; Analysing *Peter Pan and Wendy*, Loveday notes that Captain Hook's use of sarcasm contributes to interpretations of him as a villain (2016:170). Loveday argues that "the most important aspect of […] caustic dialogue is the way it allows the reader to make inferences about the personality of those producing it" (Loveday 2016:175). Paternoster (2012) identifies that the use of impoliteness contributes to interpretations of the protagonist inspectors in the *Montalbano* and *Rebus* crime series as "hardboiled, fractious and unconventional" (Paternoster 2012:319). These impolite, "maverick hero" characters (ibid) are typical of the crime detective fiction genre (Paternoster 2012:322, Gregoriou 2009:91) and are also found in the sitcom. The anti-social protagonist is a common feature in British sitcom, which "repeatedly focuses on characters who are incapable of communicating and for whom relationships and family are problematic and stifling" (Mills 2005:41).

Presuming that characters are treated as human and understood "to have the same identical, or similar face needs to humans in real life," (Simpson and Bousfield 2017:164), then the use of impoliteness can have a characterising effect (Simpson and Bousfield 2017:168). Simpson and Bousfield show how Elizabeth Bennett's use of face-attack in her response to Mr Darcy's marriage proposal in Price and Prejudice "marks her character out as well-rounded, fearless, controlled and strong-minded" (2017:168). Using data from TV drama Game of Thrones (HBO 2011- present), they also show how the use of impoliteness in a mock-confession by a recently incarcerated Tyrion Lannister

"contributes to an undercurrent of power challenge" (2017:170) that Tyrion is constructing and "acts as evidence of Tyrion having a cunning, clever and sarcastic mind" (2017:171).

Impoliteness use by a character can serve to undermine or challenge the dominant social rules and those with power. Mandon-Hunter (2013) states that 17th century theatre audiences "relished those moments of verbal chaos in which the rules of good breeding were wilfully transgressed." (2013:95). For restoration comedies, "showing figures of authority reduced to powerlessness was (and still is) a stock comic device" (2013:96). This can also be seen in sitcoms, for example, in comedies where transgressions occur in the representations of US government (*Veep, 2012-2018 HBO*), the UK government (*The Thick of It 2005-2012 BBC)*, religious leaders (*Father Ted, 1995-1998, Channel 4 The Vicar of Dibley 1994-2015)* and so on. This relates to the potentially disruptive role of sitcom in society, which is discussed in section 2.5.3.

Despite the symbiotic relationship between the fields of pragmatics and stylistics, and the useful existing studies exploring character and plot creation through the use of impoliteness, there are some limitations to some of the existing research exploring impoliteness from a stylistic perspective: chiefly, the lack of quantitative analyses, small data set sizes, over-use of early impoliteness frameworks and a reliance on particular kinds of data. I'll discuss each of these in turn.

Few stylistic explorations of impoliteness in fiction have adopted quantitative approaches to data analysis. As a result, some of these analyses (e.g. Loveday's 2016 analysis of sarcasm in *Peter Pan*) could be criticised for 'cherry-picking' examples from the data set to analyse based on their conformity to the researcher's thesis. For many studies, neither corpus nor pragmatic quantitative analyses have been adopted in the analysis of impoliteness. Tuldava (2004:141-2) argues that statistical/quantitative stylistics is a "sensitive tool for the analysis of individual styles (genres and registers), including the style of fiction" and adds that the adoption of quantitative methods is "a good helpmate" to qualitative studies. He points to Perebejnos' observation that "statistical methods enable us not only to check up on the correctness of our intuitive views about style, but also to establish such regularities, which could not be found by other methods" (Perebejnos 1967). Stubbs argues that "analysts have a responsibility to use all available sources of information, and this includes quantitative information" (Stubbs 2015:46-62).

The few existing quantitative studies of impoliteness in fiction have pointed towards the potential uses of quantitative analysis in understanding and reporting impoliteness use.

Aydinoglu (2013) uses quantitative analysis to show that there is a difference in impoliteness strategy use according to the gender of the character in Geralyn L. Horton's plays. Finding that 7.8% of female and 10.6% of male speech contained impoliteness (2013:479), she also identifies differences in strategy use for attack and defence. Kantara (2010) also shows that quantitative impoliteness analysis can be useful in mapping different characters' impoliteness styles in US TV series *House MD*. Using Culpeper's 1996 framework for the analysis of impoliteness 'attacks' and Culpeper et al's (2003) framework for response strategies, she finds that "quantitative analysis of hearer's responses […] reveals that the great majority of [his hearers] perceived Dr House's sarcasm as impoliteness" (2010:327). Likewise, she presents pie charts showing strategy use by different characters, concluding "Dr House uses sarcasm as his main impoliteness strategy (35%) and secondly multiple impoliteness strategies (25%)" (2010:327). Such studies thus point to the potential usefulness of a quantitative approach to fiction in that it can clearly demonstrate how characterisation reflects impoliteness use and vice versa. A criticism of Kantara's study, however, is that she codes the use of more than one of Culpeper's strategies as 'multiple', which obscures which strategies are actually being used together, which prevents an understanding of which and how strategies are combined.

Pleyer (2015) highlights the useful applications of quantitative methods for examining impoliteness use diachronically in her study comparing the impoliteness strategies of Harry Potter and his adversarial potions master, Professor Snape. Coding all interactions between Potter and Snape in two books in the seven book *Harry Potter* series, Pleyer finds that Potter's impoliteness increases and his strategy use becomes more varied as he matures (2015:68-69). The use of quantitative analysis allows her to clearly map this usage and to present it, as she does, in graph. A limitation of Pleyer's otherwise useful study reflects another issue in stylistic analyses of impoliteness: small data sets. Pleyer only analyses two of the seven Harry Potter novels and it is likely that a more detailed view of Potter's maturation as represented through his impoliteness use would have been enabled by analysing the entire available data set.

Likewise, with regards small data sets, researchers analysing impoliteness in film, such as Culpeper (1998), Rong (2009) and Bousfield (2014) do not apply their analysis to the entirety of the film's dialogue but choose representative samples to analyse. Ermida (2006) chooses short segments of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to analyse, as does Paternoster (2012) with the various instalments in the *Rebus* and *Montalbano* detective

series. One of the few stylistic studies that analyses the sitcom, Jobert's (2013) analysis of impoliteness in *Fawlty Towers*, explores only a small number of episodes. The same is true of Dynel (2013) and Stokoe (2008), who select a number of episodes from televised drama-comedy *House MD* and *Friends*, respectively. Finally, analyses that have studied impoliteness in a single play include Toddington (2008), Leech (1992), Aydinoglu (2013), Mandon-Hunter (2013) and Rudanko (2006). In an otherwise interesting article, Brookins (2010) applies Leech's impoliteness framework to classic poetry but uses a small data set of poems and applies only two of Leech's (then) five politeness principles to the data. This is an unusual decision to simplify an already fairly simple framework and brings in the issue of framework selection.

In general, there has been a lack of diversity with regard to the impoliteness frameworks that are applied to the data sets in question, with Brown and Levinson (1987) and Culpeper's (1996) frameworks being frequently over-relied upon to the neglect of more recent frameworks and indeed elaborations of existing ones. Older studies (e.g. Simpson 1989, Brown and Gilman 1989) understandably make use of Brown and Levinson's framework, it being recently published in the field at that time. However, recent studies (e.g. Ermida 2006, Rong, 2009) show that the willingness to apply B&L's framework in explorations of impoliteness continues. Many studies use Culpeper's 1996 framework (e.g. Kantara 2010, Toddington 2008) even after more recent revisions by the author have been published (e.g. Culpeper et al 2003, Culpeper, 2005). Even after Culpeper's 2011 monograph significantly reworked his impoliteness approach, research can still be found that applies his 1996 framework (e.g. Tutas and Azak 2014).

Though Culpeper (2011) makes use of Spencer Oatey's framework in exploring students' self-report data of impolite interactions, few studies of fiction have applied her framework in an analysis of impoliteness in fiction. Likewise, only a small number of stylistic studies have applied Leech's framework, as noted by Brookins (2010:1283). Brookins, despite the aforementioned decision to only use 2 of Leech's then-5 maxims, finds Leech's framework to be suitable for such analysis, stating "on the whole, the theory adapts remarkably well" to ancient poetry (2010:1294). This suggests that Leech's framework may be usefully applied to different data types.

Though some research makes use of more than one framework in order to explain impoliteness effects (e.g. Rong 2009, Loveday 2016), I could find no studies that explicitly compared the outcome of the application of two or more impoliteness frameworks to a data set.

Finally, very few stylistic studies of impoliteness have explored television (in general) or sitcom (in particular). In stylistics, the majority of the impoliteness stylistic research has focused on films (e.g. Culpeper 1998, Bousfield 2014, Rong Rong 2009), plays (e.g. Leech 2014, Toddington 2008, Leech 1992, Simpson 1989, Bousfield 2007, Aydinoglu 2013, Mandon-Hunter 2013, Rudanko 2006) and prose (e.g. Pleyer 2015 Loveday 2016 Ermida 2006 Paternoster 2012) with some researchers also applying (im)politeness analysis to poetry (e.g. Brookins 2010). Those studies that have used television as their data set, often used drama, film, documentary and 'reality' television. For example, Pilliere 2013, Kantara 2010, Dynel 2013, have all used the American medical drama *House MD* as their data set. Many impoliteness studies have also used documentary series (e.g. Bousfield's 2007's use of *The Clampers, Car Wars, Soldiers to Be, Redcaps, Raw Blues* and *Boiling Point,* Bousfield 2008a's exploration of *The Clampers*, Culpeper's 1996 use of *Soldier Girls*, Culpeper et al's 2003 exploration of prosody in *The Clampers*) docu-reality (e.g. Culpeper and Holmes' 2013 analysis of *American Idol* and *The X Factor*), or quiz shows (e.g. Culpeper's 2005 analysis of Weakest Link). Though in slightly broader works, such as those by Quaglio (2009), Mittmann (2006) and Bednarek (2010), researchers have explored the language featured in fictional television, these have had broader scope and have not specifically explored the use of impoliteness. Very few stylistic impoliteness analyses have explored the sitcom. Stokoe (2008), Jobert (2013) and Walshe (2011) are some of the few impoliteness studies to look at the sitcom. Jobert (2013), as outline above, explores BBC sitcom *Fawlty Towers*, Walshe (2011), explores the performance of Irish dialects in *Father Ted* and, though not explicitly exploring impoliteness as a humour mechanism, he does identify 'feck' as a humorous trigger. Finally, Stokoe (2008) explores dispreferred second pair parts in the sitcom *Friends* and makes use of audience laughter to verify humour ascriptions. Though in many of her examples, the dispreferred second pair parts can be argued to constitute impoliteness, at no point in her article does she address the concept of impoliteness.

2.4 IMPOLITENESS AND HUMOUR

A key question that has been raised in (im)politeness studies, is: Why would a speaker use impoliteness? Culpeper outlines three non-mutually-exclusive functions of impoliteness; affective impoliteness, coercive impoliteness and entertaining impoliteness (2011:221). Affective impoliteness relates to "the targeted display of heightened emotion, typically anger, with the implication that the target is to blame for producing that negative

emotional state." (Culpeper 2011:223). Coercive impoliteness occurs when the speaker tries to get the hearer to do something that may not be in their interests (2011:226). Entertaining impoliteness has the function of generating impoliteness at the expense of a target (2011:233), though "in the case of literary fiction, the targets are entirely fictional". To this one might add that those who are entertained in fiction can be the readers/viewers in addition to, or instead of other fictional characters, as outlined in Dynel's (2013) concept of disaffiliative humour.

I view *entertainment* as an umbrella term that covers many forms of amusement, of which humour is one. As Dynel notes, "one of the central functions of films, series and serials is to entertain the general public, and humour serves this general purpose" (Dynel 2013:106). In his work on the entertaining function of impoliteness, Culpeper does not focus on comedy, but rather exploitative quiz, entertainment and reality TV shows (e.g. *Weakest Link, Wife Swap, Clampers*). Though humour is identified as an outcome of the entertaining function of impoliteness, a specific focus on the comedy genre has been missing in much of the research. Indeed, Toddington proposes that research ought to be conducted "within the genre of comedy, to see how impoliteness may generate humour" (2008:448).

2.4.1 Humour Theories

The majority of Western humour research is classified into one of three "streams" (Larkin-Galinanes 2017:5); Superiority Theory, Relief/Release Theory and Incongruity Theory (see, Raskin 1985, Morreall 2009, Sanders 2009, Attardo and Raskin 2017).

The Relief/Release Theory is often most associated with Freud (1905) but was first proposed by Lord Shaftesbury in 1711 (1727). The theory posits that humour and laughter release "repressed feelings" (Morreall 2009:21) for the laugher. Freud (1905), for example, proposes that on hearing a comic ending to a joke with a tragic beginning, we release the unnecessary sympathy we felt for the characters at the start of the narrative as surplus mental energy through laughter (Morreall 2009:19).

The Relief Theory has been criticised for its reliance on an "outdated hydraulic theory of mind" (Morreall 2009:23), in that it "postulate[s] the existence of mental energy that behaves like water - flowing in certain channels […] and seeking outlets as the pressure builds" (Carroll 2003:352). This interpretation of mental energy is "highly dubious"

(Carroll 2003:352) on account of the fact that in the advent of neuroimaging, "there seem to be scant scientific grounds for such assumptions" (ibid.352). Despite the unpopularity of the relief theory in modern humour studies, the sitcom is still theorised as a mechanism for release. Javna proposes that "people get a vicarious pleasure out of watching [sitcoms], because it's behaviour we can't get away with in what passes for real life" (Javna 1988:95). Kutulas proposes that 1970s American sitcom '*Rhoda*', in which the mother and daughter characters clashed over women's' roles, allowed "the young female demographic the vicarious thrill of besting mom" (Kutulas 2016:23). Dylan Moran, the co-creator and star of *Black Books* adopts a similar view of his character Bernard Black, stating, "he does what you want to do. He's a refusenik child, he's the child who doesn't want to get out of bed. We all have a bit of that in us." (Moran 2018:np). Thus, it seems that though scientific research has largely discredited the relief theory, there remains a folk notion that sitcom can facilitate vicarious release.

The Superiority Theory, originating in Ancient Greek Philosophy, is the oldest of the humour theories and remained the dominant theory of humour in Western cultures for over a thousand years (Morreall 2009:5). The position of Plato, mirrored in Epictetus and (to a lesser extent) Aristotle, was that humour is a dangerous phenomenon, born of human tendency to laugh at the inferiority of others (Plato 1961, 1993). Perhaps the most recognised definition of superiority humour comes from Hobbes' Leviathan where laughter is triggered in individuals "by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they [the laugher] suddenly applaud themselves" (Hobbes 1651). Carroll notes that in superiority humour, "we laugh at people who [...] deceive themselves, imagining they are wiser than they are, or taller etc." (Carroll 2003:344). Mills notes that sitcom characters are often unified by such a lack of self-awareness (2005, 2014).

Two criticisms of the superiority theory were identified by Francis Hutcheson; the first being that, "we are in greater danger of weeping than laughing" when we observe someone suffering (1750:11). Indeed, psychological research has shown that when participants witnessed suffering, it aroused pity and not laughter (Dijker 2001:617). Hutcheson's second criticism was that should the superiority theory be correct, "there can be no laughter on any occasion where we make no comparison of ourselves to others" (Hutcheson 1750:7). Many examples can be provided where laughter arises *without* feelings of superiority, one example comes from Nerhardt (1970:194), in whose classic experiment participants were asked to lift a series of weights and found that when

the heaviness of the weights deviated from expectations, participants exhibited more laughter than where there was no deviation. Based on the two criticisms of the Superiority theory, Hutcheson proposed an alternative theory that later came to be known (from Beattie 1779) as the Incongruity Theory:

> "That which seems generally the cause of laughter is the bringing together of images which have contrary additional ideas […] this contrast between ideas of grandeur, dignity, sanctity, perfection and ideas of meanness, baseness, profanity, seems to be the very spirit of burlesque and the greatest part of our raillery and jest is founded upon it."

> (Hutcheson 1750:19)

The central tenet of the Incongruity Theory is that "comic amusement comes with the apprehension of incongruity" (Carroll 2003:347) where incongruity is defined as "some thing or event [that] violates our normal mental patterns and normal expectations" (Morreall 2009:11). Mills notes the importance of expectations and norms to incongruous humour; "unless a viewer understands the way things are 'meant to be', incongruity will be unnoticeable and laughter will not occur" (2009:83). This reliance on pre-existing knowledge of social norms explains the cultural relativity of humour.

Despite the popularity of the incongruity theory of humour, critics have observed that pure incongruity can lead to puzzlement or confusion (Morreall 2009:13) or even fear and anxiety (Carroll 2003:350). This led to the development of the incongruity-resolution model. Suls (1972:82) proposes that "humour derives from experiencing a sudden incongruity which is then made congruous" (1972:82). He proposes a two-stage process which a perceiver must go through in order to glean humour from a joke or cartoon:

> "In the first stage, the perceiver finds his [sic] expectations about the text disconfirmed by the ending of the joke [...] in other words, the recipient encounters an incongruity."

> "In the second stage, the perceiver engages in a form of problem solving to find a cognitive rule which makes the punch line follow from the main part of the joke and reconciles the incongruous parts."

> (Suls 1972:82)

In response to the criticism that some incongruities, e.g. mathematical problems, are incongruous, resolvable but not humorous, Suls proposed the Play Cue, noting that

Rothbart's notion of safety (1973, 1976) is an essential criterion for humour: "humour is occasioned by a set or cue that it be processed as 'this is play' or 'not to be taken seriously'"(Suls 1983:54). The Benign-Violation theory (McGraw and Warren 2010), a recent incongruity-resolution theory proposes psychological conditions that must be met in order for an incongruity (in their words, a 'violation') to be resolved (in their words 'made benign') and thus found humorous. They state that an incongruity can be resolved (or a 'violation' made 'benign'), if a salient norm suggests the violation is acceptable, the hearer is only weakly committed to the norm that has been violated, or if "the violation is psychologically distant" (McGraw and Warren 2010:1142). Drawing on Liberman and Trope (2008), McGraw et al. propose that psychological distance can be spatial, social, temporal or hypothetical in nature and the greater the distance, the more easily a violation is rendered benign.

A typical sitcom viewer meets the psychological distance criteria in the following ways:

- **Spatial**: The sitcom viewer is geographically distant from the actors in a sitcom and the sets upon which scenes were filmed.
- **Social**: The sitcom viewer is socially distant from the characters of a sitcom because, though they may become familiar with particular characters, the viewer does not 'know' the characters personally and has no opportunity to socialise with them.
- **Temporal**: The time at which the sitcom is recorded in the studio and on location is temporally distant from the time at which the sitcom is viewed.
- **Hypothetical**: The characters in a sitcom are fictional. Though they are portrayed by real humans/ drawn in the likeness of humans, they are not real people. The audience is invited to suspend disbelief and imagine these characters are real people and these situations are truly occurring.

Thus, the generic cues of the sitcom may enable psychological distance which may then aid viewers in finding incongruities, or 'violations' amusing.

2.4.2 Linking Impoliteness and Incongruous Humour

As I outlined in the introduction, the theoretical links between impoliteness theory and humour theory are seemingly congruent with one another. Take, for example, two definitions, one of impoliteness, the other of incongruous humour:

- o "Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered 'impolite' – when they ***conflict*** with how one ***expects*** them to be, how one wants them to be, and/or how one thinks they ought to be" (Culpeper 2011:23, my emphasis)

- o "Humour is seen to arise from the ***disparity*** between the ways in which things are ***expected*** to be and how they actually are" (Mills 2005:83, my emphasis)

Here, we can see that the definitions are unified by a reliance upon a deviation from expectations. Or, a difference between that is *expected* and what is *experienced*. Indeed, Simpson and Bousfield note that "the concepts of humour and impoliteness when present in fiction, drama and even real life, can be natural bedfellows" (2017:163).

Based on an amalgamation of the humour theory literature, McGraw and Warren (2010) propose the Benign Violation Theory, positing that "a situation must be appraised as a **violation**, a situation must be appraised as **benign**, and these two appraisals must occur **simultaneously**" (2010:1142, emphasis) for humour to arise. Violations can include violations of social, moral or linguistic norms (McGraw and Warren 2010:1142). Impoliteness, in the right circumstances, could be classified as violating all three.

Despite the apparent relationship between conceptualisations of impoliteness and conceptualisations of humour, there has been little work exploring the link between these two concepts. In the past fifteen years, only a handful of researchers (e.g. Culpeper 2005, 2011, Dynel 2013, 2016 and Toddington 2008, 2015 and, more recently, Simpson and Bousfield 2017) have approached this topic. Indeed, in stylistics, though dialogue from drama has been a popular source of stylistic analysis, "little of this work has focussed directly or systematically on humour" (Simpson and Bousfield (2017:163). Bousfield and Simpson point to the popularity of conflict-driven drama and comedies such as *House MD* and *The Thick of It*, as well as pseudo-reality programmes such as *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* as being indicative of "a sure attraction towards and fundamental appetite for the socially disruptive nature of what has been termed, in academic circles, as rudeness, aggression and impoliteness" (2017:163).

In the section on humour (2.4.1), I briefly outlined the central tenets of the three main branches of humour theory – Superiority, Release/Relief and Incongruity. What is perhaps remarkable about impoliteness is that its conceptualisation links not only with the incongruity theory as discussed above but can be unified with the other two main branches of humour as well. As Simpson and Bousfield observe, impoliteness can be understood in terms of the superiority theory of humour in that the communication of

impoliteness, or language used to offend "is based on notions of power and, hence, superiority." (2017:163). Impoliteness is sometimes sanctioned, though not necessarily neutralised (Culpeper 2011) when being uttered from those with greater social or institutional power to those with less. A classic example would be in cases of Army recruit training, where powerful officers might be expected to use linguistic impoliteness in order to 'train' new recruits (see Culpeper 1996). Thus, impoliteness has associations with power and it is these associations which link it with superiority. In examining the link between impoliteness and aesthetic pleasure and entertainment, Culpeper (2011) suggests that one of the ways that impoliteness can entertain is through giving the speaker "the pleasure of being superior" (2011:235) to their victim. Culpeper also suggests that superiority theory of humour as proposed in Hobbes' Leviathan can be "used to explain the 'butts' of jokes".

Impoliteness can also be understood in terms of the Release/Relief theory of humour. The use of impoliteness "can be constructed and communicated as a means of socio-cognitive relief (see Bousfield 2008), from pressure, stress or other perceived tension" and this links with the relief theory, as "so too does humour have its relief theory" (Simpson and Bousfield 2017:163). Recent work on humour theory (e.g. Larkin-Galinanes 2017:5) has suggested that the three branches of the field are not mutually exclusive but can co-exist together. This may also be true when linking impoliteness and humour – that the three mechanisms of humour are at work in various ways during impoliteness used as humour. However, just as incongruity has been the most relied-upon theory of humour in linguistics, it is the theory that has been explored in the greatest depth in relation to linguistic analyses of humour.

In a seminal in-depth exploration of humour in relation to incongruity theory, Dynel notes that "practically all humour instances rely on some form of incongruity, with the notions of surprise and novelty lying at its heart" (Dynel 2013:124). Attardo states, "humour analysts are investigating a mode of communication in which the rules of communication are deliberately breached" (Attardo 2017:184). Dynel (2013:124) suggests that impoliteness as a humour device can be best explained through the incongruity theory. She proposes that the incongruity approach humour can be used to address the "hearer's satisfaction and mirthful pleasure" in witnessing impoliteness. Dynel adopts Forabosco's conception of cognitive incongruity in exploring how impoliteness gives rise to incongruity and thus humour. This approach from Forabosco (1992, 2008) "proposes a stimulus is incongruous when it diverts from the cognitive model of reference,

predicated on the premise that an individual garners knowledge in his/her cognitive history, which amounts to models (i.e. unbounded schemata) formed thanks to prior experience and learning […] any new stimulus is evaluated against a relevant cognitive model and in the light of a mismatch, (surprising) incongruity arises" and this gives rise, in the right circumstances, to humour (2013:129). Impoliteness that diverges from our schematic expectations in a situation is thus rendered incongruous and thus humorous.

This position is also found in Simpson and Bousfield (2017):

> "The concepts of humour and impoliteness when present in fiction, drama and even real life, can be natural bedfellows […] One often crucial aspect of humour is that of incongruity. Incongruent humour is that which breaks the expected or schematic norms of everyday situations […] the main point to be made here is that humour is similar, in the respect of social transgression, at least, to impoliteness" (2017:163).

In analysing how impoliteness gives rise to incongruity and humour in medical drama series *House MD*, Dynel notes, "House's impolite utterances present incongruity with the cognitive model of reference for a doctor's (and even an average society member's) standard conversational behaviour. The resolution entails the recipient's realisation that such behaviour is indeed possible, albeit rare and uncanny." (2013:130).

It's also crucial to consider how it is that impolite characters such as *House* manage to maintain their ability to generate humour over many episodes (*House MD* totals 176 episodes), if their humour is reliant on surprise. Surely, viewers will come to expect Dr. House to be impolite and he will cease to be funny? Dynel suggests that though the viewer may come to expect impoliteness from House, the exact nature and time of that impoliteness cannot be predicted and this is what retains the surprise and hence the incongruity and the resultant humour. It is the "random distribution and innumerable manifestations" of House's impoliteness that retain the element of surprise, and thus incongruous humour. Dynel suggests, following Hurley et al. (2011), that viewers do not always develop expectations of what *will* happen, but "what they expected not to happen" (Dynel 2013:132). In regards to incongruous impoliteness in *House MD*, she suggests "it is not the case that […] viewers expect only polite utterances on House's part […] as they are cognisant of his propensity for causing offence. However, each time they have heard an impolite utterance, they will admit that they cannot have envisaged it at the exact conversational moment and/or cannot have conceived of its form" (2013:132).

A final, important point is that, as Dynel notes, "not all incongruities are humorous" (2013:133). Indeed, if we are sympathetic towards a fictional character who is the victim of verbal or physical aggression, we might not be amused. Thus, in addition to resolved incongruity, there are also psychological conditions that must be met in order for a viewer to find impoliteness humorous. Dynel states that minimal victim response helps to "guarantee humorous effects" (Dynel 2013:135). An assessment of a safe context (Rothbart 1976) and a playful frame of mind (Apter 1982, Ruch 2008) have also been proposed as necessary conditions for incongruous humour to be found funny (Morreall 1987). Likewise, Toddington considers that psychological conditions that must be met in order for audiences to find impoliteness entertaining, noting that "the feeling of safety" generated for the audience of a play "allows us to 'enjoy' conflict" (2008:428). In section 2.4.1, I outlined the recent Benign Violation Theory approach to incongruity resolution humour. The theory proposes that distance on a number of planes can assist in making otherwise violational humour funny. The criteria for psychological distance, I argued, are all met by a standard sitcom viewer and, by extension, a viewer of drama such as *House MD*. Meeting these conditions for psychological distance may thus aid the viewer in finding incongruous impolite humour amusing.

2.4.3 Impoliteness and Humour in Stylistics

There are two core principles that are found in the stylistic work on humour – the first is that "humour requires some form of stylistic incongruity" and the second is that "the incongruity can be situated in any layer of linguistic structure" (Simpson and Bousfield 2017:159). Impoliteness, of course, is an example of an incongruity occurring at the pragmatic but also the social level as the communication of impoliteness represents "a break from the norms of interactional explanation", just as humour does when viewed from the incongruity theory (Simpson and Bousfield 2017:163). The exploration of impoliteness in relation to its humour potential is a concern of stylistics because "it is the role of the stylistician to show the mechanisms and models behind the verbal humour and, in this case, therefore, behind the linguistic impoliteness to show how the attempt at humour (or at impoliteness, or both) has been made" (Simpson and Bousfield 2017:164). Simpson and Bousfield propose that "an account of linguistic features serves to ground the stylistic interpretation and explain why, for the analyst, certain types of humour are possible" (2017:159).

Though few stylistic studies have explored the relationship between impoliteness and humour in fiction, those that *have*, have laid the groundwork for further research. First, in terms of linking impoliteness with entertainment, in his 1998 exploration of *Scent of a Woman*, Culpeper identified that entertainment was generated by the Colonel's use of impoliteness and proposed the entertaining function of impoliteness, stating "impoliteness is a type of aggression and aggression has been a source of entertainment for thousands of years" (1998:85). In his later monograph, Culpeper (2011) notes the continuing popularity of impoliteness as a source of entertainment, "Today's television in the UK, but in many other countries too, is replete with programmes stuffed full of verbal violence" (2011:234). Other studies that have suggested a link between impoliteness and entertainment include Brookins, who, analysing classic poetry, states "in almost all instances of impoliteness, the motivation can be connected with the implied author's aim to entertain his literary audience" (Brookins 2010:1283).

Some studies have addressed the link between impoliteness and humour, rather than just entertainment. Exploring the work of William Congreve, a 17th century dramatist, Mandon-Hunter notes that Congreve "successfully combines two aims […] the dramatist stages verbal interaction in which language is used to cause offence (or is perceived as offensive by the hearer and/or spectator) and at the same time achieves comic effect" (2013:94). Likewise, Jobert identifies that *Fawlty Towers* and other sitcoms and sketch shows in Britain "heavily rely on verbal abuse, which seems to suggest that laughter is often triggered by impolite interaction in a sort of comic catharsis" (2013:75). He concludes, "impoliteness is not simply an element of characterisation, but an essential ingredient present on several planes simultaneously in the (sitcom) series" (2013:92).

The relationship between impoliteness and humour is also touched upon by Pilliere's analysis of *House MD*. She notes that "offensive language can become humorous" on account of a clash between context mental models that the audience has for doctor/patient interactions and the actual communicative acts witnessed between House and his patients and colleagues (2013:70). Also using *House MD* as a data set is Dynel's (2013) seminal article on impoliteness as a humour device in which she proposes the concept of disaffiliative humour.

Methodologically, the studies of impoliteness and humour in fiction thus far have adopted a variety of methods in exploring impoliteness and humour. Mandon-Hunter's analysis of 17th century texts highlights the difficulty for historical stylisticians of impoliteness and humour in that they must determine which utterances would have been found humorous

by the audiences at the time when the text was disseminated/performed. Similarly, analyses of modern texts that do not have audience response data, such as Dynel (2013) and Pilliere's (2031) analyses of *House MD*, must also rely on researcher intuition to identify which utterances are likely to be interpreted as humorous. This is perhaps a crucially limiting issue in explorations of dramatic use of impoliteness for humour. Indeed, Simpson and Bousfield are very clear on this issue that "it is simply not enough for the critic-analyst to decree that a passage of writing is humorous; nor is it enough to reiterate a received wisdom about certain genres of writing being 'comic' or to assume that all readers will find aspects of the prose style of, say, Jane Austen or Laurence Sterne inherently funny." (2017:159). Stokoe's (2008) study of *Friends* goes some way to solving this problem by using the laughter responses of the studio audience as verification of the successful uptake of humour. Live co-present studio audience responses (whether laughter, cheers, silence, boos etc) are thus a potential means of verification of audience humour uptake (or not, in the case of silence).

2.5 THE SITCOM

Sitcom, from the portmanteau of '*situation'* and '*comedy,'* denotes a subgenre of fictional television that evolved from radio to television in the 1940s and 1950s. Sitcoms can be distinguished by their adherence (or not) to 'traditional' sitcom cues and genre traits (Austerlitz 2014:3). These traits include fixed three-camera ('three-headed monster') shots (Mills 2014:456), that allow for two close-ups and a wide shot to be filmed simultaneously, audible audience laughter, a three-walled set, and circular narrative plots that are resolved by the end of each episode (Austerlitz 2014:3-4). Early television sitcoms in the late 1940s and early 1950s, e.g. *I Love Lucy* (1951-57) often featured "stable nuclear families", reflecting the conformism and safety post-WW2 audiences desired (Austerlitz 2014:8). These established sitcom traditions were then blown apart, starting in 1989 with *The Simpsons*, with sitcoms "finding humour in the disjunction between [sitcom's] family-values past and the dysfunctional present" (Austerlitz 2014:3). Some popular modern sitcoms such as *The Office* (BBC) and *30 Rock* (NBC) move away from the traditional sitcom cues, using single-camera shots and no audience response. However, traditional studio sitcoms (e.g. *The Big Bang Theory*) are still popular. Indeed, Mills notes that *Father Ted* and *The IT Crowd* represented moves by Channel 4 to revive the traditional sitcom (Mills 2014:457).

Traditional sitcom structure can be argued to resemble a classic narrative cycle. Todorov (1971:39) proposed that narrative involves a "transformation" from equilibrium, to loss of equilibrium (or disequilibrium) leading to action attempting to re-establish equilibrium. The narrative structure of typical sitcoms can be argued to roughly follow this pattern. Austerlitz proposes that "each [sitcom] episode is a self-enclosed world, a brief overturning of the established order of its universe before returning, unblemished, to the precise spot from which it began" (2014:4). Co-writer of *Father Ted*, Arthur Mathews, states "That's the beauty of sitcoms as opposed to drama: you can end one episode with something terrible happening and then not even refer to it in the next," (Linehan and Mathews 1999:22). It is this transcendence from consequence that provides some of the characteristic safety or "familiarity" (Curtis 1982:11) of the sitcom as well as the consequence-limited world in which impoliteness can thrive and (often) go unpunished.

Mills writes that the 'scarcity of academic work on the sitcom' is a consequence of sitcom's popularity with the 'working class' (2005:19). However, this perspective is beginning to change. Dalton and Linder (2005:1) propose that researchers no longer need to justify their interest in television, a sentiment succinctly expressed by Medhurst and Tuck:

> "[T]oo many approaches to popular television have been crippled by varieties of cultural guilt. We're not interested in 'justifying' our interest in sitcoms. We're not concerned with validating them in terms of traditional aesthetics or with wallowing in them as low camp, with patronisingly celebrating their 'working-class vitality', with defensively resorting to the 'sixteen million people watch them so they must be interesting' argument, or with relegating them to the fashionable academic ghetto of popular culture. All those debates, crucial though they once were, seem to us to be obstacles in the way of simply addressing the texts as cultural artefacts."
>
> (Medhurst and Tuck 1982:43).

Their perspective is still relevant 36 years after its publication and is adopted in this research.

2.5.1 Britcom and Social Identity

Often regarded as the first British Sitcom (or 'Britcom', see Mills 2005:40), *Hancock's Half Hour (*BBC 1956-1960) presented a protagonist who, unlike the US sitcom

characters of the time who, on account of the Jewish origins of US comedy (Mills 2014:453, Brook 2003), were witty and self-aware (Mills 2005:42), was a stubborn, fractious loser (Goddard 1991:87). From *Hancock* onwards, while American sitcoms largely portray social relationships as support networks (e.g. *Friends, Cheers),* British sitcom "repeatedly focuses on characters who are incapable of communicating and for whom relationships and family are problematic and stifling" (Mills 2005:41). These poor social skills on the part of British sitcom characters can manifest themselves in the communication of impoliteness.

Often associated with the 'Britcom' is the '*British sense of humour'* which has been described as "real but elusive, accepted as a national trait but apparently unexportable" (Jennings 1970:169) and as a "significant media myth" (Curtis 1982:12). Indeed, the comedy series produced in Britain are closely linked with British national identity (Jennings, 1970, Roura 1995, Jarski 2005, Leith 2011). In 2013, the UK citizenship test was updated to include questions on 1960s British comedy troupe *Monty Python* (Booth 2013). This move implied that a knowledge of *Monty Python* is a required trait of the idealised British citizen and thus signifies comedy's importance to the British and its place in the (real or perceived) British identity.

2.5.2 Prevalence of Impoliteness on Television and in the Sitcom

While in the field of linguistics, there has been little quantitative research into impoliteness in the sitcom, research from media and psychology has repeatedly shown the sitcom to be the television genre containing the most verbal aggression. Table 2-6 below shows the results found for the average number of verbally aggressive acts per hour in a variety of different television genres:

Table 2-6- Comparison of Verbal Aggression Findings

Average number of verbally aggressive acts per hour				
	Greenberg (1980)	Potter and Ware (1987)	Potter and Vaughan (1997)	Glascock (2008)
Sitcom	33.2	11.3	41.9	52.7
Action/adventure/crime	21.9	8.0	28.6	-
Family dramas	13.3	-	-	-
Dramas	-	7.3	-	38.5
Dramas and movies	-	-	19.1	-
Reality shows	-	-	-	18.8
News magazines	-	-	-	1.3

(data from Chory 2010:182)

For each of the four studies in the table above, sitcom was the genre with the highest number of impolite acts per hour, outranking genres that might be considered liable to contain a great deal of conflict, e.g. action, adventure and crime. Glascock's (2008) study finds 52.7 impolite acts per hour - nearly one verbally aggressive act per minute. Potter and Vaughan's (1997) find 41.9, Greenberg et al (1980) find 33.2 impolite acts per hour in the sitcom and Potter and Ware (1987a) find 11.3. These results suggest that impoliteness is important in the sitcom, though these studies do not investigate this relationship further. With the exception of Potter and Ware (1987), these results also show an increase in impoliteness use over time, a finding echoed in Greenberg's (1980) diachronic study and Scharrer's (2001) exploration of impoliteness between parents in sitcoms from 1950-2000.

Many researchers in media and behavioural studies, refer to 'verbal aggression' rather than impoliteness. In order to argue that the results of my impoliteness analyses are comparable (or at least comparable enough to allow for a comparison) to the data analysed as verbal aggression, I will outline below the ways in which the definitions and categories of impoliteness from the three frameworks compare with Glascock's criteria for verbal aggression. Glascock (2008) adopts Infante and Wigley's (1986) definition of verbal aggression, where verbal aggression is understood to be "an attack on the self-concept of another in order to inflict psychological pain, which could include depression, humiliation, or other negative feelings. Examples of verbal aggression include insults, yelling or arguing, threats sarcasm and name calling" (Glascock 2008:269). In the table

below, I list Glascock's defined criteria for verbal aggression alongside the equivalent categories from the three impoliteness frameworks:

Table 2-7 - Comparing Verbal Aggression with Impoliteness

Glascock's Verbal Aggression Examples	Leech's Equivalent Categories	Spencer-Oatey's Equivalent Categories	Culpeper's Equivalent Categories
Insults	Violation of Approbation	Quality Face Challenge	Insults
Yelling			
Arguing	Violation of Agreement	Association Rights Challenge	Pointed Criticisms/Complaints
Threats	Violation of Generosity	Equity Rights Challenge	Threats
Sarcasm	Sarcasm	Quality Face Challenge	Convention-driven implication
Name Calling	Rudeness/Violation of Approbation	Quality Face/ Identity Face Challenge	Insults

All of the criteria of verbal aggression listed by Glascock are covered by equivalent criteria in the three impoliteness frameworks used in the present study. The exception to this is 'yelling'. This is a prosodic feature and so is not included in the three linguistic frameworks though, clearly, all types of verbal aggression can all be realised and thus boosted through 'yelling' or increased volume. In general, I am satisfied that there is enough congruence between Glascock's definition of verbal aggression and the criteria for impoliteness analysis in the three frameworks used in this study to allow for a general comparison.

2.5.3 Social Function of the Sitcom

A point of contention evident in the sitcom literature is the question of whether the sitcom functions as a social disruptor or whether it pacifies the general public. Mills argues that

representing "deviances" such as taboo language use and "incongruities" as "pleasurable", demonstrates "the tenuous and artificial nature of social norms, undermining their supposed transparency and obviousness" (Mills 2009:87), thus impoliteness in the sitcom may be a tool of disruption. Furthermore, he notes that because the sitcom represents incongruous behaviour which is often "at odds with what is normal, […] the sitcom might also be seen as offensive, out of control and troublesome" (2009:88). Curtis notes, "the more complex interactional sitcom activates considerations of class and social relations and the comic effect of challenging or transgressing consensual notions of appropriateness." (1984:8-9)

Sitcoms and comedy programmes were often scheduled to appear on Friday evenings. Indeed, *Father Ted* was originally broadcast "on Friday evenings between the American hits *Cybill* and *Roseanne*" (Llewellyn-Jones 2000:127). Likewise, *The IT Crowd* and *Black Books* were first broadcast on Friday evenings. This rationing of comedy to Friday evenings means sitcoms are broadcast at a time that is the furthest possible time from the viewer's return to work. If sitcoms are disruptive, then perhaps this minimises the likelihood of anti-social sentiments from the sitcom being brought to the workplace. Despite this scheduling, Wickham notes that the catchphrases of *Father Ted*, including 'feck' and 'go on' "quickly became cult favourites across Britain and Ireland. Playgrounds and offices rang out with catchphrases" (Wickham 2014:857). Thus, *Father Ted* had a disruptive influence on the British and Irish lexicons despite its weekend scheduling. Indeed, Walshe (2011) has noted that *Father Ted* introduced 'feck' into the British lexicon. However, he also notes that the ASA rejected a viewer complaint when 'feck', appeared in a beer advert, citing that 'feck's use in *Father Ted* had ameliorated the term (Walshe 2011:146).

The literature also positions sitcom as a tool of pacification as incongruous humour "only makes sense to viewers who understand what is 'normal'" (Mills 2009:87) and is therefore a tool to mock "the deviant" (Mills 2009:87). Similarly, Carroll (2003:348) suggests that incongruous humour arises from the fast retrieval of rules and schemas, thus, viewers are rewarded for knowing social rules. Some sitcoms, such as Keeping up Appearances (BBC 1990-1995) invite audiences "to find individuals' desire to 'better' themselves funny and whose circular narratives doom such characters to forever remain where they are" (Mills 2014:453). The debate over whether the sitcom is a tool of pacification or of rebellion is an open and ongoing. It may be that different structural elements of the sitcom contribute to these two different social effects; as Austerlitz notes,

"the sitcom is a jumble of mixed metaphors: the repetition compulsion of an eternal sameness conjoined to a desire to overturn the established order: a profound aesthetic conservatism bundled with an ingrained desire to shock" (Austerlitz 2014:7).

3   METHODOLOGY

<div style="background:#eee">

ROY: So, here's the plan…

MOSS: A plan? Let me put on my slightly larger glasses.

ROY: You know what? I shouldn't have used the word 'plan' I've clearly got you over-excited.

- THE IT CROWD, EPISODE 1.1

</div>

In this chapter, I outline the methodology of my study, justifying where necessary the motives for methodological decisions. I begin by outlining the research questions, before discussing approach, data selection, collection and analysis. Finally, I consider ethics, copyright, reliability and validity.

3.1   RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND APPROACH

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter in television sitcoms. In addition to this, I sought to explore how impoliteness is realised in the sitcom and whether the fictional characters use impoliteness differently. The thesis doesn't seek to conduct a theoretical exploration of why impoliteness is funny, but rather to conduct empirical and pragmatic-stylistic research into how impoliteness is used in the sitcom and how the audience responds to it. Neither does this thesis seek to claim that impoliteness is the only humour trigger in the sitcom, but that it one of the contributing elements to humour effects in the sitcom.

There were four research questions governed by the over-arching principal research question "Is there a relationship between impoliteness and humour in the sitcom?"

Some studies (e.g. Greenberg et al 1980, Glascock 2008) have shown that sitcoms are the television genre with the highest incidence of impoliteness. Likewise, Ofcom have noted that even those viewers who dislike offensive language understood it as justified for use in comedy (2016). Thus, there is some evidence that impoliteness is likely to be found in the sitcom. No study could be found that explored the prevalence of impoliteness

in British sitcoms. To understand how frequently impoliteness appears in my data set, research question one asks:

1) How prevalent is impoliteness in the sitcom data, both in terms of pragmatic analysis of impoliteness strategy and corpus analysis of Ofcom-sanctioned taboo words?

Given that no other study has yet explored the outcome of a stylistic analysis using multiple impoliteness strategies, I intended to explore how the three frameworks fared when applied to a large data set. Additionally, I wanted to know how impoliteness use was stratified in the scripts.

2) What are the frequencies of impoliteness found by the three impoliteness frameworks and how are those strategies distributed?

Research question three addresses the central question of the thesis:

3) What is the audience response to impoliteness? Is there a statistically significant relationship between linguistic impoliteness and audience laughter?

Finally, research question 4 explores whether there are differences in the way in which characters use impoliteness

4) Is impoliteness used differently by different characters?

This research was approached from the perspective of what Chapman and Clark (2014) term 'pragmatic literary stylistics'. This approach involves the applications of ideas from pragmatics to the analysis of literary texts (Chapman and Clark 2014:1). My study adopted a mixed methods approach (i.e. the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods [Croker 2009:5]). The benefits of combining quantitative and qualitative research are many, as Dornyei states, "a mixed methods inquiry offers a potentially more comprehensive means of legitimising findings than do either qualitative or quantitative methods alone" (2007:62). The two studies that influenced my methodological choices were Dynel's study of disaffiliative talk in *House MD* (2013) and Stokoe's exploration of dis-preferred adjacency pairs in *Friends* (2008). The present study has been designed to build upon these studies by 1) using audience laughter as humour verification and 2) recording audience laughter quantitatively rather than using CA transcription techniques.

3.2 DATA SELECTION

I chose to study sitcom data as the genre meets the three methodological requirements of the data:

- Having humorous intent
- Containing audible audience response
- The possibility that it might contain impoliteness (As found in Glascock 2008).

Given that audience laughter as indexical of humour is crucial to my study, it is important to address authenticity of the audience laughter in my data set. Early sitcoms in the 1950s made use of the artificial inclusion of pre-taped audience laughter produced using a keyboard, which came to be known as 'canned laughter' (see Chafe 2007:110). Canned laughter was developed by Charles Douglass, an American sound engineer, in order to "sweeten a live recording by adding laughs" (Collins 2013:np). Sitcoms such as *Bewitched* were thus enhanced using a "laff box", which was "a proto-Mellotron containing tape loops of merriment and applause, operated by a keyboard" (Collins 2013:np). Since the 1980s, the practice of using 'canned' laughter has declined. Some of the most successful sitcoms of more recent years; *Friends*, *The Big Bang Theory, Frasier,* have all been filmed in front of a live studio audience. Indeed, the 'laff box' itself ended up appearing on the Antiques Roadshow (Collins 2013:n.p). Following the success of sitcoms that do not have a studio audience, such as *The Office* (BBC), *30 Rock* (NBC*), Arrested Development* (Fox/Netflix), the studio sitcom has come under greater criticism from reviewers (Coogan, quoted in Collins 2013, n.p) and a common misconception is that all studio sitcoms still use 'canned laughter'. Graham Linehan refers to this as a "myth" (Linehan 2008:n.p) and Collins (2013:n.p) as "bitchy shorthand" which he argues is used by critics to disparage the sitcom genre.

Graham Linehan, who wrote, co-wrote and/or co-created the three series in the data set has been vocal in his attempts to dispel the myth that canned audience laughter is still used, particularly in his own sitcoms. He has asserted that he always uses a live studio audience to provide the laughter in his sitcoms:

> "So why on earth do I film sitcoms in front of a studio audience? Well, to start with, it pushes me to make the show funnier. We start rehearsals on a Monday in order to film the show in front of an audience the following Friday (location material is shown on monitors in story order). Under the threat of such an

unpredictable group of people, any line that doesn't get a laugh stands out like an old guy at a party. Because *The IT Crowd*, is, like *Father Ted* before it, just a device for generating laughter, this extra pressure is invaluable to me."

(Linehan 2007:n.p)

He has also spoken of audience laughter in such a way that it conforms to the setting-specific cue theory of Handelman and Kapferer (1972:484), whereby it can cue the viewer at home into interpreting an utterance/character/scene as being funny rather than threatening, or tragic:

"There are some actors who come alive in front of a crowd, and if you've cast it right, there's an energy between cast and audience that can be exhilarating for both parties, then enjoyed by the audience at home. […] Audience laughter, when it's deserved, acts as a sort of fairy dust that makes funny moments not just funny, but joyous. It also takes the edge off moments that otherwise might tip over into tragedy; imagine Basil Fawlty whacking his car with a branch or goose-stepping around a hotel lobby to complete silence and you're imagining not a comedy, but a fairly grim account of mental collapse."

(Linehan 2007:n.p)

It is important to the present thesis that the data set contains genuine audience laughter because audience laughter is being used as a measure of successful communication of humour by the sitcom producers (who, by including audience laughter intend to signal to the viewer at home that events are meant to be taken as 'playful', 'non-serious).

In addition to Linehan's publications on the subject, further evidence that the sitcoms in my data set were filmed in front of a live audience comes from behind-the-scenes footage that shows the audience at the taping of *The IT Crowd*:

1. **Backstage Photographs**
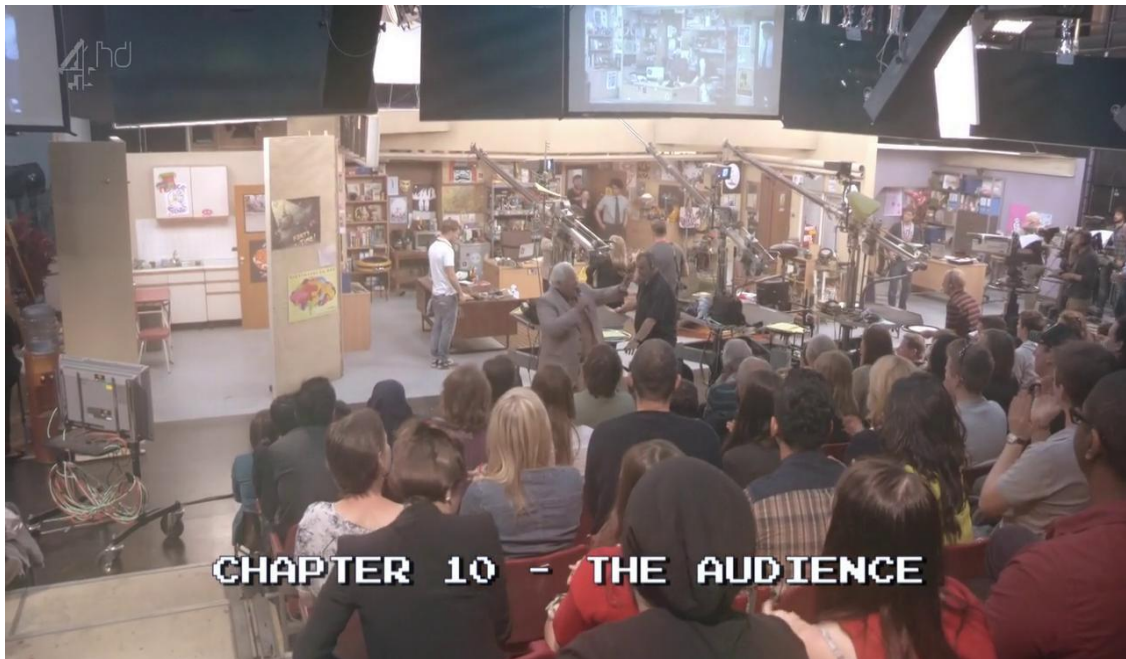
Image 3-1- Backstage Image of The IT Crowd Set

Image: Channel 4 (2014)

Image 3-2- Backstage Photo of IT Crowd Audience

Image of *The IT Crowd* set and studio audience (Dirty Feed 2011)

In 2016, Graham Linehan started a twitter campaign to get those who had been in the audience for any of his sitcoms to tweet pictures from backstage to the TV critic who

complained that Linehan's *Count Arthur Strong* (BBC) sitcom used canned laughter. Multiple responders sent images from backstage at *Count Arthur Strong*.

Image 3-3- Tweet from Graham Linehan

Graham Linehan (2016)

2. Bloopers/Gag reel with audience present and/or with audience causing the blooper

Evidence of a live studio audience also comes from out-take/blooper footage from the taping of *Father Ted*. In an interview for the documentary *Small and Far Away: The World of Father Ted,* Declan Lowney, who directed *Father Ted* introduces his archives of *Father Ted* bloopers. In one clip, Ardal O'Hanlon 'corpses' [laughs] during one of his lines and the studio audience laughs and applauds at his mistake. Lowney comments "Of course, the [studio] audience can see all this and hear it, you know, and sometimes it's good to let the audience hear that stuff, it just adds to the fun." (Lowney 2011). Likewise, the *Black Books* bloopers on the DVD extras show a prop breaking in the middle of a scene and the audience laughing in response (Hat Trick Productions 2013) as well as actors Tamsin Greig and Bill Bailey interacting with the audience.

3. Waiting for laughter to subside

Another indicator that the audience is live is that during the data set, the actors can be seen waiting for the audience laughter to die down before continuing with their lines (an act not present in pre-taped sitcom series such as *How I Met Your Mother* where laughter is dubbed over the top of lines). There are also false-starts when actors begin to speak but realise they will be drowned out by the laughter from the audience. As Lowney noted, "when the laughter's in a wave, it takes a few seconds" for the actors to continue (Lowney 2011).

4. Audience laughter length is different with each laugh.

I recorded the length of each burst of audience laughter in seconds and milliseconds and found that that very few laughter bursts lasted the same length, which suggests legitimacy when compared with the identical-length laughter bursts found in early sitcoms such as *The Flintstones* (ABC 1960-1966).

These elements of evidence together suggest that I can be fairly confident in arguing that the studio audience laughter in my data set is real and not 'canned'.

3.2.1 Data Set

In this section, I briefly introduce the three sitcoms that comprise the data set: *Father Ted, Black Books* and *The IT Crowd.*

3.2.1.1 Father Ted (1995-1998)

Image 3-4- Cast of Father Ted

(Image: Channel4:2013)

Father Ted was broadcast by UK broadcaster Channel 4 between 1995 and 1998, comprising three series and one Christmas special. The series is set on the (fictional) Craggy Island and follows the adventures of three Catholic priests, Fathers **Ted, Jack and Dougal**, who have been banished to the remote island for a variety of misdemeanours. They live with their tea-obsessed housekeeper, **Mrs Doyle** in the Craggy Island Parochial house. The comedy of *Father Ted* has been labelled 'absurd' and 'outrageous' (Berman 2011:121) and indeed, there are often elements of the

fantastical about the series. *Father Ted* was a cult hit that remains popular today (Hunt 2013); in 2012, it was ranked 1st in 'Channel 4's 30 greatest comedy shows' (British Comedy Guide 2012:n.p).

Father Ted Crilly is the protagonist of the series and was banished to Craggy Island by the fearsome **Bishop Brennan** for 'financial irregularities' involving a trip to Lourdes. Ted is described by co-writer Graham Linehan as "very nearly a rounded human being" with the other central characters (Jack, Dougal and Mrs Doyle) being "foils who are only really there to torture Ted" (Harrison 2015). Craggy Island functions as "an actual, literal trap, a bleak Alcatraz for disgraced priests, with Ted marooned there." (Harrison 2015:n.p). Ted is not without his vices, "He cares deeply about all the really superficial things that priests aren't supposed to care about – especially money – and he's utterly useless at hiding the fact" (Linehan and Mathews 1999:8).

Father Dougal is Ted's well-meaning but cognitively-challenged protegee. Dougal struggles to understand simple concepts such as the relationship between size and distance (in episode *Hell*) and the central teachings of the Catholic Church. Ardal O'Hanlon, who portrayed Dougal, notes "I saw Dougal as very doglike, very puppyish and lovable, and really loyal to Ted" (O'Hanlon, in Harrison 2015:n.p). Mrs Doyle is their frenetic housekeeper who offers refreshments with fervour, especially to those who do not want them. Father Jack, who is in retirement at the Parochial house, is an aggressive alcoholic, whose vocabulary is limited to shouting "drink", "feck" and "girls" "with little or no provocation" (Linehan and Mathews 1999:n.p).

3.2.1.2 Black Books (2000 – 2004)

Image 3-5- Cast of Black Books

(Image: Channel4.com)

Black Books was broadcast on Channel 4 between 2000 and 2004 and comprised of three series. The programme centres on the misadventures of irritable and "anti-social" (Bednarek 2010:176) **Bernard Black,** the "doom-laden bookseller who won the heart of the nation" (Patterson 2009:np) whose second-hand bookshop, 'Black Books', is the bane of his life; "selling books isn't a priority for Bernard... if anything he tries to keep the public as far away as possible by […] practising the poorest customer service techniques around." (Channel 4:nd).

Bernard's friend, **Fran**, a slightly neurotic chain smoker and keen wine drinker, owns a gift shop next door. She spends much of her time looking for fulfilment in various aspects of her life and as Bernard's only friend, she tries to better him at every opportunity.

The series begins when recently-fired over-worked accountant, **Manny**, comes to work as Bernard's assistant, following an incident in which he accidentally swallows the '*Little Book of Calm'*, absorbs it into his system and becomes a Christ-like paragon of peace.

3.2.1.3   The IT Crowd (2006 – 2013)

Image 3-6- Cast of The IT Crowd

(Image: Channel4.com)

The IT crowd was created by Graham Linehan as a solo project and was broadcast on Channel 4 between 2006 and 2013, comprising four series and one special. *The IT Crowd* begins with **Jen Barber's** first day at Reynholm Industries. Having lied on her CV about being good with computers, she is made Head of the IT Department. The upstairs offices of Reynholm Industries are sleek and full of 'a lot of sexy people not doing much work and having affairs' (Mr Reynholm ITC 1.1 Turn 50), so Jen is dismayed when she is sent away from this glossy corporate world and down into the dingy, forgotten, basement with the socially awkward **Roy** and **Maurice Moss**. Roy hates his job, evidenced by his IT-support phrase 'Have you tried turning it off and on again?' which quickly became synonymous not only with the series but with IT repair dialogue in general (Corfield 2013, n.p, Daily Edge 2013). **Moss** is a child-like 'geek' who still lives with this mother. He has poor social skills and a variety of idiosyncrasies including attempts at inventing bizarre items, including a 'lie detecting machine', a 'perfect bra' and a ladder for moths who get trapped in the bath.

3.2.2 Rationale for Selection

I will now outline the four influencing factors for the selection of the three sitcoms.

3.2.2.1 Authentic Audience Laughter

As outlined in section 3.2, I was satisfied that the audience laughter in the sitcoms of Graham Linehan was real and not canned, as such his body of work emerged as useful for research concerned with audience laughter.

3.2.2.2 Authorial Consistency

The three sitcoms were written or co-written by Graham Linehan, giving some authorial consistency. Linehan has stated; "we always felt that [Father] Ted was a sitcom in the British tradition although it was set in Ireland" (Linehan in Linehan and Mathews 1999:92). Having all the series come from the British-Irish sitcom tradition was important because it enabled my research to be intra-cultural. Also, impoliteness (and humour) are often culturally defined and so the use of (and reaction to) impoliteness is likely to vary between different cultures, thus I desired my data to come from the British-Irish culture. Additionally, in Britain, artistic control of a sitcom series "is more firmly in the hands of the writer" and so an individual voice "is allowed to flourish" (Mills 2005:55). This enables writers to make use of taboo language and impoliteness more so than American series which are, according to Mills, subject to tighter control from executives and producers.

3.2.2.3 Broadcast Dates

Another reason for choosing the three series was that they are fairly evenly spaced in terms of broadcast date. *Father Ted* (1995-1998), *Black Books* (2000 – 2004) and *The It Crowd* (2006 – 2013) were broadcast at punctuated times over 20 years, which allowed me to conduct a diachronic analysis of impoliteness use.

3.2.2.4 Critical Acclaim and Popularity

All three series have received critical acclaim; *Father Ted* won the BAFTA for 'Best Comedy' in 1996 and again in 1999. The series also won six British Comedy Awards during its run, (IMDB *Father Ted* :nd) and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain bestowed

Linehan and Mathews with an award for Situation Comedy in 1996. *Black Books* won two BAFTAs for Situation Comedy, the first in 2001 and the second in 2005. It also won the Rose d'Or Light Entertainment Bronze Rose for sitcom in 2001 (IMDB: Black Books:nd). *The IT Crowd* won three BAFTAs, including Best Situation Comedy in 2009 and an International Emmy in 2008 for Best Comedy (IMDB IT Crowd:nd). The wealth of awards given to the three series suggests they have been deemed of significant quality by the entertainment industry. That so many of these awards come from British establishments suggests that they are highly regarded as examples of British comedy; that is, they have succeeded in entertaining and are regarded as examples of 'good' writing.

In addition to critical acclaim, the three series have also been popular with viewers. *Father Ted* achieved a 'cult' like status (Hill 2016:225) in Britain; it was voted Channel 4's Best Loved Comedy Programme in 2012 (British Comedy Guide:nd) and is still broadcast weekly in the UK on Channel 4 and its subsidiary channels.

Father Ted has also had linguistic impact in Britain and Ireland, introducing the term 'feck' into popular use (Walshe 2011:20) as well as other memorable catchphrases; "'Down with this sort of thing' and 'careful now' and […] are testament to the universal appeal and hidden perceptive qualities that made a comedy classic out of *Father Ted*" (Harrison 2015:np).

Similar to *Father Ted, Black Books* has been dubbed a "cult classic" (Eames 2015:np). Its continued popularity was noted on the show's 15th anniversary by Bill Bailey, who played Manny; "It's been wonderful watching [*Black Books*] have this big long life after it went out on TV […] It's developed this cult following around the world." (Bill Bailey, quoted in Eames 2015).

The pilot episode of *The IT Crowd* attracted 1.8 million viewers (Gorgoni 2016:n.p), the series' popularity steadily increased and its fourth series had a viewing average of 2.5 million viewers (BBC 2011). With four series and one special, *The IT Crowd* is Linehan's longest-running sitcom to date.

Another reflection of the enduring popularity of the series is that there have been numerous attempts made to re-package the series for American audiences. Several attempts to remake *Father Ted* for an American audience have failed to make it to broadcast (Jeffery 2015, n.p), yet in May 2018, Graham Linehan announced a

forthcoming *Father Ted* musical (Johnston 2018). The enthusiasm for this news on social media and in British news outlets indicates the lasting popularity of *Father Ted*.

Likewise, two attempts at re-making *The IT Crowd* have failed, the first leaked online (Musson 2014:n.p) and never made it to air (Dowell 2014:n.p) and a second remake with Linehan's involvement in 2014 also never materialised (Gill 2014:n,p). That attempts at 'Americanising' the programmes have failed suggests the series have an inherent cultural identity that doesn't transpose easily to other cultures, perhaps reflecting the divergence between UK and US sitcom styles.

3.2.3 Balance and Representation

Baker states that the texts within a corpus "must be chosen and balanced carefully in order to ensure that some texts do not skew the corpus as a whole" (Baker 2010:96). As I used corpus analysis for the exploration of taboo words in my data set, it was important in data selection to make sure that my corpus was balanced. Baker suggests in the compiling of a corpus of prose, "we may decide to only take equal-sized samples from each novel" (2010:96). Building on this, I took equal-sized samples of data from the sitcoms. I did this by selecting the same number of episodes from each sitcom, dictated by the series with the fewest episodes – *Black Books*.

I selected the entirety of *Black Books* which contained a total of 18 episodes. *Father Ted*'s second and third series were extended beyond the 6-episode run of its first series, so I selected only the first 6 episodes of each season for a total of 18 episodes. I did the same for *The IT Crowd*.

As a result, my data set/corpus consisted 18 episodes from each of the three sitcoms for a total of 54 episodes. This totalled approximately 27 hours of data, 141,114 words (excluding stage directions) and 14,135 lines of dialogue.

The episodes included in my data set are listed below. I have assigned each episode a code for ease of reference throughout the thesis, taking the format:

PROGRAM TITLE INITIALS: Season number. Episode number.

Table 3-1- Episodes in the Data Set

Episodes Included in Data Set:					
Father Ted		Black Books		The IT Crowd	
Episode Code	Title	Episode Code	Title	Episode Code	Title
FT 1.1	Good Luck, Father Ted	BB 1.1	Cooking the Books	ITC 1.1	Yesterday's Jam
FT 1.2	Entertaining Father Stone	BB 1.2	Manny's First Day	ITC 1.2	Calamity Jen
FT 1.3	The Passion of St. Tibulus	BB 1.3	The Grapes of Wrath	ITC 1.3	50:50
FT 1.4	Competition Time	BB 1.4	The Blackout	ITC 1.4	The Red Door
FT 1.5	And God Created Woman	BB 1.5	The Big Lock-Out	ITC 1.5	The Haunting of Bill Crouse
FT 1.6	Grant unto Him Eternal Rest	BB 1.6	He's Leaving Home	ITC 1.6	Aunt Irma Visits
FT 2.1	Hell	BB 2.1	The Entertainer	ITC 2.1	The Work Outing
FT 2.2	Think Fast, Father Ted	BB 2.2	Fever	ITC 2.2	Return of the Golden Child
FT 2.3	Tentacles of Doom	BB 2.3	The Fixer	ITC 2.3	Moss and the German
FT 2.4	Old Grey Whistle Theft	BB 2.4	Blood	ITC 2.4	The Dinner Party
FT 2.5	A Song for Europe	BB 2.5	Hello Sun	ITC 2.5	Smoke and Mirrors
FT 2.6	The Plague	BB 2.6	A Nice Change	ITC 2.6	Men Without Women
FT 3.1	Are You Right Their Father Ted?	BB 3.1	Manny Come Home	ITC 3.1	From Hell

FT 3.2	Chirpy Burpy Cheap Sheep	BB 3.2	Elephants and Hens	ITC 3.2	Are We Not Men?
FT 3.3	Speed 3	BB 3.3	Moo-Ma and Moo-Pa	ITC 3.3	Tramps Like Us
FT 3.4	The Mainland	BB 3.4	A Little Flutter	ITC 3.4	Speech
FT 3.5	Escape from Victory	BB 3.5	The Travel Writer	ITC 3.5	Friendface
FT 3.6	Kicking Bishop Brennan Up the Arse	BB 3.6	Party	ITC 3.6	Calendar Geeks

3.3 Data Collection

Every episode in the data set was transcribed from the performances on-screen. This was motivated by the desire to capture the *exact* words that were broadcast rather than the text as printed in a script book because, as Kozloff (2000:92) notes, "in memorising and speaking the lines, nearly every actor changes the wording. Lines are improvised, cut, repeated, stammered, swallowed, paraphrased, changes may be minor or major, but the results represent the unique alchemy of that script in the mouth, mind and heart of that actor." As such, having transcribed the data directly from the spoken language of the screen, I have a record of the delivery as broadcast.

Microsoft Excel was used to record the scripts and to code them according to the frameworks and laughter responses. *AntConc* (Anthony 2014) was used for the corpus analysis.

All 54 of the episodes in the data set were transcribed from the UK DVD editions. Due to my focus on linguistic impoliteness, very little prosodic information was required, except shouting which is indicated with capital letters.

An example of a coded utterance is given below, where the utterance's episode code, turn number, speaker and utterance are reproduced.

| BB 2.3 | 64 | Fran | Sorry, er, I don't actually know what the job, what I… |
| BB 2.3 | 65 | Nugent [on phone] | OH, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, DOES HE HAVE TO BE TOLD EVERYTHING? |

Following a transcription period of six months, each script was checked against the episode to make sure any discrepancies were identified and dealt with (such as missing turns, typos etc). When speech was inaudible, I used the subtitles included in the DVD to verify meaning. If neither the subtitles, lip reading nor repeated viewing could clarify an utterance, I recorded the element as [inaudible]. The total number of words in my data set was 141,114, made up of 14,135 utterances.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

Once my data was collected, I conducted a pilot study in which I analysed the six episodes of season one of *Father Ted* according to the three impoliteness frameworks and for presence/absence of audience laughter using Microsoft Excel. Following the pilot study, I identified two areas that needed to be improved in my methodology:

1) Addition of subsequent laughter bursts

During pilot study coding, I discovered that many utterances triggered more than one burst of audience laughter. Thus, I allocated additional categories to record laughter bursts that occurred more than once, with no cap on how many bursts could be recorded.

2) Addition of laughter placement

When utterances generated more than one audience laughter burst, it became necessary to identify which part of the utterance triggered the laughter. Unless the audience laughter followed the final word of the utterance, the word upon which audience laughter began was marked with a bold font. For multiple bursts, the marking in the utterance was sequential so it was possible to match the trigger word to the laughter burst length.

All other aspects of the methodology were retained and the data analysis procedure is detailed below.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Once I had collected the data, each utterance of the 54 episodes in the data set was coded according to the impoliteness frameworks of Spencer-Oatey (2000), Culpeper (2011) and Leech² (2014). Based on the literature that proposes the mixing of impoliteness strategies (Culpeper et al 2003, Bousfield 2008, Lachenicht 1980:635), each utterance was given the option of a secondary coding for each of the frameworks.

The utterances were also coded for presence/absence of audience laughter, the length of each burst of audience laughter and the part of the utterance at which the laughter began (if not beginning at the final word of the utterance). To prevent unconscious bias during the coding process the results of the coding of the other frameworks and/or audience laughter were hidden. A 2-month gap was used between coding phases in order to minimise the influence of memory for particular coding. The diagram below shows the process for data analysis that was followed:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                   Transcription                       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Spencer-Oatey Coding (Primary and secondary)     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Culpeper Coding (Primary and secondary) with all    │
│                other coding hidden                    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│    Leech Coding (Primary and secondary) with all      │
│                other coding hidden                    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Presence/Absence of Audience Laughter Coding,        │
│      laughter length and laughter placement           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Check of all analysis for errors/inconsistencies │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
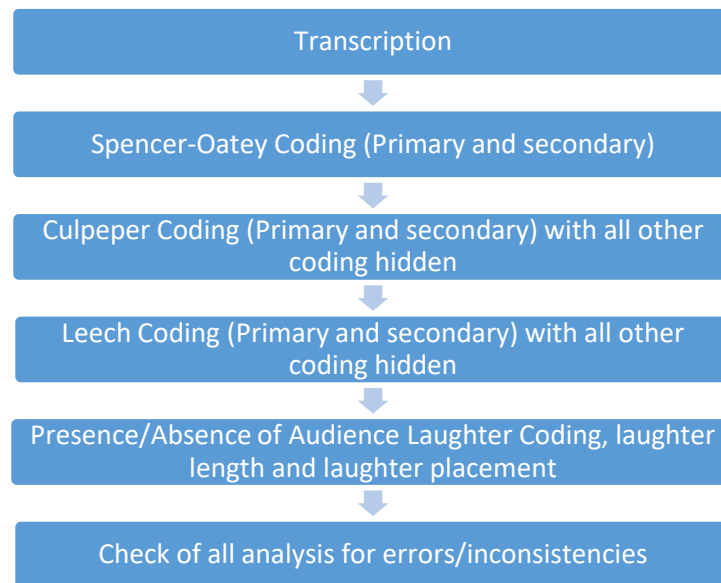
Image 3-7- Data Analysis Order

3.5.1 Impoliteness Frameworks

An important caveat here is that this methodological approach is somewhat experimental as I have been able to find no other comparable study to act as a guide. Furthermore, Culpeper (2011) and Spencer-Oatey's frameworks have not been designed to be applied

to fictional data and though Leech (2014) uses the dramatic text 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' to demonstrate the application of his framework, it was not explicitly designed for only stylistic use. Likewise, it is not necessarily the case that these three frameworks are mutually exclusive, nor by coding with these frameworks separately, is it my intention to imply as much: they are used as discrete systems simply to enable quantitative analysis.

Selecting three impoliteness frameworks for the analysis was based on the following criteria:

1) The frameworks must each take a different theoretical approach to impoliteness
2) The frameworks must each be presented as a finite number of categories that will allow for quantitative coding (unlike, for example the Conversational Contract approach, which has no categories for analysis)

The three frameworks were selected because each takes a different theoretical approach to impoliteness; Spencer Oatey elaborates on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, Leech uses an extension of his own Gricean politeness principle (1983) and Culpeper presents a pattern grammar-inspired conventionalisation and implicational approach. Though, of course, there are elements of overlap - most notably the 'implicational' component of Culpeper's framework adopts the same maxim-based Gricean approach as Leech. However, Culpeper's conventionalisation approach was deemed unique enough to qualify as a framework for analysis. Each framework presents a finite number of impoliteness strategies (Spencer-Oatey has 4 categories, Culpeper has 15 and Leech has 13) in their conceptualisation.

3.5.2 Spencer-Oatey (2000)

Spencer-Oatey's framework for the analysis of rapport management (outlined in brief in section 2.1.1.3) approaches (im)politeness from the perspective of Brown and Levinson's politeness framework (1987). Below are the four categories that Spencer-Oatey proposes as constituting face and sociality rights (2008:4, a restatement of Spencer-Oatey 2000). Impoliteness occurs when any one of these four elements are challenged.

Table 3-2- Spencer-Oatey Framework

1	Quality Face	"We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance etc. Quality face is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of such personal qualities as these, and so is closely associated with our sense of personal self-esteem."
2	Identity Face	"We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend. Identity face is concerned with the value we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of social or group roles and is closely associated with our sense of public worth."
3	Equity Rights	"We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon, that we are not unfairly ordered about, and that we are not taken advantage of or exploited. There seem to be two components to this equity entitlement: the notion of cost-benefit (the extent to which we are exploited or disadvantaged, and the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity), and the related issue of autonomy-imposition (the extent to which people control us or impose on us)."
4	Association Rights	"We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship we have with them. These association rights relate partly to interactional association-dissociation (the type and extent of our involvement with others), so that we feel, for example, that we are entitled to an appropriate amount of conversational interaction and social chit-chat with others (e.g. not ignored on the one hand, but not overwhelmed on the other). They also relate to affective association-dissociation (the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests). Naturally, what counts as 'an appropriate amount' depends on the nature of the relationship, as well as sociocultural norms and personal preferences."

Culpeper (2011:28-29 and 40-41), in adopting Spencer-Oatey's framework when analysing self-report data of impoliteness, provides the following questions for ascertaining whether an utterance fits into one of Spencer-Oatey's framework. When coding my sitcom data, these questions were used in addition to the definitions above to determine an utterance's category.

- **Quality Face:**

"When deciding whether quality face is involved in a potentially impolite interaction, the question to be asked it: *"does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters positive values which a participant claims not only to have as a specific individual but to be assumed by other participant(s) as having?"* (Culpeper 2011:28)

A good example of a quality face challenge comes from *Black Books* episode 3.1:

BB 3.1	86	Fran	Well I think you're both being really selfish. What about me? What am I supposed to do? Think about me, I'm a girl and it's horrible in here.

Under normal circumstances, we can assume that people do not want to be accused of being selfish, with the ability to share being viewed as a positive personal trait in British culture. As such, utterance 86 was coded as containing a quality face challenge.

- **Identity Face:**

"Does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters positive values which a participant claims not only to have in common with all other members in a particular group, but to be assumed by other participants as having?" (Culpeper 2011:29).

An example of this comes from *Father Ted* episode 1.6 in which, after Father Jack ostensibly passes away, a (female) solicitor arrives to detail his will.

FT 1.6	173	Ted	Okay, alright, yeah, I suppose that's the least we can do, anyway, we can discuss it with the solicitor
FT 1.6	174	Laura	I am the solicitor
FT 1.6	175	Ted	No, you're not

By proposing that Laura is not the solicitor, Ted undermines her identity as a solicitor which she could reasonably assume the other participants to uphold.

- **Equity Rights:**

"D*oes the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters a state of affairs in which a participant considers that they are not unduly exploited, disadvantaged, unfairly dealt with, controlled or imposed upon?"* (Culpeper 2011:40).

In *Black Books* episode 2.4, Fran has found some Eastern-European distant relatives who quickly engage Fran in a number of errands.

BB 2.4	141	Fran	I, uh, I think I'll go home, get to bed.
BB 2.4	142	Frederic	Yes, rest Fran. Then on Saturday you will take Gregor to the **hospital.** It's a little out of the way this hospital - **Aberdeen.**

Taking Gregor to hospital in Aberdeen, roughly 500 miles from their location in London has a big cost for Fran (both in time and money) with little benefit. Thus, the utterance is coded as an equity rights violation because Fran clearly feels exploited and imposed upon.

- **Association Rights**

"*Does the interaction evoke an understanding that something counters a state of affairs in which a participant considers that they have an appropriate level of behavioural involvement and sharing of concerns, feelings, and interests with others and are accorded an appropriate level of respect?"* (Culpeper 2011:41).

In the example below, Moss challenges Jen's sociality rights because he shows a lack of involvement in her conversational topic, showing little concern for her interest in Helen Buley. Thus, it is coded as an association rights challenge.

ITC 2.5	172	Jen	Guess who I'm about to meet now. Helen Buley!
Moss shakes his head, indicating he hasn't heard of Helen Buley			
			Oh, come on, she took that football team to court for institutional sexism, won massive damages and now she's head CEO of BHDR industries.
ITC 2.5	173	Moss	Sorry, I kind of switched off after the word 'football'

3.5.2.1 Issues with Spencer-Oatey Coding

The main issue when coding the data according to Spencer-Oatey's framework relates to association rights. A challenge to association rights contests the "fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them" and relates to "interactional association-disassociation" and "affective association-disassociation" (Spencer-Oatey 2000:14-15). In other words, speakers desire not to be overwhelmed with conversation or ignored, and they also wish to share "concerns, feelings and interests". A possible criticism of this element is the ambiguity of the second part. We could argue that as people are supposed to have a concern for their *own* face, by not sharing this concern and by communicating a lack of concern for a hearer's face, speakers might challenge both quality face and association rights simultaneously. Likewise, if 'feelings' are considered to be related to our quality face then, again, there is an overlap. To eliminate confusion, a speaker's ostensible ack of interest in something in which another is interested was thus coded as an association right challenge. The aspect of 'concern for face' remains a quality face challenge.

Association rights thus focuses on two elements: (1) the speaker's desire to be neither ignored nor overwhelmed with the other speaker's interaction and/or (2) lack of interest in something which another is interested in.

An example of an **interactional** association right challenge (1) in which a speaker is ignored or overwhelmed is below in which Bernard tries to instigate conversation with Fran but she rejects his attempts at conversation:

| BB 1.6 | 25 | Bernard | Oh hi, what's the… |
| BB 1.6 | 26 | Fran | Don't need you, need Manny, Manny! Look! Look! |

An example of an **interest** association right challenge (2) in which a speaker shows lack of interest in their interlocutor's interests, is below in which Dougal's fondness for fortune telling is criticised by Ted:

| FT 1.1 | 230 | Ted | It's rubbish, how can anybody believe any of that sort of nonsense? |

3.5.3 Culpeper (2011)

Culpeper's list of 9 conventionalised impoliteness formulae was created in the style of the "pattern grammar of Gill Francis and Susan Hunston" (Culpeper 2011:134). Perhaps unfairly, given that Culpeper explicitly notes that his framework "is not a list of all English conventionalised impoliteness formulae" (2011:136), I have treated the framework as though it were complete. I have done this because the framework is detailed, extensive and approaches impoliteness from a perspective not found in other work. Culpeper notes, "I would be surprised if this list did not include many very generally used English conventionalised impoliteness formulae" (Culpeper 2011:136). Culpeper's proposal that the list is not exhaustive makes it suitable for the forthcoming comparison between the three frameworks as I will be able to see what (if anything) needs to be added or amended to the conventionalised framework based on the results of the Leech and Spencer-Oatey analyses.

I took another liberty with Culpeper's framework in that coding in this binary way (i.e. that a particular conventionalised formula is present/absent), implies that conventionalised impoliteness formulae are not scalar. The scalar nature of conventionalised impoliteness formulae is noted throughout Culpeper's treatment of the topic (2011:137). By adopting a methodology that does not record the scalarity of the conventionalised impoliteness formulae, I of course remove some of the potential for a more nuanced analysis. However, as the first study to apply Culpeper's framework to an extensive piece of data, I hope the findings will be illuminating enough to make up for this methodological compromise.

The coding criteria for Culpeper's framework are provided below:

Table 3-3- Culpeper Conventionalisation Framework

Conventionalised Impoliteness Formulae	
Category name	Culpeper's Examples
Insults	
1) Personalised Negative Vocatives	[you] [fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little/etc.] [moron/fuck/plonker/dickhead/berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/minx/brat/slut/squirt/sod/buggar/etc.] [you]

2) Personalised Negative Assertions	[you] [are] [so/such a] [shit/stink/thick/stupid/bitchy/bitch/hypocrite/disappointment/gay[3]/nuts/nuttier than a fruit cake/hopeless/pathetic/fussy/terrible/fat/ugly/etc.]	
	[you] [can't do] [anything right/basic arithmetic/etc.]	
	[you] [disgust me]/[make me] [sick/etc.]	
3) Personalised Negative References	[your] [stinking/little] [mouth/act/arse/body/corpse/hands/guts/trap/breath/etc.]	
4) Personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)	[the] [daft] [bimbo]	
	[she] ['s] [nutzo][1]	
Pointed Criticisms/Complaints		
	[that/this/it] [is/was] [absolutely/extraordinarily/unspeakably/etc.] [bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/terrible/etc.]	
Unpalatable Questions and/or Presuppositions		
	Why do you make my life impossible?	
	Which lie are you telling me now?	
	What's gone wrong now?	
	You want to argue with me or you want to go to jail?	
	I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience	
Condescensions		
	[that] ['s/ is being] [babyish/childish/etc.]	
Message Enforcers		
	Listen here (preface)	
	You got [it/that]? (tag)	
	Do you understand [me]? (tag)	
Dismissals		

	[go] [away]
	[get] [lost/out]
	[fuck/piss/shove] [off]
Silencers	
	[shut] [it] / [your] [stinking/fucking/etc.] [mouth/face/trap/etc.]
	Shut [the fuck] up
Threats	
	[I'll/I'm/we're] [gonna] [smash your face in/beat the shit out of you/box your ears/bust your fucking head off/straighten you out/etc.] [if you don't] [X]
	[You'd better be ready Friday the 20th to meet with me/do it] [or else] [I'll] [X]
	[X] [before I] [hit you/strangle you]
Negative Expressives (e.g. curses, ill wishes).	
	[go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself]
	[damn/fuck] [you]

(Culpeper 2011: 135-6)

Implicational Impoliteness

Table 3-4- Culpeper Implicational Framework

Category Name	Culpeper's Examples
Form Driven Implication	
	The surface form or semantic content of a behaviour is marked [this includes maxim violations of quantity, quality, relation and manner].
Convention Driven Implication	[includes sarcasm]
a) Internal	The context projected by part of a behaviour mismatches that projected by another part [e.g., "dear sir, kindly fuck off"]
b) External	The context projected by a behaviour mismatches the context of use [e.g. saying "you're welcome" to a

	person who hasn't thanked you for holding open a door for them]
Context Driven Implication	
a) Unmarked behaviour	An unmarked (with respect to the surface form or semantic content) and unconventionalised behaviour mismatches the context [e.g. asking someone to shake their sleeve in an argument about change gives the impression that the hearer is hiding money in their sleeve]
b) Absence of behaviour	The absence of a behaviour mismatches the context [e.g. failing to thank someone for an expensive gift]

(Culpeper 2011:155)

The Culpeper analysis involved three stages. The first identified whether an utterance was 'conventionalised', 'implicational' or 'conventionalised *and* implicational'. This was followed by the primary coding and the optional secondary coding.

Coding for the conventionalised elements of Culpeper's framework was fairly straightforward, given that utterances simply needed to fit into a grammatical structure.

In the example below, taken from IT Crowd episode 1.4, Jen has discovered Richmond, a goth, who has been living in seclusion behind a red door in the IT office. On talking with him, Jen utters the personalised negative assertion "it's obvious you're going mad". This fits within the structure of Culpeper's examples of personalised negative assertions, [you] [are] [X] and so is coded as such.

Thus, the Culpeper type coded is 'conventional' and the primary code given is 'personalised negative assertions'.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Culpeper Type	Primary Culpeper Coding
ITC 1.4	138	Jen	Wow, it's obvious you're going mad. […]	Conventional	Personalised negative assertions

The coding of the implicational impoliteness is slightly more complicated, as the meaning is a pragmatic one found beyond the literal meaning of the words.

The example below comes from episode 3.5 in which Roy has recounted to Jen the tale of a previous relationship with a girl called Alison in which he broke up with her because she wore too much make-up.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Culpeper Type	Primary Culpeper Coding
ITC 3.5	68	Jen	It sounds like you really hurt this Alison's feelings. The least you can do is tell her the truth, be a man, for God's sake.	Implicational	Form driven implication
ITC 3.5	69	Roy	Whoa! Don't, hey I am a man. I will tell her, I will email her.		

Jen's utterance is coded as a form driven implication because of the order "be a man" which carries with it the implication at Roy is behaving in a way not consistent with his ostensible gender identity[3] (*see notes*), based on the gendered hegemonic construction of masculinity entailing strength and bravery. This is a form driven implication as the "surface form or semantic content of [the] behaviour is marked" (Culpeper 2011:155) because the order violates the Gricean maxim of quality in that Roy is ostensibly a man. As such this generates the implicature that he is behaving as though he were not male and this entails (misogynistic) implications of his being weak. Therefore, the utterance is coded as implicational, and being a form-driven implication.

3.5.3.1 Issues with Culpeper Coding

Culpeper's framework has no category for orders/demands. Spencer-Oatey treats these as equity rights violations, Leech as violations of Tact and the absence of a category dealing with orders and commands was an issue when coding the data using Culpeper's framework. It could easily be accommodated into the conventionalised framework, but in

coding the data I did not add any such category to Culpeper's framework as I wished to explore the frameworks as they were presented by their authors.

Another issue I found with Culpeper's framework that also applies to Spencer-Oatey's was that there is no category dealing with taboo words. Instead, taboo words appear as boosters in the conventionalised strategies. As Spencer-Oatey's framework is divided into face and rights, it doesn't explicitly capture taboo words either. Indeed, in his own application of Spencer-Oatey's framework to data in his 2011 monograph, Culpeper creates an additional category to accommodate taboo words. Of course, some taboo words are captured in the conventionalised framework, but there is no explicit category for them.

3.5.4 Leech (2014)

Leech (2014) proposes the GSI, or 'General Strategy of Impoliteness', in which "In pursuing the goal of impoliteness, S will express/imply evaluative meanings that are favourable to S and unfavourable to O" (Leech 2014:221). Continuing in the maxim-based approach inspired by Gricean maxims of the Cooperative Principle and the maxims found in his 1983 treatment of politeness, Leech proposes 10 maxims whose violation constitutes an act of impoliteness. He presents three additional categories of banter, sarcasm and mock impoliteness. The presentation of prototypical speech acts and clarity of the framework meant that coding according to the Leech categories was fairly straightforward. The categories for the Leech coding are presented below:

3.5.4.1 Coding Categories

Table 3-5- Leech's Framework

Leech's Framework of Impoliteness (2014) [O =Other, S= Speaker]			
Label	Maxim Expressed as an Imperative	Typical Speech Acts	Name for Maxim Pair
M1 Violation of Generosity	Give an unfavourable value to O's wants	Refusing, Threatening	
M2 Violation of Tact	Give favourable value to S's wants	Ordering, Demanding	Generosity/Tact

M3 Violation of Approbation	Give an unfavourable value to O's qualities	Insulting, Complaining, Telling Off	Approbation/Modesty
M4 Violation of Modesty	Give a favourable/high value to S's qualities	Boasting, being complacent	
M5 Violation of Obligation to O	Give unfavourable/low value to S's Obligation to O	Withholding thanks or apologies	Obligation
M6 Violation of Obligation to S	Give a favourable/high value to O's Obligation to S	Demanding thanks and apologies	
M7 Violation of Agreement	Give an unfavourable/low value to O's opinions	Disagreeing, contradicting	Opinion
M8 Violation of Opinion	Give a favourable/high value to S's opinions	Being opinionated	
M9 Violation of Sympathy	Give an unfavourable/low value to O's feelings	Expressing antipathy to O	Feeling
M10 Violation of Feeing Reticence	Give a favourable/high value to S's feelings	Grumbling, grousing	

Adapted from Leech (2014:221)

In addition to the 10 maxims which were coded according to their Leech-assigned number, Leech added three additional categories that were not present in his 1983 work:

Table 3-6 - Leech's Framework – Additional Categories

Rudeness (taboo language)	"We can attach the word *rudeness* to the offensive use of language that is not just a matter of expressing or intensifying impolite meanings but of being blatantly offensive […] One sign of rudeness, in this sense, is that the expressions [e.g. goddamn] have no meaningful function apart from adding an aggressive emotive charge. […] Taboo terms alluding to physical sex, bodily excretion, or other taboo topics can be found aplenty in spoken corpora and other sources. They extend from the milder end of the

	scale (piss, shit, bugger, balls, etc.) through moderately offensive items (like *bastard*) to the more extreme end (*fucking, cunt, motherfucker)*, the last group obviously having the most aggravating effect. […] Some swear words can be used alone as an impolite illocution, e.g. 'Piss off' ('Go away') or 'Bullshit!' (in the sense of 'What you say is nonsense!); others need to combine with other expressions in a longer illocution. Perhaps the most telling demonstration of the impoliteness of swear words occurs where the utterance, without the added swear word, could be interpreted 'innocently' with no implication of impoliteness. In other words, the swear word is in itself responsible (pragmalinguistically) for the impolite effect." Swear words and animal metaphors are good examples of rudeness (Leech 2014:229-231).
Banter (Mock Impoliteness)	Banter occurs when "overt impoliteness leads to a 'polite' (or rather, 'cameraderic') interpretation […] The rationale behind this is that if two or more people find it possible to exchange insults, and other impolite remarks, and at the same time to treat these as nonserious, or even amusing, they share a powerful way of signalling their solidarity […] banter is not normally used between people who are of unequal power status, or who are strangers" (Leech 2014:239). "banter has a positive function in allowing aggression to be expressed, but also in defusing its violent effects by promoting an atmosphere of friendly jocularity" (Leech 2014:241).
Sarcasm (Conversational Irony)	Sarcasm occurs when "overt politeness leads to an impolite interpretation" (Leech 2014:238). "S says something that is superficially interpretable as polite but is more indirectly or 'deeply' interpreted as face attack – as impolite." (Leech 2014:232). Leech refers to this phenomenon as conversational irony but this phenomenon is more commonly known as 'sarcasm'. His full definition is as follows: "In order to be ironic, S expresses or implies a meaning (let's call it Meaning 1) that associates a favourable value with what pertains to O (O= other person(s), mainly the addressee) or associates and unfavourable value with what pertains to S (S= self, speaker). At

| | | | the same time, by means of Meaning 1 and the context, S more indirectly implies a second, deeper meaning (Meaning 2) that cancels out Meaning 1 by associating an unfavourable value with what pertains to O, or associating a favourable meaning with what pertains to S. The derivation of Meaning 2 from meaning 1 is by means of two paths of inference: first, Meaning 1 is infelicitous (i.e. pragmatically untenable in context, often because of violation of the Cooperative Principle) and therefore to be rejected; and second, given that the meaning is **infelicitous** and in accordance with the PP[Politeness Principle], the obvious way to make sense of it is to look for a related interpretation that is **felicitous** and not in accordance with the PP – which is what the Irony Principle [IP] provides" (Leech 2014:233, emphasis added). |

Every utterance in the data set was coded according to these 13 categories.

The following example is taken from episode 3.6 of *The IT Crowd* in which Roy is photographing Moss for a charity calendar and has asked him to pose as though he has just made a scientific discovery.

ITC 3.6	199	Moss	But what have I discovered?	
ITC 3.6	200	Roy	It doesn't matter.	
ITC 3.6	201	Moss	It does a bit actually.	M7 Violation of Agreement

Turn 201 is coded as constituting a violation of Agreement because Moss explicitly contradicts Roy by reversing the polarity of his statement in order to communicate his disagreement.

3.5.5 Secondary Coding

Despite Brown and Levinson's argument to the contrary (1987: 17-20), Lachenicht proposed that "it is possible to combine more than one [impoliteness] sub-strategy into an utterance" (1980:635). In an exploration of televised data, Culpeper et al (2003:1562) concluded that "combinations of strategies turned out to be the norm in our data: in any one interaction a participant never used a single strategy just once." Likewise, Spencer-

Oatey (2008) notes that in some situations, face and rights are threatened at the same time. As such, in order for my analysis to allow for such potential strategy mixing, I created a 'secondary' coding column for each framework. This meant that each utterance had the potential to have a 'primary' and 'secondary' strategy coded, for each of the three frameworks, allowing an exploration of strategy mixing.

Of course, having a 'primary' and 'secondary' code implies that one strategy is more prominent than the second. For some utterances that made use of strategy mixing, this wasn't the case. When two codes were equally pertinent to an utterance, the sequential order with which they occurred was used to assign 'primary' and 'secondary'.

I'll now give an example of the use of secondary coding. In the extract below, Manny's utterance (turn 48) is given two Leech codes.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Primary Leech Code	Secondary Leech Code
BB 2.1	47	Bernard	Where were you? Fran kicked me out for her stupid lesson.		
BB 2.1	48	Manny	Shut up. I'm not talking to you.	M2 Violation of Tact	M1 Violation of Generosity

The primary code, relates to 'Shut up'. This is coded as a violation of Tact because it takes the form of an imperative. The second part of the utterance 'I'm not talking to you' functions as a refusal on Manny's part to converse with Bernard and is coded as a violation of Generosity. The codes are applied as 'primary' and 'secondary' in relation to the order in which they appear. As mentioned, this ordered coding is necessary only in cases where a strategy was not clearly more prominent than the strategy it was mixed with.

Of course, impoliteness strategy mixing is not limited to two strategies. However, I capped the number of strategies per framework at two in order to keep the data generated within manageable limits. As each of the three frameworks were to be given a secondary coding, this meant that each of the 14,135 lines of dialogue were analysed six times, with a potential for 84,810 data codes. Capping the strategy mixing coding at two codes per framework kept the data generated within manageable limits with the time available. The pilot study results also indicated that a low percentage of utterances used strategy mixing and indeed, the results of the primary and secondary analyses of the

entire data set showed that only 18% of Leech-coded utterances used strategy mixing, 17% of Spencer-Oatey-coded utterances used strategy mixing and only 6% of Culpeper primary impoliteness codes were followed by a secondary code. These low percentages, indicate that adding a tertiary coding would be relevant only for a few utterances and thus, considering the aims of the present research, would be mostly unnecessary.

3.6 LAUGHTER ANALYSIS

Devereaux and Heffner note that "a paradox exists that everyone knows what laughter is but scientifically its measurement has been scattered" (2006:235). Edmonson provides a useful linguistically-orientated definition of laughter, stating that "the central sound feature of laughter is aspiration /h/. It is the reiteration of this sound, or its combination with a limited range of others, that enable us to identify an utterance as laughter" (1987:23). In defining laughter Chafe (2007:22) includes the importance of inhalation and Hopper (1992:179) includes exhalation. Mills (2009:13) mentions both. Though these definitions are useful, the ubiquity of human experience of laughter also allows for, following Kowal (2009:165), a "common-sense" approach to defining the phenomenon. McKeown and Curran (2015:27) similarly approached their participants as "laughter experts", stating that "as long-term laughers and receivers of laughter as a social signal, [humans] can be deemed to have developed some expertise" regarding laughter ascriptions. In coding the presence/absence of laughter in the data set, I adopted the common-sense approach, coding as laughter "any perceptibly audible sound that an ordinary person would characterise as a laugh if heard under ordinary everyday circumstances" (Bachorowski, et al. 2001:1582).

3.6.1 Laughter as Mark of Humour Uptake

Edmonson argues that laughter can be used by an individual to cast a vote in regards to their pleasure or displeasure at a particular stimulus (Edmonson 1987:29). Group laughter, he writes, is similar to cheering, applauding or booing in that it enables groups of individuals to 'code' their "socially shared joy and anger" (Edmonson 1987:29). Schenkein echoes this view, noting that "interactants can display affiliation by producing laughter and disaffiliation by withholding it" (Schenkein 1972, cited in Voge and Wagner 2010). In this thesis, I argue that the presence of laughter in my dataset can be taken as a sign that the utterance or behaviour exhibited at that time in the sitcom has successfully communicated humour to the studio audience. Laughter as an indicator of successful

humorous uptake of a stimulus has been proposed in other studies; Platow et al. adopted the position that audience laughter is "social proof" (Cialdini 1993:94) that "potentially humorous material is funny" (Platow et al. 2004:542). Likewise, Lawson, Dowling and Cetola propose that "audience members' unconstrained laughter is valid social proof of the humorous quality of the material" (1998:244). That comedy can be classified as successful when it elicits audience laughter is also echoed in theatre studies, "to hear waves of laughter rolling onto the stage [...] so long as you are performing a comedy [is] to know that your work is succeeding" (White 2013:132). Linehan himself has claimed that "*The IT Crowd*, is, like *Father Ted* before it, just a device for generating laughter" (Linehan 2007:n.p). It is this notion of audience laughter as evidence of the successful humorous uptake of a character's utterance or behaviour which is crucial to my study, as it enables me to quantitatively analyse the relationship between impolite utterances and audience laughter as a way in to arguing that impoliteness triggers humour. Thus, in this study, it will be taken that laughter of the studio audience indicates the successful uptake of humour from whatever is occurring on screen at that time.

3.6.2 Transcribing Laughter

Researchers in the field of Conversation Analysis have contributed the majority of work on laughter in everyday interaction (Myers and Lampropoulou 2016:78), with much of that work coming from Gail Jefferson, who in 1985 wrote that "laughter appears to be among the activity types that do not require, nor lend themselves to reporting of their particulars" (1985:27-28). Though there is a wealth of research of individual speakers' laughter in interaction, few linguistic studies have explored multi-speaker/audience laughter.

While the CA methodologies for the transcription of the laughter might be suitable for transcribing the laughter of *individual* speakers, the application of CA transcription to the sounds made by a group of audience members laughing is less appropriate as it cannot capture duration, intensity or indeed the real sounds made. I have given Stokoe's (2008) study of *Friends* in evidence of this point; the excerpt below from Stokoe's (2008) study, which was reported in section 1.1, presents two different bursts of audience laughter. I would argue the transcription does not accurately portray the sounds heard in the episodes of many hundreds of people laughing and makes objective comparison between the laughter bursts difficult.

A: [HEH HEH HEH HEH heh heh heh [heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh]

A: HEH HEH HEH HEH heh heh heh heh heh [heh] heh

(Turns 28-29 and 41, Stokoe 2008:300-301)

Jefferson noted in 1985 that the procedure of naming laughter is "unquestionably adequate for a range of purposes and illuminating a range of phenomena" (1985:28). I argue that naming the presence of laughter will be a useful starting point for a correlative study of impoliteness and audience laughter. Though problematic, Stokoe's transcription points to two features of audience laughter intensity that can be compared: duration and volume.

3.6.3 Measuring Laughter Intensity

It can be hypothesised that the intensity of an audience's laughter response may indicate the strength with which an utterance (or action) triggers a humour response. In a study of over 600 participants, McKeown and Curran (2015) found a significant positively correlated relationship between the intensity which participants ascribed to laughter and their rating of the laughter as humorous. "High intensity laughs [are] strongly associated with humour and low intensity laughs [are] only weakly or not at all associated with humour" (McKeown and Curran 2015:29). Based on these findings, the authors recommend that "some measure of intensity is always included in studies that seek to investigate laughter" (2015:29). Stokoe's (2008) CA transcription points to two measures of intensity; duration and volume.

3.6.3.1 Duration

One measure of laughter intensity that seems intuitively obvious is that of duration. As Edmonson states, "real amusement requires a longer signal, and normally exceeds one second in duration" (1987:27). "Intensive laughter is prolonged and hence requires reiteration, though it appears to be the duration of the laugh utterance rather than the number of reiterations that signals intensity" (Edmonson 1987:31).

Studies that have measured laughter duration as a marker of laughter intensity include those that have explored the influence of self/other categorisation of audience on viewer laughter (Platow et al 2005), the influence of facial behaviour on audience laughter (Stewart 2010) and cultural variation of laughter (Edmonson 1987). The quantitative nature of recording of the length of time spent laughing (or the number of laughs emitted)

allows for the testing of the statistical significance of the relationship between variables and the amount of time participants spent laughing. For example, Platow et al. found that "participants laughed more (nearly four times as much) when they heard an in-group audience laugh" than when they heard out-group laughter (2005: 547). Therefore, I would argue that the use of recording of 1) the presence/absence of laughter, and 2) the length of time the audience spends laughing will provide the reader with a more objective and comparable laughter record than the traditional CA transcription.

3.6.3.2 Volume

Though Stokoe's CA transcription makes use of capitalisation to indicate volume, the present study will only use duration. Edmonson (1987) uses that duration and volume as simultaneous markers of intensity. Thus, the addition of volume measurement would be redundant given that the study already explores intensity through duration. Additionally, the practice of 'levelling' in sound mixing of the DVDs would obscure the true volume at the time of recording.

3.6.4 Coding of Laughter

Once all 54 episodes had been coded according to the primary and secondary impoliteness codes for the three frameworks, the presence/absence of audience laughter, length of laughter busts and placement of the laughter was recorded, using the DVDs as data source. Rather than only recording laughter responses following impolite utterances, I recorded audience laughter for all utterances, as this would allow me to compare laughter responses to utterances featuring impoliteness with utterances without impoliteness.

3.6.4.1 Presence/Absence of Laughter

Laughter presence/absence coding was a straightforward process. Each line of dialogue as recorded in the transcribed scripts was given a column titled 'laughter?'. A yes/no binary drop-down list was created for each row and each utterance was coded accordingly.

There were no instances where it was not possible to determine whether there was audience laughter or not. There were some instances, however, where there was an action on set that had no language attached to it (e.g. a character falls over, with no

dialogue uttered). If it was clear that the audience laughter followed a physical move on the stage and not on any preceding dialogue, laughter was not attached to the utterance.

3.6.4.2 Laughter Length

Every audience laugh was timed using a stopwatch recording **Minutes: Seconds: Milliseconds** to two decimal places. In cases where there was more than one audible burst of laughter, each distinct burst was timed individually.

3.6.4.3 Placing of Laughter

For the majority of utterances, the laughter occurs on or after the last spoken word of the turn. In these cases, no mark was given as this was the 'standard' or 'default' response. If there was more than one audience laughter burst and/or the laughter burst came somewhere other than the end of the utterance, the word that triggered the laughter would be in bold.

The example below shows the binary yes/no of audience laughter, the three laughter burst lengths and the words that triggered them are in bold.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Audience Laughter?	Laughter 1 Length	Laughter 2 Length	Laughter 3 Length
BB 1.1	48	Customer	I expect better service.				
BB 1.1	49	Bernard	Well expect away. Get out, bye **bye,** come on all you time-wasting bastards, get back on the	Yes	0.00.94	0.01.32	0.01.16

<table>
<tr><td>

streets,

come on,

bye, bye,

bye.

Goodbye!

Thank you,

bye bye

bye. Come

on, it's

back to

reality.

Thank you.

</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

3.6.4.4 Resultant Data

The resultant data from the coding process outlined above was an excel spreadsheet for each episode in the data set (54 in total). The screenshot below shows the result of the coding in a spreadsheet for *Black Books* episode 1.1:

Image 3-8 - Screenshot of Coded Data

	A	B	C	D	E	F	H	I	J Spencer-Oatey	K Secondary Spencer-Oatey	L Laughter Y/N?	M Laughter 1 Length	N Laughter 2 Length
3	BB 1.1	2	Customer 1	These books... Hello there? Excuse me?									
4	BB 1.1	3	Bernard	Yeah... yeah	Implicational	Context-driven implication	M1 Violation of Generos	Association Rig	Identity Face			
5	BB 1.1	4	Customer 1	'Scuse me, I just wonder if,								
6	BB 1.1	5	Bernard	It'll be much simpler this time, Nick, honestly. The accounts are in order. Yeah, okay, well I'll see you in an hour. Okay. Bye	Implicational	Context-driven implication	M1 Violation of Generosity					
7	BB 1.1	6	Bernard	Now..?					Association Rights			
8	BB 1.1	7	Customer 1	Those books... How much?								
9	BB 1.1	8	Bernard	Hmm?								
10	BB 1.1	9	Customer 1	Those books. Leather bound ones.								
11	BB 1.1	10	Bernard	Yes. Dickens. The collected works of Charles Dickens								
12	BB 1.1	11	Customer 1	Are they real leather?								
13	BB 1.1	12	Bernard	They're real Dickens	Implicational	Form driven implication	Sarcasm ("conversational irony")			Yes	0.00.87	
14	BB 1.1	13	Customer 1	I have to know if they're real leather because they have to go with a sofa. Everything else in my house is **real.** I'll give you 200 for them						Yes	0.01.48	
15	BB 1.1	14	Bernard	200 what?	Implicational	Convention-driven implication						
16	BB 1.1	15	Customer 1	200 pounds								
17	BB 1.1	16	Bernard	Are they leather-bound pounds?	Implicational	Form driven implication	Sarcasm ("conversational irony")			Yes	0.02.80	
18	BB 1.1	17	Customer 1	No.								
19	BB 1.1	18	Bernard	Sorry, I need leather-bound pounds to go with my wallet. Next!	Implicational	Form driven implication	M1 Violation of Generos	Equity Rights	Identity Face	Yes	0.03.94	
20	BB 1.1	19	Manny	Hello?								
21	BB 1.1	20	Bernard	Hello.								
22	BB 1.1	21	Manny	Do you have the little book of calm? I need the little book of calm. Do you have it? I need it, I'm late for **work.** Calm...little book...						Yes	0.01.41	
23	BB 1.1	22	Bernard	Is this it?								
24	BB 1.1	23	Manny	Ah, no, it's too big, little...small								
25	BB 1.1	24	Bernard	This one?								
26	BB 1.1	25	Manny	The... Calm...the little book of calm. It's a little one.								
27	BB 1.1	26	Bernard	Is this it?								
28	BB 1.1	27	Manny	Yes! How much?								
29	BB 1.1	28	Bernard	Two Fifty								
30	BB 1.1	29	Manny	Two fifty.								

Each spoken turn has been according to the three frameworks, with a primary and secondary code available for each. A binary of Yes/No for the presence/absence of

laughter was recoded (a blank cell in this column indicates no), and then the duration of any bursts of laughter, with the part of the utterance where the laughter began being highlighted in bold.

3.7 CORPUS ANALYSIS

Baker notes that "in stylistics, corpus methods of analysis have been used in order to add systematicity to and reduce subjectivity in stylistic analysis" (2010:101). For the explorations of taboo word incidence and keyness in the data set, the corpus analysis programme AntConc (Anthony 2014:3.4.4w) was used in order to investigate the incidence of the taboo words. I also identified particular taboo words' keyness in the data set against a reference corpus using the keyword list generated by the British National Corpus, a "100-million-word corpus of present-day British English" (McEnery2006:14). I treated my data set as a 'specialised corpus' (Baker 2010:99), though its restricted size of only 141,114 words meant that I had to be careful about any conclusions I wished to make.

In order to remove researcher bias in the taboo words that were explored in the corpus analysis, I used Ofcom's list of general taboo words (2016) (reproduced in section 2.1.5), which are subject to censorship in the UK. Primarily, I chose this taboo list rather than one gathered from the beginning of my research data (e.g. 1995) because it is the most comprehensive list of taboo words and how they are regulated to be published by a regulatory body to date. Furthermore, as my data spans 18 years, there would be no way to select a point from within that time without this being to the advantage of one series over the others. Culpeper (2011) reports that taboo words have remained relatively stable over the past few decades and so it is unlikely that the taboo words from 2016 are markedly different in their content or offensiveness than they would have been in 1995. The use of the Ofcom taboo words as a list is a means of generating a list of widely-recognised taboo words in British English which are subject to current broadcast legislation without relying on a researcher-generated list.

3.8 ETHICS, COPYRIGHT, RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY CONSIDERATIONS

3.8.1 Ethics

As this thesis did not make use of human participants, ethical approval was not relevant and so was not sought.

3.8.2 Copyright

The copyright of the scripts performed in the three programmes resides with its creators and broadcasters, in order not to breach copyright, the data transcribed from the series will not be made publicly available online or elsewhere.

3.8.3 External Validity

External validity concerns "the generalizability of the results beyond the observed sample" (Dornyei 2007:50). I have taken the following steps to improve the external validity of my study:

1) Triangulation

Triangulation, the use of "multiple methods, sources or perspectives in a research project" (Dornyei 2007:61) has been noted to "strengthen the conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from the analysis" (Palfrey et al 2009:266). In other words, "triangulation has traditionally been seen as a way of ensuring research validity" (Dornyei 2007:62). My research made use of two types of triangulation: method triangulation and data triangulation through the triangulation of three impoliteness frameworks and the triangulation of three sitcom data sets. As Dornyei notes, "if we come to the same conclusion about a phenomenon using a different data collection method or a different sample, the convergence offers strong validity evidence" (Dornyei 2007:61).

2) Mixed Methods

As will no doubt be clear from the above methodology, my research adopts a mixed methods design. It has been argued that mixed methods research has the potential to balance the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis (Walker 1985). By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches into my mixed methods study, I was also able to address some external validity issues (Dornyei

2007:63), one of which is anecdotalism, or 'cherry-picking'. Anecdotalism relates to the selection of examples without any method of "'within case' sampling to justify selection of examples" (Dornyei 2007:56). As Dornyei asks, how are researchers "to convince themselves (and their audience) that their 'findings' are genuinely based on critical investigation of all their data and do not depend on a few well-chosen 'examples'?". On account of the mixed methods approach, illustrative examples chosen from the data set have been selected based on their membership of pre-defined groups based on the quantitative results of the impoliteness analysis. By using the quantitative coding results to guide the selection of examples from the data set, I hoped to be working on reducing the influence of anecdotalism, though of course in qualitative research, anecdotalism cannot be eliminated.

3) Diachronic Study

Duff (2006) has argued that, "longitudinal studies have the potential to increase the validity of the inferences that can be drawn from them because they can [...] document different types of interactions over time" (Duff summarised in Dornyei 2007:62). Rallis and Rossman (2009:265) note, one strategy to establish credibility (a term used to refer to validity [Dornyei 2007:49]), is to gather data "over a significant period of time [...] as [...] superficial one-shot data collection is definitely insufficient".

By selecting data from sitcoms aired at different points over an eighteen-year period (1995-2013), I was able to conduct my analysis of sitcom language over a significant period of time and to explore my results diachronically.

3.8.3.1   Reliability

Reliability "concerns the extent to which results are reproducible" (Palfrey et al 2012:68). This is an issue typically associated with qualitative research. Whereas in the corpus analysis, the reliability is enhanced by the ease of which the results can be replicated, for the analysis of qualitative data using pragmatic frameworks, reliability is more of an issue. In order to strengthen the reliability of my analysis, the following steps were taken:

1) Use of quantitative analysis.

Using the binary presence/absence of audience laughter, timed laughter length as well as the corpus practices adopted, I was able to quantitatively explore my data and the presence of the types of impoliteness and how the audience responded. These aspects

of the quantitative analysis would be easily replicated and would likely show minimal variation, particularly with regards whether or not audience laughter follows an utterance and if so, how long that laughter lasts. I would expect differences between myself and another researcher with regards timing of laughter to minimally vary.

2) Coding using existing frameworks

With regards to assessing a methodology's rigor, Rallis and Rossman ask "is there a strong conceptual framework to guide the research? Is the conceptual framework explicated fully and clearly?" (Rallis and Rossman 2009:267). Addressing the first question, rather than creating my own framework and testing it on the data, I used three already established frameworks, each of which are clearly explicated by their authors. This meant that there were three strong conceptual frameworks guiding my research. With regards the second part of the question, in this methodology, the criteria for the coding has been made explicit. Of the three frameworks, the conventionalised impoliteness framework (Culpeper 2011) is the best candidate for reliability because the pattern grammar format of the utterances means that an utterance clearly fits the pattern or it does not.

3) Coding check

I re-checked all coding after an interval of 2 months from the date of coding completion in order to confirm that all coding was satisfactory, making amendments where necessary.

4 PREVALENCE OF IMPOLITENESS

> "*Bastard* this and *bastard* that, you can't move for the bastards in her novels, it's wall-to-wall bastards!"
>
> - MRS DOYLE, EPISODE 1.5

The central argument of this study is that impoliteness is used in the sitcom as a mechanism for humour. As a corollary of this, if impoliteness is one (though not the only) way in which humour is generated, we might reasonably expect there to be a high usage of impoliteness in the sitcom. In the present chapter, I will explore the prevalence of impoliteness in my sitcom data in order to answer the research question: **How prevalent is impoliteness in the sitcom?** I shall explore this in two ways: Firstly, I will look at the utterances coded as impolite by one or more of the three frameworks. Given that only Leech's (2014) framework has an explicit code for taboo words, I will then explore the prevalence of taboo words specifically, using Ofcom's list of general offensive terms (2016) as the basis for a corpus analysis.

At the time of data analysis (2016), no study could be found within the past decade that quantitatively explored the frequency of impoliteness in British sitcoms, and as such the most recent exploration of impoliteness in US sitcoms (Glascock 2008) will have to be taken as the point of comparison for my own findings. As outlined in the literature review (Section 2.5.2.1), given the agreement between Glascock's framework of verbal aggression and the three frameworks used in this study, I will take 'verbal aggression' to be roughly synonymous with 'impoliteness'. In linguistics, it is uncommon to present results for the presence of a linguistic or pragmatic phenomenon per hour, however, as this is the way in which Glascock (and the majority of other studies from media studies) presents his findings, I will also report my findings per hour when comparing my results with Glascock's for ease of comparison.

4.1 AVERAGE NUMBER OF IMPOLITE ACTS PER HOUR: COMPARISON WITH GLASCOCK (2008)

In this section, I explore the average number of impolite acts per hour that occurred in my data set.

4.1.1 Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this set of results was as follows:

> HYPOTHESIS: Impoliteness in my sitcom data will be as frequent (in acts per hour) as the number of verbally aggressive acts found in US sitcoms by Glascock in 2008.

4.1.2 Method

1. If one or more of the three frameworks (Culpeper 2011, Spencer-Oatey 2000 and Leech 2014) coded an utterance as containing impoliteness, then the utterance was counted as containing impoliteness.
2. The episodes in my data set were originally broadcast in 30-minute timeslots. As such, each episode will be taken to represent 30 minutes of television. Though each episode typically lasts a little less to allow for commercial breaks, when broadcast on Channel 4, the language found in each episode would be representative of 30 minutes of television.
3. The number of impolite utterances per episode was calculated and then the averages for each series, program and the data set as a whole were calculated.
4. The resulting averages were all for 30 minutes of data and so were then multiplied by 2 to represent sixty minutes of television.

4.1.3 Results

The table below shows the results of the average number of impolite utterances per hour in my data set. These are compared with Glascock's findings for the average number of verbally aggressive acts per hour of US sitcoms. My data set consisted of 27 hours of data, though Glascock does not provide the number of hours of data in his data set.

Table 4-1 - Impolite Acts Per Hour Result Compared with Glascock (2008)

Glascock's (2008) findings: Average number of Verbally Aggressive acts per hour in US sitcoms	My findings: Average number of impolite utterances per hour in the first 3 series of *Father Ted*, *Black Books* and The IT Crowd
52.7	151.7
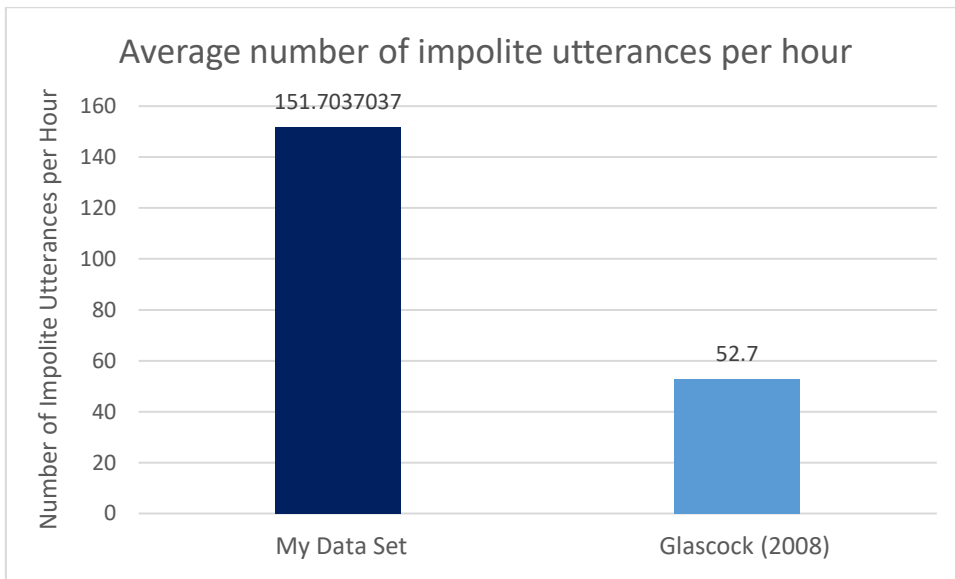
There were an average of 151.7 impolite utterances per hour in my data set. This number is markedly higher than the 52.7 average found my Glascock for US sitcoms in 2008, with nearly three times as many impolite utterances per hour in my sitcom data set. Indeed, in my data set there were, on average, 2.5 impolite utterances per minute. This supports my hypothesis that impoliteness in my data set would be as prevalent or more prevalent than in Glascock's study. The high number of impolite utterances per hour in my data set suggest that impoliteness is prevalent, which in turn points to the potential importance of impoliteness to the British sitcom.

These findings also suggest that there is a difference in the use of impoliteness between American and British sitcom series. It is possible that there is a difference in the value placed on impoliteness influenced by cultural differences in humour appreciation. This in turn may influence and be influenced by stylistic conventions such as characterisation. Mills (2005:41) contrasts the "self-obsessed, pretentious, stubborn loser" of British sitcoms and the "witty intelligent heroes" of American sitcoms. He states, as noted above, that unlike the US characters who tend to enjoy fairly successful social networks, "British

sitcom repeatedly focuses on characters who are incapable of communicating and for whom relationships and family are problematic and stifling" (Mills 2005:41). This difference in characterisation and the British emphasis on anti-social heroes, then, could go some way in explaining the difference between the use of impoliteness found in Glascock's study and the use of impoliteness in my own British data set.

Crucially, my findings suggest that impoliteness (as defined by Culpeper, Leech and Spencer-Oatey) is prevalent in my sitcom data. This supports my argument that impoliteness is an important element of the sitcom and will be a useful basis on which to explore the second of my arguments – that impoliteness is prevalent because it is a crucial tool in the creation of humour.

It could be argued that the differences in conceptualisations of impoliteness and verbal aggression could have caused these differences in the averages. As I outlined in the literature review, all of the elements of Glascock's criteria for verbal aggression, with the exception of the prosodic notion of 'yelling', could be subsumed fairly comfortably under the different categories of Culpeper (2011), Spencer-Oatey (2000) and Leech (2014). However, it may be the case that the broader scope of Leech and Culpeper's frameworks led to the significantly higher number of impolite utterances per hour found in my data. The comparison with Glascock's findings is merely illustrative and the point remains that I found my data set to contain a high frequency of impoliteness per hour.

4.1.4 Prevalence of Impoliteness Over Time

The three sitcoms in my data set were broadcast over 18 years – *Father Ted* from 1995-1998, *Black Books* from 2000-2004 and *The IT Crowd* from 2006-2013, though my data set contains only 2006-2008. On account of these original broadcast dates, I can explore the prevalence of impoliteness diachronically. This will allow me to explore whether my data supports the findings of other researchers (e.g. Greenberg et al 1980, Scharrer 2001) that impoliteness (or verbal aggression) is increasing over time in television and specifically in the sitcom.

Table 4-2 and figure 4-1 below show the averages for the three series as a whole (or in the case of *Father Ted*, the first 6 episodes of series 1-3). As the series were broadcast at different points in time, they can be viewed in terms of the fluctuations of impoliteness over time. I will retain caution in interpreting these findings, however, as they represent only one particular series rather than a cross section of sitcoms broadcast at different

times, and by different broadcasters and are illustrative only of the type of analysis that can be achieved using quantitative approaches to impoliteness in stylistics.

Table 4-2 - Number of Impolite Utterances per Hour in Father Ted, Black Books and The IT Crowd

	Father Ted (1995-1998)	Black Books (2000-2004)	The IT Crowd (2006-2013 [this data 2006-2008])
Average number of impolite utterances per hour	147.8	161.2	146

Figure 4-1- Average Number of Impolite Utterances Per Hour
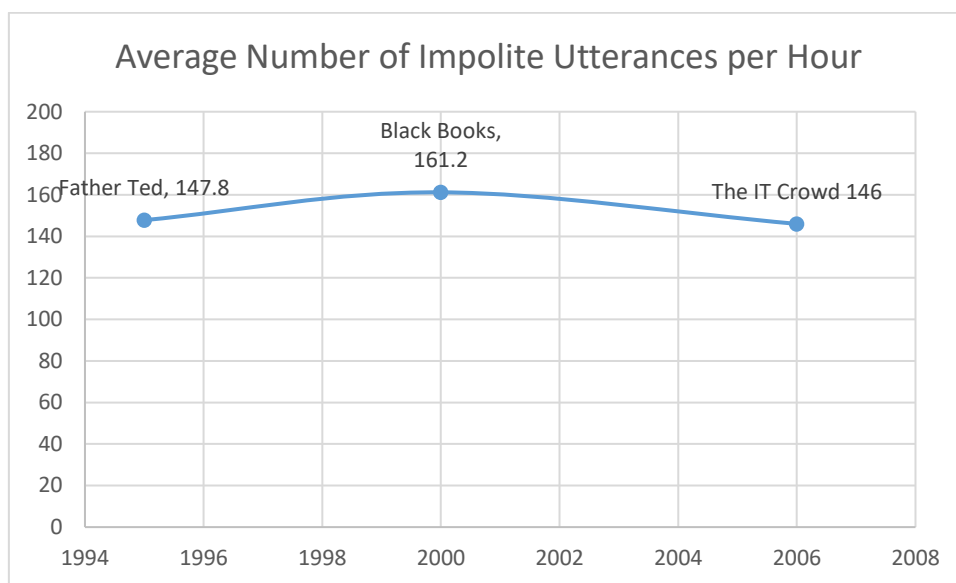
The results above show that impoliteness usage did not increase over time across the three series – we can see that *Black Books* had the highest average impoliteness – with 161.2 impolite utterances per hour throughout the three series. *Father Ted* had the second highest impoliteness average, with 147.8 impolite utterances per hour and *The IT Crowd* had 146 impolite utterances and contained the lowest average use of impoliteness. These results contrast with the findings of other researchers (e.g. Greenberg et al 1980, Scharrer 2001) who found a general trend for impoliteness (or verbal aggression) to increase over time.

Though the patterning of impoliteness in my data doesn't show an increase in impoliteness usage between *Black Books* and *The IT Crowd*, it is interesting to note the similarity in the average impoliteness per hour – that all three series are within a range of only 15.2 impolite utterances per hour, and that each series deploys 2-3 impolite utterances per minute suggests that impoliteness features highly in all series.

Figure 4-2 below shows the average number of impolite utterances per hour for each of the three programmes' series 1, 2 and 3. It shows fluctuations of impoliteness use across the entire series of *Black Books* and the first three series of *The IT Crowd* and *Father Ted*. The average number of verbally aggressive acts found by Glascock are indicated by the yellow line to allow for comparison between my data and the average found in the US study.

Figure 4-2 - Average Number of Impolite Utterances Per Hour for All Three Series and Glascock (2008)
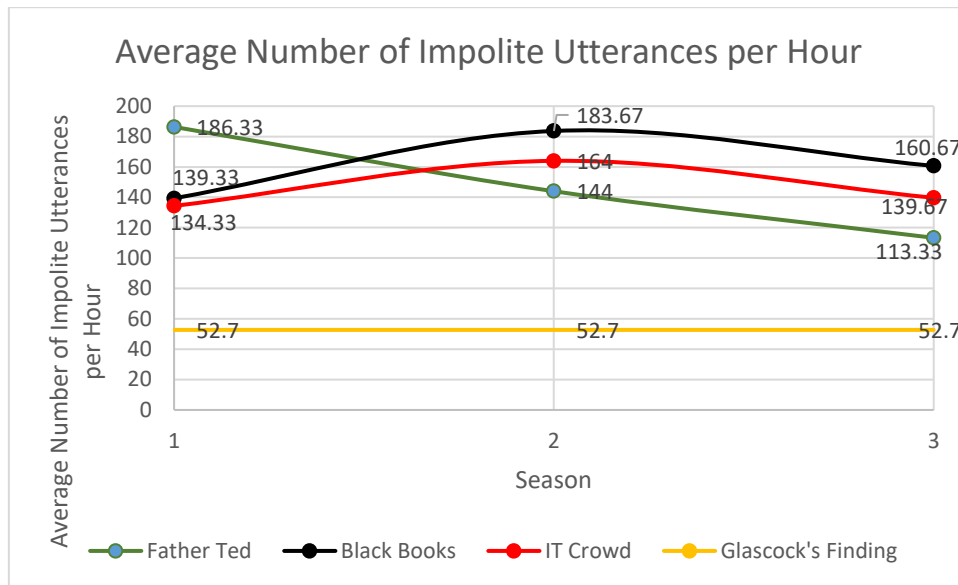
These results reveal a similarity in the patterning of the prevalence of impoliteness in *Black Books* (black line) and *The IT Crowd* (red line). We can see that in both series, impoliteness increased from the first to the second season and then decreased for the third. This is contrasted with *Father Ted*'s results (green line), which show a decrease in the average number of impolite utterances per hour from the first to the third series.

4.2 PERCENTAGE OF UTTERANCES THAT ARE IMPOLITE

In this section, I explore the percentage of utterances that contain impoliteness out of the total number of utterances. An utterance here is a complete spoken turn by a speaker which is bracketed by either silence, other character interruptions, audience response or a significant stage direction, such as exiting a house. I could find no comparable study that explored the percentage of utterances that contained impoliteness (or verbal aggression) and as such have no base study with which to compare my results. The percentage results show the impoliteness' prevalence within the context of the other

utterances of the episodes and so are arguably more reliable than looking at the averages alone.

4.2.1 Method

1   If an utterance was coded according to one or more of the three frameworks as containing impoliteness, it was counted as 'impolite'.
2   The total number of utterances and total number of impolite utterances for each episode were recorded
3   These totals were added together for the 54 episodes in the data set. Then the percentage of all utterances that were impolite was calculated.

4.2.2 Results

Table 4-3 below shows the results – giving the percentage of utterances from the entire data set that contained impoliteness.

Table 4-3- Percentage of Utterances that Contain Impoliteness

Percentage of utterances from entire data set that contain impoliteness
29.1

The results show that 29.1% of utterances in my sitcom data set were coded as containing impoliteness following one or more of the frameworks of Leech (2014), Spencer-Oatey (2000) and Culpeper (2011). This shows support for my hypothesis that impoliteness would be prevalent in the sitcom, as it accounts for just under a third of all dialogue.

Table 4-4 below shows the percentage of utterances that were impolite when broken down into the three series. We can see that for all of the series, impoliteness accounted for at least 27% of all utterances. Again, this confirms that impoliteness usage is high in my sitcom data and shows that there is only minimal variation in impoliteness usage across the three series. In other words, impoliteness is consistently prevalent in *Father Ted*, *Black Books* and *The IT Crowd*.

Table 4-4- Average Percentage of Utterances in an Episode that Contain Impoliteness

	Father Ted	Black Books	The IT Crowd
Average percentage of utterances in an episode that contain impoliteness	27.65%	32.73%	27.23%

As the earlier results indicated, *Black Books* contained the highest percentage of impolite utterances per episode on average. *The IT Crowd* and *Father Ted* were similar with regards to percentage of impoliteness. All three series make a high use of impoliteness which suggests that impoliteness is an integral part of sitcom scripts. Culpeper argues that "it is difficult to see how society would function if people were impolite (and perceived to be so) most of the time," (2011:130). Though the impoliteness in the sitcom does not occur more often than non-impoliteness, it is still prominent in the sitcom. Thus, the question perhaps ought to be asked, how is the sitcom structured so as to prevent the constant disruptions and amends-making that would likely follow the consistent use of impoliteness. In Chapter 7, I will elaborate on this point, discussing how impoliteness is frequently ignored by characters in the sitcom world.

4.3 PREVALENCE OF TABOO WORDS IN THE DATA SET

In the literature review, I noted that two of the three frameworks do not have an explicit category for taboo words. As such, it would be useful to explore the frequency of occurrence of taboo words on their own independent of the three impoliteness frameworks. In this section, I will explore the prevalence of taboo words in my data set. Jay (2009:153) defines taboo words as those that are subject to bans or inhibitions relating to "social custom or aversion". Thus, in identifying taboo words, I needed to identify those words which are subject to censorship on British television. *Ofcom*, the Office of Communication is the government body responsible for policing the content of broadcasting. As I outlined in the literature review, in 2016, Ofcom published the results of an extensive study into the language that the general public in the UK find offensive, the results of which were used to categorise the potentially offensive words with regards to how offensive they are and, as a result, the censorship rules that would apply to them. As a result of the study, Ofcom produced a list of 47 general and non-discriminatory swear words, categorised according to their level of offence perceived by the study's participants. The four categories are: *milder words, medium words, strong words* and

strongest words. The category to which a general non-discriminatory word belongs determines the sanctions and broadcasting rules placed on them with regards the 9pm watershed (after which adult material is permitted to be broadcast). I will use these 47 words in my exploration of taboo words. I'll begin by exploring their frequency of appearance, their keyness against the British National Corpus (BNC) and the audience response to the occurrence of these words.

4.3.1   Ofcom's general swear words

Though Ofcom have classifications of other types of taboo words, such as religious discrimination words, it is the words from the general category that I will be exploring in my data set, primarily due to restrictions of space, but also because the 'general swear words and body parts' category is the largest and contains the most recognisable taboo words in British culture, though some of the words in the 'strong' category are niche to particular linguistic cultures and would not be widely recognised by British speakers, e.g. *Bloodclaat*.

Ofcom's general, non-discriminatory words are listed below. For each of the four categories, as the words increase in their ascribed severity, the restrictions on those words increase (e.g. strong words are 'unacceptable pre-watershed').

Table 4-5- Ofcom's List of General Taboo Words

Milder words (generally of little concern)	Medium words (potentially unacceptable pre-watershed but acceptable post-watershed)	Strong words (generally unacceptable pre-watershed but mostly acceptable post-watershed	Strongest words (highly unacceptable pre-watershed but generally acceptable post-watershed)
Arse	*Arsehole*	*Bastard*	*Cunt*
Bloody	*Balls*	*Beaver*	*Fuck*
Bugger	*Bint*	*Beef curtains* [4]	*Motherfucker*
Cow	*Bitch*	*Bellend*	
Crap	*Bollocks*	*Bloodclaat* [4]	
Damn	*Bullshit*	*Clunge*	
Ginger	*Feck*	*Cock*	
Git	*Fecking* [7]	*Dick* [5]	
God [6]	*Feckin* [7]	*Dickhead*	

Goddamn	*Fecker* [7]	*Fanny*	
Jesus Christ [8]	*Munter*	*Flaps*	
Minger	*Pissed/ Pissed off* [8]	*Gash*	
Sod-off	*Shit*	*Knob*	
	Son of a bitch [8]	*Minge*	
	Tits	*Prick*	
		Punani	
		Pussy	
		Snatch	
		Twat (s)	

(Table adapted from Ofcom 2016:44)

[4]These words are particularly niche and may not be recognised by many English speakers.

[5]One of the characters in *Father Ted* is called 'Dick Byrne'. The totals used throughout this chapter have had references to the Dick the character taken out so as not to skew the results.

[6] Likewise, as *Father Ted* is set in a parochial house, all non-taboo uses of *God*, which are part of the characters' roles as priests or just general use of 'God' as a noun e.g. 'I wonder if God is punishing us for something' (FT 2.6 line 128) have also been taken out so as not to skew the results.

[7] *Feck* is included in the Ofcom table, but variants, such as *fecker* and *feckin* are not. In the study, given the prevalence of *feck* I deemed it necessary to separate these to better explore how *feck* is used.

[8]*Jesus Christ*, *son of a bitch* and *pissed* off are problematic in a keyword search because they consider two separate words to constitute one taboo word.

Hypothesis: Given that there are greater restrictions place on the stronger words, I would expect to find that the frequency of use of the taboo terms is inversely correlated with their level of offensiveness. Thus, I would expect to see many more mild words than strong words.

4.3.2 Distribution of taboo word tokens according to Ofcom's categories

In this section, I report the results of the frequency of use of the general taboo words.

Table 4-6- Distribution of taboo word tokens according to Ofcom's categories

Total Number of Words in Data Set	Total Number of Taboo Words	Percentage of Corpus That Constitutes Taboo Words
141,114	746	0.5%

Of the 47 types of taboo word listed by Ofcom as general non-discriminatory swear words, the data set contained at least one usage of 22 of those words. The total number of swear word (tokens) in the data set was 746, which out of the corpus of 141,114 words meant that general nondiscriminatory swear words accounted for 0.5% of all the words in the corpus. This matches roughly with McEnery's findings for spoken British English (2006) which estimate that taboo words occurred at between 0.3 and 0.5% rate out of all spoken data.

Mehl and Pennebaker (2003) also found a 0.5% rate of swearing using recordings over 48 hours, though as Jay reports, they found "substantial individual differences" (Jay 2009:155) in which "taboo word rates varied from a minimum of 0% per day to a maximum of 3.4% per day" (Jay 2009:155) depending on the speaker.

As mentioned in the literature review and above, Glascock (2008) found the sitcom to be the genre with the highest usage of verbal aggression, so it may be the case that my sitcom data set (and others like it) more closely mirror the everyday usage of taboo words than do other television genres (e.g. soaps, news, factual, childrens etc.). Indeed, in Ofcom's study of attitudes to swearing in the media, they found that "strong language in comedy was expected and enjoyed by many participants. Even those who did not like this type of comedy thought it was acceptable, provided the language used was in line with audience expectations and was broadcast after the watershed." (Ofcom 2016:28). So viewers may approach sitcoms (and other comedy programmes) with a greater tolerance of taboo language and this tolerance may stem from the generic expectations they have as a result of experience of coming into contact with comedy genres in the past. It is interesting to note that Ofcom identifies that even those who dislike taboo language accepted it in the genre of comedy. Perhaps this tolerance comes from the

'safe' nature comedy. As discussed in the literature review, the Benign Violation Theory can be usefully applied to the sitcom in terms of its position on psychological distance, which gives a more nuanced understanding of the 'play cue' or 'playful mindset' mentioned in many other humour theories that explains why sometimes offensive behaviour is found to be okay in a joking context. Perhaps it is the psychological distance on the space, time, social and hypothetical planes generated through television and comedies that gives comedy the licence to use taboo words.

Figure 4-3 below shows the distribution of taboo words in the data set according to Ofcom's categories.

Figure 4-3- Distribution of Taboo Words in the Data Set
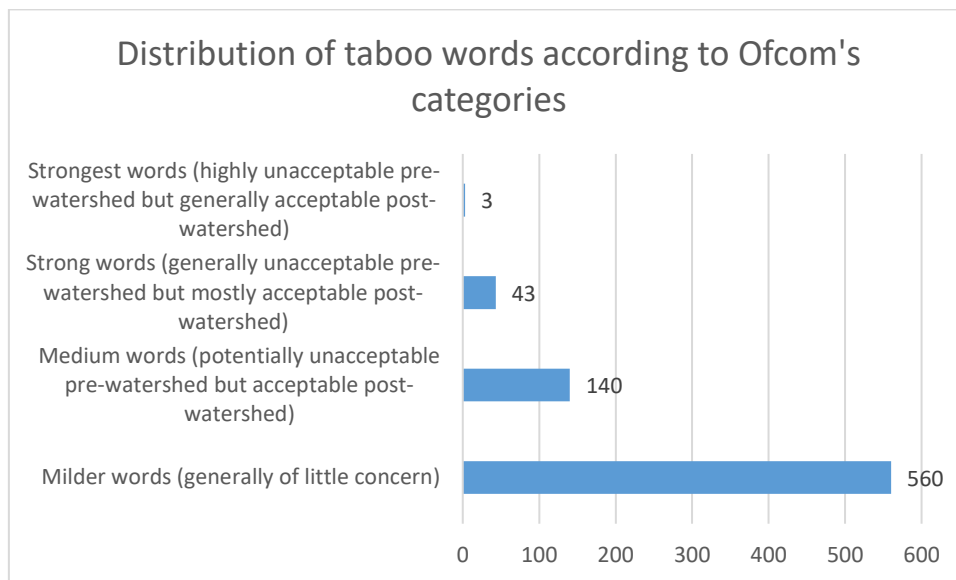
As we can see, tokens of words from the 'strongest' category appear only 3 times in my data set, tokens of words from the 'strong' category appear 43 times, tokens of words from the 'medium' category appear 140 times and tokens of words from the 'milder' category appear 560 times.

As predicted in the hypothesis, the frequency of occurrence of taboo words was inversely correlated with the taboo-ness of the word. In other words, the more taboo a word was, the less likely it was to occur in my data set. This is not surprising given that there are broadcasting restrictions placed on the stronger words and that Ofcom have the power to financially sanction broadcasters who violate the taboo term restrictions (the fining of MTV Europe is an example, see Bold 2008 and Ofcom 2003). These results suggest that

the writers and broadcaster of *Father Ted*, *Black Books* and *The IT Crowd* are adhering to the broadcast regulations of Ofcom.

It is worth considering that the size of each category (i.e. the number of taboo word types therein) has the potential to impact upon the number of tokens of those types that appear. However, if category size was an indicator of frequency, the 'strong' category which has the most word types within it, would have had the highest frequency of usage. As this is not the case, we can consider that it is not purely influenced by the group size.

These results suggest that the milder a taboo word is, the more likely it will appear in the language of sitcoms. This is likely due to two factors – firstly, the regulation and prohibition of the use of the more offensive taboo words by Ofcom and its predecessors and secondly, the societal notions of the appropriacy of taboo words. In Chapter 6, I explore the audience response to the taboo words in order to better understand whether there is a relationship between word severity (i.e. its taboo-ness) and audience laughter response.

A further note should be made that while strongest words appear the least frequently, with only 3 tokens in the data set, Ofcom makes no mention of different forms of particular lemmas and so, when *fuck** was searched for, the total instances of all the forms of *fuck* would in fact be 11. Though this doesn't alter the patterning of the results, it is worth bearing in mind.

In the next section, I look more closely at the individual terms, their frequency and more importantly their keyness against the BNC.

4.3.3 Keyness

A keyword is a word which "appears in a text or corpus statistically significantly more frequently than would be expected by chance when compared to a corpus which is larger or of equal size" (Baker et al 2006:97). In the following sections, as well as identifying which of the words on Ofcom's list appear in my data set and their frequency, I will also discuss their keyness when compared with the 100-million-word British National Corpus (BNC). Those words that are 'key' are those that are significantly more used in my data set than in general spoken and written British English. The key taboo words will likely signify words which are representative of the language used in the three series.

Based on the idea that incongruous or unexpected items will generate laughter under the right conditions, we might expect the most key words (those that are rarer in spoken

and written British English, but significantly used in my data set) to be the funniest and I'll explore this in Chapter 6.

4.3.3.1   Mild Words

Table 4-7 below shows the words identified by Ofcom as 'mild words' sorted in order of their keyness score against the BNC, with their frequency in my data set, their keyword rank (when compared against the BNC wordlist) and their keyness score.

Nine of the 13 words classified as 'mild' appeared at least once in the data set, with a total of 560 tokens of mild words appearing in the whole data set. I discussed above how the prevalence of mild taboo words may be due to the looser restrictions about these words' use on broadcast television.

Three of the words (*git*, *minger*, *sod-off*) did not appear in my data set. *Jesus Christ* was discounted because this is a two-word phrase and when ranked according to keyness, the words *Jesus* and *Christ* return two different results. *Minger* is a relatively new term used to describe an unattractive person and its recency may have affected its absence of use.

Table 4-7 - Distribution and Keyness o Mild Taboo Words in Data Set

Milder words (generally of little concern)	Number of tokens in my data set	Keyword Rank against BNC Wordlist	Keyness against BNC Wordlist (Chi Square)
God	421 (365 when non-taboo uses removed)	53 (71)	4466.558 (3280.822)
Arse	53	66	3660.853
Bloody	48	703	295.868
Crap	8	1266	55.449
Goddamn	2	1275	53.398
Damn	13	1450	38.475
Bugger	4	1785	21.9
Cow	8	2000	15.341
Ginger	3	2813	5.426
Git	0	/	0
Jesus Christ	0	/	0
Minger	0	/	0

Sod-off	0	/	0
Total	560		

All of the mild words that appeared in my data set appeared more than once. The lowest number of tokens was for *Goddamn* which appeared only twice and had a keyness value of 53.398. I will now explore the two most key 'mild' words.

4.3.3.1.1 Arse

Once literal and religious uses of *God* were removed from the data set, *arse* became the most key mild taboo word. It appears in the data set 53 times, with a notably high keyness value of 3660.853, suggesting that this word is more frequently used in my data set in comparison with the BNC corpus.

Arse appears most frequently in *Father Ted* – 70% of its appearances are in *Father Ted*, 17% in *The IT Crowd* and 13% in *Black Books*. *Arse* is one of the three words that comprise Father Jack's limited vocabulary (*'Arse! Feck! Drink!'* Father Jack, FT 1.5, turn 75) and as such is strongly associated with *Father Ted*. Indeed, Walshe argues that on account of its use in *Father Ted*, *Arse* came to be known as an Irish swear word (Walshe 2011). Indeed, there is an entire episode of *Father Ted* devoted to Ted losing a bet to Dick Byrne and being challenged to 'kick Bishop Brennan up the arse'.

4.3.3.1.2 God

When including the results of the non-taboo uses of *God*, such as 'Dougal, you know you can praise God with sleep.' (*Father Ted* 1.1, turn 118), *God* was the most key mild word, appearing 421 times with a with a keyness score of 4466.5. However, given the ecclesiastical nature of *Father Ted*, there were many instances where *God* was not being used as a taboo word and it was important to identify how frequent and key the taboo uses of *God* were. Following a manual check of all instances where *God* appeared in the data set, 56 instances where *God* was used in a literal, religious manner were identified and removed. As a result, there were 365 taboo uses of *God* which meant that taboo uses of *God* had a keyness score of 3280.822. *God's* keyword rank became 71 and meant that it was the second most key mild taboo word, after *Arse*.

God is coded by Ofcom as "Mild language, generally of little concern when used to express emotion. A concern for older or more religiously sensitive participants when used

as an obscenity. Some recognition that this may offend religious people" (Ofcom 2016b:6). This word is particularly associated with Irish English (Walshe 2011:136-138) and thus its high frequency of use in my data set is not surprising given that the series were written/co-created by an Irish writer. Likewise as *Father Ted* is set in Ireland with all four protagonists being Irish, and both *Black Books* and *The IT Crowd* have an Irish progagonist, this suggests that the dialogue in the sitcoms reflects real Irish English use.

In terms of the distribution across the data sets, the highest usage of *God* was in *Father Ted* (54% of all instances), second highest use was *The IT Crowd* (34%) and lowest usage in *Black Books* (12%). It is unsurprising that *Father Ted* has high usage of *arse*, then, and its presence may give the dialogue authenticity in that a frequently used taboo word is associated with Irish English. That the two most key taboo words in the data set are lexical items typically associated with Irish speech shows that taboo words are not being used haphazardly but are being deployed in order to reflect character and setting.

4.3.3.2 Medium Words

The table below shows the number of tokens, keyword rank, keyness against the BNC for words identified by Ofcom as being of 'medium' strength. They are ordered according to their keyness score. These would be "potentially unacceptable pre-watershed [9pm] but acceptable post-watershed" (Ofcom 2016:44). As they are potentially problematic, these are words for which discretion at the producer and broadcaster level would be required. Programmes considered to overuse or misuse these words before the watershed would be subject to investigation by Ofcom over the appropriacy of the broadcast. This would take into consideration the taboo term's context as well as the audience, which is subdivided into the likely audience (the audience at whom the programme is aimed) and the potential audience (all the demographics who might "reasonably be expected to see or listen" to the broadcast [Ofcom 2016:3]).

Table 4-8- Distribution and Keyness of Medium Taboo Words in the Data Set

Medium words (potentially unacceptable pre-watershed but acceptable post-watershed)	Number of tokens in my data set	Keyword Rank against BNC Wordlist	Keyness against BNC Wordlist (Chi Square)
Feck	49	11	28810.68
*Feckin'**	20	23	10905.7
*Fecker**	2	174	1200.027
Bollocks	16	225	896.632
Fecking	2	587	477.614
Tits	10	720	275.412
Bitch	12	1054	90.997
Shit	15	1071	84.185
Pissed/ Pissed off	4	1685	25.798
Bullshit	2	2054	12.321
Arsehole	1	2251	11.161
Balls	7	2381	9.448
Bint	-	-	0
Munter	-	-	0
Son of a bitch	-	-	0
Total	140	-	0

As we can see, the number of the medium taboo terms in my data set is significantly lower than that for mild words, with the total number of medium words being 140. Three words did not appear in the data set at all; *bint, munter* and *son of a bitch*. Of course, *son of a bitch* is a string and not a word and so was automatically discounted from the keyword search. Munter is, like minger, a relatively new term referring to a person who is not attractive. 12 of the 15 words in the category appeared at least once. *Feck* appeared the most frequently, with 49 instances. In the medium category, I expanded on Ofcom's classification of *feck* to include *fecking feckin'* and *fecker* as these forms of the *feck* are used with different effects in the series In total, *feck* as appeared 73 times in the data set, which is high compared with its single appearance in the BNC. Clearly, *feck* is a word central to the taboo word usage in the data set and also perhaps central to its identity.

4.3.3.2.1 Most Key Medium Words

4.3.3.2.1.1 Feck*

Feck is the highest ranked keyword out of all of Ofcom's taboo words in this data set, being 11th in the keyword ranking and appearing 49 times. It also has the highest keyness value for all of the taboo words classified by Ofcom, with a keyness value of 28810.682. The second and third most key words are different forms of *feck*, namely *feckin'* and *fecker*. Thus, of the medium words, *feck* and its variants are significantly key in my data set. The distribution of *feck* and its variants across the three series shows that 100% of the instances of *feck* occurred in *Father Ted* and 100% of the instances of *feckin'* occurred in *Father Ted*. Thus the keyness of this word relates only to the series *Father Ted* and not to the other two series. The strength of the association between *feck* and *Father Ted* in society (Harrison 2015) is thus evidenced in the data. *Feck's* high keyness and keyword ranking confirm that *feck* is integral to the linguistic identity of *Father Ted*.

Interestingly, Ofcom's description of *feck* addresses the humorous potential of the word; Ofcom classify *feck* as "medium language, potentially unacceptable pre-watershed. Often seen as humorous. Older participants more likely to consider the word unacceptable" (Ofcom 2016b:6). Furthermore, Ofcom also consider *feck* to be a euphemistic variant of *fuck* and classify it alongside 'effing' (Ofcom 2016b:6). This correlates with the Oxford English Dictionary definition of *feck* as "slang (orig. and chiefly Irish English). Expressing frustration, regret, or annoyance: 'damn', 'blast'; Etymology: Euphemistic alteration of fuck int. Compare earlier feck v.2, fecker n., fecking adj." (OED online, n.d).

Walshe (2011) suggests that on television, *feck*, on account of being a euphemism, could be used to bypass the rules about swearing on British television. Indeed, he notes that *feck's* popularity is a result of its use in *Father Ted*. He states that *feck* "was made famous in Britain by its use in the show [*Father Ted*], particularly by Father Jack" (Walshe 2011:140). Pauline McLynne, the actor who played Mrs Doyle, in an interview on *Father Ted's* 20th anniversary stressed the importance of taboo language to the identity of *Father Ted*, "I thank the Lord that it [*Father Ted*] was made by an English company, because otherwise we just wouldn't have been allowed even the mild swearing that we had. It would have been utterly toothless" (McLynn quoted in Harrison 2015, n.p). Indeed, the Partridge Dictionary of Slang defines *feck* as to mean "*'fuck'* in all senses and derivatives.

Scarcely euphemistic, widely popularised by *Father Ted*, a Channel 4 situation comedy 1995-98" (Dalzell and Victor 2014:294).

Comedian and writer David Mitchell suggests that the arbitrariness of the phonological differences between *feck* and *fuck* can be exploited by writers to call attention to the arbitrariness of censorship and offense to 'taboo' language in general. "The noises people choose to take offence from become arbitrary. 'Fuck' is beyond the pale but 'frick', 'frack', or 'feck', used in *Scrubs*, *Battlestar Galactica* and *Father Ted* respectively to mean exactly the same thing, invoke no complaints" (Mitchell 2009, n.p). Though Mitchell isn't entirely correct here as *feck* is noted by Ofcom in their study to be labelled as inappropriate by certain participants, he interestingly also notes that censorship affects the creative process of creation of comedy series, "any new TV rules against swearing will only make life easier for people who want to cause offence on a tight effort budget. At the same time, they'll make it harder for comedy and drama writers to script television dialogue which is remotely similar to how a lot of us actually talk" (Mitchell 2009, n.p). My results suggest that taboo usage in my sitcom data is actually in line with the incidence of taboo words used in genuine interaction - my results showed that 0.5% of the data set consisted of taboo words which tallies with McEnery, who found taboo words made up 0.3-0.5% of spoken data (2006) and Mehl and Pennebaker (2003) who also found 0.5% of spoken data comprised taboo words. What might perhaps be Mitchel's point could be that the severity of the taboo words is what differs. Though my data set has 0.5% taboo words, these words might be much milder than those found in studies of genuine spoken data.

The issue of reality in dialogue and the retention of freedom of speech and creative licence is considered on a number of occasions in Ofcom's study while they, paradoxically, categorise words into levels of offense and decree when they can and cannot be used. They note that participants drew attention to the desire for television to continue to reflect reality and to prevent the limiting of creative licence, stating that participants "looked at the overall programme and thought about why editorial decisions had been taken; for example, to reflect reality, highlight the emotion of a particular scene, or to shock. They assessed the validity of these intentions and noted the importance of individual choice for the audience, in terms of viewing or listening to content that includes strong language." (Ofcom 2016:35). This emphasis on intentions links back to the theoretical discussions on impoliteness in general, whereby a number of the definitions

of impoliteness (e.g. Culpeper 2005) take the recovery of speaker intentions as integral to the assessment that impoliteness has taken place.

I will argue, however, in contrast to Mitchell's argument that the creative process is affected by censorship, that the sanctioning of taboo words which leads to their limited use on television is actually useful for comic writing as the rarity of these words renders them more incongruous when they *are* heard and this enables writers to use them for inconguity-based humour. If this suggestion is correct, then it might be assumed that the more rare (and stronger) taboo words will be more consistently successful at generating audience laughter. I will explore this in Chapter 6.

At the time when *Father Ted* was first broadcast, the taboo term *feck* was not in widespread use in the UK (Walshe 2011:140). The fact that it is so well remembered and later became synonymous with the series might have something to do with the Von Restorff Effect. This effect was first noted in 1933 by Hedwig Von Restorff (Kujawski Taylor 2013:1155), who found that when presented with word lists, participants remembered distinctive or unexpected items more than they remembered expected items (Schmidt and Schmidt 2015:151). Though in empirical studies this has mostly been conducted with word lists and stroop tests, when taboo words were used in a number of recall tasks, Schmidt and Schmidt (2015) found that "irrespective of task difficulty, recall of taboo words exceeded recall of all other targets by a large magnitude" (2015:158). This may also be applied to the real world experience of television comedy as it may be that the unexpected-ness of the taboo terms and *feck* in particular contribute to viewer recall. In other words, the taboo word's low frequency in other genres of television (as evidenced by Glascock 2008), its low frequency in everyday spoken conversation (*feck* doesn't appear at all in the spoken data of the BNC and appears just once in writing), make the word unexpected and so it stands out and is thus well remembered. Kujawski Taylor (2013:1155) states that one possible reason for the Von Restorff effect is that unexpected items are processed more deeply which leads to better recall. This, then, links with stylistic notions of deviation and foregrounding in literature (Short 1996).

This also links in with my argument that impoliteness and taboo language constitute incongruous language use which then can act as a trigger for impoliteness. *Feck's* low usage in spoken data (not appearing at all in the spoken BNC) and written data (appearing just once in the written BNC) and its being subject to censorship means that it is all the more incongruous when (a) it appears, (b), it appears with significantly high frequency and (c) it is spoken by priests who are usually expected to conform to polite

language norms, and it is this that helps the use of the word to be humorous. In Chapter 6, I will explore the audience laughter response to taboo words.

I noted above that though they were not included in Ofcom's word list, I did a separate search for three variations of *feck; fecking, feckin'* and *fecker*. These three terms all appeared in the data set at least once. Feckin' appears the most, with 20 tokens in my data set, a keyword rank against the BNC of 23 and a keyness score of 10905.698, confirming that this term is significantly key against the general speech and writing of British English. *Fecking* appeared two times with a keyness score of 477.614 and *fecker* two times with a keyness score of 1200.027. In hindsight, it may have been unnecessary to separate the phonological distinction between *feckin'* and *fecking* as the difference in pronunciation does not change the meaning of the word, although the 'g-dropping' may be part of an Irish accent and thus serve as an identity marker.

As with the mild words, the most key medium words are indexical of Irish identity and, in the case of *feck** are specifically associated with *Father Ted*. This suggests strategic usage of the taboo words to indicate location and place in the series. In the literature review I noted that I intended to test Culpeper's proposition that impoliteness is not thrown into a script at random (1998). Identifying the place-giving effect of the taboo words and their use in just one series shows support that the taboo word *feck* and its variations are not thrown into the data set at random but serve to give one of the three series a particular linguistic identity.

Above, I noted that Walshe credits *Father Ted* with introducing *feck* to Britain and making it "famous" (2011:140). In the footnotes of the same article, Walshe cites a complaint made to the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) in "regarding the use of the words 'feck off' in an advert for Magners cider" (Walshe 2011: f.n13). The ASA rejected the complaint on the grounds that they "considered that the use of the word 'feck' in Britain had been popularised by TV programmes such as *Father Ted* and that the term 'feck' was unlikely to be seen as a swearword' (ASA cited in Walshe 2011:f.n13). This relates to Culpeper's (2005:65) distinction between *sanctioning* and *neutralising* impoliteness. Culpeper notes that the dominant society members' sanctioning of impoliteness doesn't necessarily entail that the impoliteness has been neutralised, whereby "the target won't take offense at the perceived face-attack" (2005:65). In the case of the ASA complaint, the governing body of UK advertising who are, naturally, a dominant society member, have santioned the use of *feck* on the grounds that its use in *Father Ted* and others programmes has effectively neutralised it. This may explain why *feck* doesn't appear in the other data sets

– it has already been neutralised through excessive use in *Father Ted*. And indeed writer Graham Linehan may have wished to distance himself from the linguistic fingerprint of *Father Ted* in order to make his new series different. Also, the use of 'feck' is so strongly associated with *Father Ted* that it might be jarring for it to be used in another sitcom context and any use may unintentionally index *Father Ted*. More recently, BBC sitcom *Mrs Brown's Boys* (BBC 2011) has made extensive use of *feck* potentially reviving the term for a new generation of TV viewers. However, that Ofcom still considers *feck* a 'medium' taboo word suggests that it has not been completely neutralised for all speakers in all contexts.

4.3.3.3 Strong Words

Although Allan and Burridge have noted that what is taboo is never absolute and changes through time (2006:9), research has shown that the most offensive words are relatively stable – Jay notes that "a set of 10 words […that…] has remained stable over the past 20 years accounts for 80% of public swearing" (Jay 2009:153). Likewise, Culpeper reports that between 1997 and 2000, the four most offensive words in Britain remained the same, and within the same severity order, which was; *cunt, motherfucker, fuck* and *wanker*, respectively (Culpeper 2011:143). In this section, I'll look at the words that Ofcom deems 'Strong'.

This category contains a number of specific and niche terms such as *Bloodclaat* and *punani* which may not be recognisable to the majority of speakers (the reasons for their inclusion by Ofcom in this category of general taboo words is one that could be questioned, as could their inclusion in the study at all considering the rarity of their appearance on television). The trend of an inverse relationship between the number of tokens and the level of offense continues, with only four of the 19 word types appearing, with a total of 43 tokens across the data set. The number of tokens, keyword rank and keyness against the BNC are shown, ordered by the keyness score.

Table 4-9- Distribution and Keyness of Strong Taboo Words in Data Set

Strong words (generally unacceptable pre-watershed but mostly acceptable post-watershed)	Number of tokens in my data set	Keyword Rank against BNC Wordlist	Keyness against BNC Wordlist (Chi Square)
Bastard	38	251	718.144
Twat (s)	1	1575	31.472
Prick	2	2561	7.552
Cock	2	3956	0.972
Beaver	0		
Beef curtains	0		
Bellend	0		
Bloodclaat	0		
Clunge	0		
Dick	0		
Dickhead	0		
Fanny	0		
Flaps	0		
Gash	0		
Knob	0		
Minge	0		
Punani	0		
Pussy	0		
Snatch	0		
Total	43		

(Ofcom 2016a)

Perhaps as can be expected, the niche words such as *bloodclaat* which I would argue have a low currency in general British English, did not appear in my data set at all. The keyness of the four words that appeared in the data set was much lower than for the mild and medium categories. This is perhaps because *bastard* is a fairly high frequency taboo word in British English and also, because *twat*, *prick* and *cock* were not used with notable frequency in my data set. Thus, they do not have a high keyness.

4.3.3.3.1 Bastard

Compared with the high keyness ratings found for words in the 'mild' and 'medium' categories, the keyness ratings for the most key strong words were much lower, suggesting that the taboo terms in this category were not as significantly over-

represented in my data set. The most key 'strong' word was *bastard* with a keyness value of 718.144 and appears 38 times. This word has less of an association with Irishness and appears most in *The IT Crowd* (48%), a series that is set in London. Ofcom describes this word as "Strong language, generally unacceptable pre-watershed. More aggression or specific intent to hurt heightens the impact [though, of course, we could argue this for all language]. Less problematic when used to refer indirectly to someone who is cruel or nasty." (Ofcom 2016b:5).

4.3.3.4 Strongest Words

As mentioned above, Culpeper has noted that c*unt*, *motherfucker* and *fuck* appeared in that order as the first, second and third most offensive words in Britain in 1997 and 2000 (Culpeper 2011:143). It is consistent with that finding that Ofcom chooses to put these three words in their most offensive category of 'strongest words'. Ofcom's strongest words were "seen to express very strong emotions, or to be rude or aggressive insults […] They were considered unacceptable before the watershed by the vast majority of participants" (Ofcom 2016:45). For most people, the most offensive of these strongest words was *cunt,* with "a significant number of people" being "uncomfortable with its use even after the watershed." (2016:45). The strongest words are subject to tight control in British television.

Table 4-10 - Distribution and Keyness of Strongest Taboo Words in the Data Set

Strongest words (highly unacceptable pre-watershed but generally acceptable post-watershed)	Frequency	Rank	Keyness
Fuck	3	3514	2.076
Cunt	0		
Motherfucker	0		

Of these three strongest words, only one type appears in my data set; *fuck. Fuck* occurs 3 times in the data set. *Fuck* is described as "Strongest language, unacceptable pre-watershed. Seen as strong, aggressive and vulgar. Older participants more likely to consider the word unacceptable" (Ofcom 2016b:6). The fact that *fuck* appears just three times whereas *feck* appears 49 times might support Walshe's argument (2011:14) that *feck* as a euphemism was used in part to get around the stricter censoring of *fuck*. As

fuck appears just three times compared with 1332 instances in the BNC, the keyness of *fuck* is low, with a score of just 2.076. This suggests that the taboo term is not significantly represented in my data set. This may at least in part be due to the rigorous restrictions placed on the use of the word compared with *feck*.

4.4 TABOO WORD USAGE BY SITCOM AND CHARACTER GENDER

In this section, I intend to discover how taboo words are distributed across the three sitcom series and the gender of the characters who use them.

4.4.1 Taboo Word Distribution by Series

Figure 4-4 below shows the total number of taboo general word tokens that appear in the three series. In total, 712 taboo word tokens appeared in my data set. These were distributed among the three series surprisingly unevenly. *Father Ted* has the majority of the taboo word tokens, with 374 taboo word tokens appearing across 18 episodes. As the 18 episodes constitute 9 hours of data, if we briefly return to the reporting of data in a 'per hour' basis as Glascock (2008) does, then this averages 41.5 taboo words per hour. Perhaps the high proportion of taboo words in *Father Ted* is what contributes to its lasting linguistic 'legacy' (Harrison 2015) of introducing taboo words and other catchphrases into public awareness (Walshe 2011).

The IT Crowd contains 251 taboo word tokens and *Black Books* has notably fewer than the other two series – with only 87 taboo word tokens. It is interesting that *Black Books* should have so few taboo word tokens when the exploration of impoliteness as coded by the three impoliteness frameworks found *Black Books* to be the series with the most impoliteness. *Black Books* had 161.2 impolite utterances per hour. This suggests that the series is high in impoliteness, but not high in its taboo word usage and this finding, I would argue, suggests that it is important for an in-depth quantitative exploration to consider impoliteness and taboo word usage separately, until such a time as there is an impoliteness framework that adequately categorises both. Were we looking only at impoliteness, or only at taboo words, then the picture we would have of the three series would be incomplete. We can also consider from this data that impoliteness can be achieved without the use of taboo words. This highlights the importance for censors and television researchers not to simply count taboo words when exploring impoliteness because, clearly impoliteness can be realised through numerous ways and is not limited to the presence of taboo words. Though if censors such as Ofcom continue to grade

impoliteness according to the number and type of taboo words used and to sanction programmes and broadcasters accordingly, then writers and performers will still be free to explore the many ways impoliteness can be creatively realised without using taboo words.

Figure 4-4 - Total Number of Taboo Words in Each Series
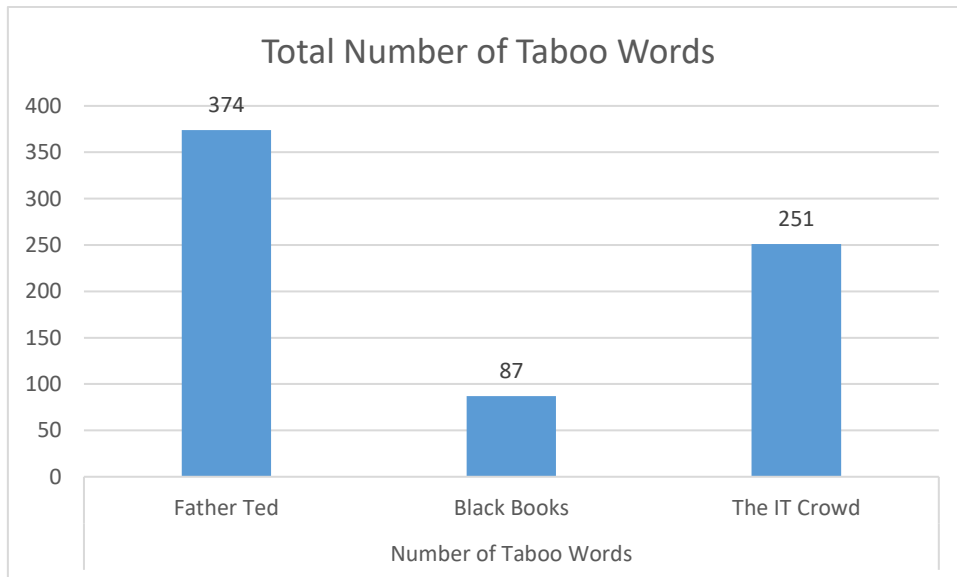
In order to explore whether certain taboo terms were used more frequently in one series than another, I explored the percentage of times a taboo word type appeared in the three series. The table below shoes the distribution of taboo words by series. For each taboo word, its total appearance in the data set would be 100% and the percentages below divide up the word's appearances according to the series it appeared in. The Ofcom rating of the word is also provided and the words are ordered in descending severity.

Table 4-11 - Distribution of Taboo Words Across Three Series

Distribution of a taboo word across the three series Showing the percentage of a word's total appearances in the data set across the three series			
	IT Crowd	Black Books	Father Ted
Fuck (strongest)	66.6	0	33.3
Bastard (Strong)	44.8	22.4	32.6
Bollocks (Medium)	25	25	50
Feck (Medium)	0	0	100
Feckin' (Medium)	0	0	100
Shit (Medium)	86.6	0	13.3
Tits (Medium)	80	10	10
Arse (Milder)	16.9	13.2	69.8
Bloody (Milder)	56.2	16.6	27
Bitch (Medium)	50	33.3	16.6
Damn (Milder)	38.4	38.4	23
God (Milder)	36.4	11	52.4

Of all the taboo types in the data set, only two were found in just one series - *feck* and *feckin'*. I have discussed above that *feck* and its variants have a strong cultural association with the *Father Ted* series, as Walshe notes that the term was "made famous in Britain by its use in the show" (2011:140). These results confirm that the term doesn't appear in either *Black Books* or *The IT Crowd*. This may be what helps to carve out *Father Ted* as a series with a uniquely 'Irish' identity. The fact that the taboo word usage isn't distributed evenly across the three series suggests that taboo words are being used as more than simply a boost to the already prevalent impoliteness and this shows support for Culpeper's argument that impoliteness is not 'thrown in' at random. *The IT Crowd* emerges as the series with the greatest percentage use of six words (*fuck, bloody, bitch, shit, tits, bastard*) and joint with *Black Books* for the highest use of *damn*. *Father Ted* has the highest percentage of usage for five of the words (*arse, god, bollocks, feck* and *feckin'*). These words are two mild words and three medium words, respectively. Several of these words have, as mentioned, been identified as being indexical of an Irish identity (*arse, god, feck* and *feckin'*). *Black Books* emerges as the series with the lowest usage of taboo words, having only one word for which it had the majority – *damn*, which is a mild word it shares with *The IT Crowd*. This correlates with the finding that *Black Books*

has the lowest usage of taboo tokens. *Black Books*, then, achieves its impoliteness through means other than taboo word use.

The taboo word usage distribution in my data set is displayed in figure 4-5 below.

Figure 4-5- Taboo Word Distribution by Series
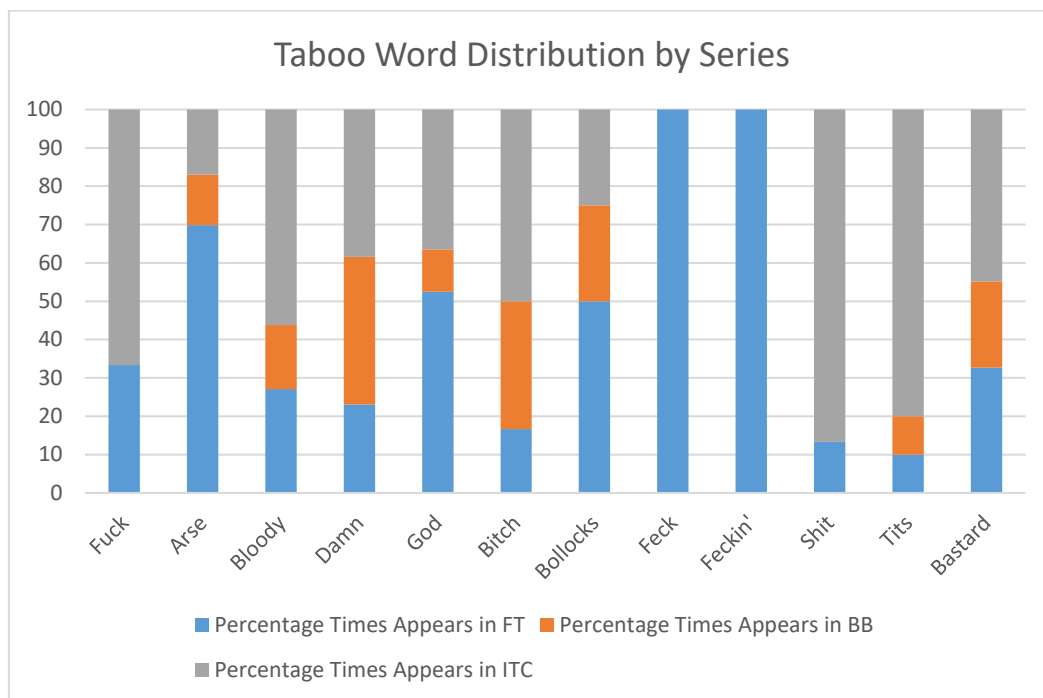
4.4.2 Taboo Word Usage by Gender

There is some confusion in the literature on taboo word use in the real world regarding whether gender impacts upon the quantity or type of swear words that speakers use. Of course, distinguishing between genders at all when exploring taboo word usage is to accept the arbitrary social binary based upon cultural and historically-influenced notions of one's sex as being a determinant of behaviour. For now, we will accept that societal experiences and expectations may influence the behaviours of people of different sexes. We will also bear in mind, however, that gender is a socially constructed notion and is a matter of great debate. McEnery (2006:34) observes that "it is still a widely held folk belief in Britain that men swear more often than women." Indeed, Jay (2009:156) claims that "men swear more frequently in public than women", however, having created the Lancaster Corpus of Abuse, a sub-corpus taking data from the 10 million words of

spoken data available in the BNC, McEnery found that "When all of the words in the Lancaster Corpus of Abuse are considered, it is equally likely that bad language will be used by a male as by a female." (2006:34). Where McEnery and other scholars agree is that men and women tend to show preferences for different taboo words. For example, Jay argues that "men say more offensive words (e.g. *fuck, shit, motherfucker*) more frequently than women do. Women say *Oh my God, bitch, piss and retard(ed)* more frequently than men do" (Jay 2009:156). Indeed, McEnery found that "If we compare the BLW [Bad Language Words] forms used by males and females, we discover that there are a set of words significantly overused by males and a set of words significantly overused by females" (2006:34). In McEnery's research, the words overused by males included '*fucking, fuck, Jesus, cunt and fucker'* "in descending order of significance". For women, "*'God, bloody, pig, hell, bugger, bitch, pissed, arsed, shit and pissy'* are in descending order of significance, more typical of females" (2006:34).

In my own data, I explored whether there were any patterns to the use of general swear words by protagonists of different genders. Table 4-12 below shows each general swear word that appeared in my data set, the gender of speaker that used it the most frequently and Ofcom's rating of its severity. It's important to bear in mind that male protagonists outnumber female protagonists 7 to 3 (Father Ted, Father Dougal, Jack, Bernard, Manny, Roy and Moss to Mrs Doyle, Fran and Jen). Therefore, the likelihood that a taboo word would be used more by a male is increased. Glascock (2001), Signorielli and Bacue (1999) and Coltrane and Messineo (2000) provide interesting discussion on the under-representation of women on television.

Table 4-12 - Usage of Taboo Words According to Gender

Taboo Word	Gender that used the word the most	Severity according to Ofcom (2016)
Bastard	Men	Strong
Tits	Women	Medium
Shit	Men	Medium
Feckin'	Men	Medium
Feck	Men	Medium
Bollocks	Men	Medium
Bitch	Men	Medium
God	Men	Milder
Damn	Men	Milder

Bloody	Men	Milder
Arse	Men	Milder
Fuck	Men	Strongest

Of the 12 general swear words that appear in my data set spoken by protagonists, only one was used most by women with the rest being predominantly spoken by men. It is also interesting that the taboo word which was spoken the most by women (*tits*) actually refers to a part of the female anatomy. The word is classified as 'medium' by Ofcom and so can't be said to either conform to, or contradict McEnery's finding that women tend to use milder taboo words than men (2006:35). Indeed, *tits* is only spoken by one of the female protagonists – Jen. *Tits* appears 10 times in the data set and 5 of these occur when Jen is in a business meeting and her bra (a prototype of the 'perfect bra' Moss has designed for Dragon's Den) catches fire. What we might conclude from the above table is that, in my sitcom data at least, swearing is very much the dominion of the male protagonists and not the female. Of course, as mentioned, there are seven male protagonist characters to three female protagonists so there are fewer women available to utter these taboo words. I will explore the usage in light of the parity of female speakers later on.

In contrast to this finding, when the distribution of taboo words according to gender is explored in greater depth, the results show that there are only two taboo words that are not spoken at all by female protagonists. Figure 4-6 below shows the breakdown of taboo word usage by the gender of the character that uttered it.

Figure 4-6- Taboo Word Use by Gender
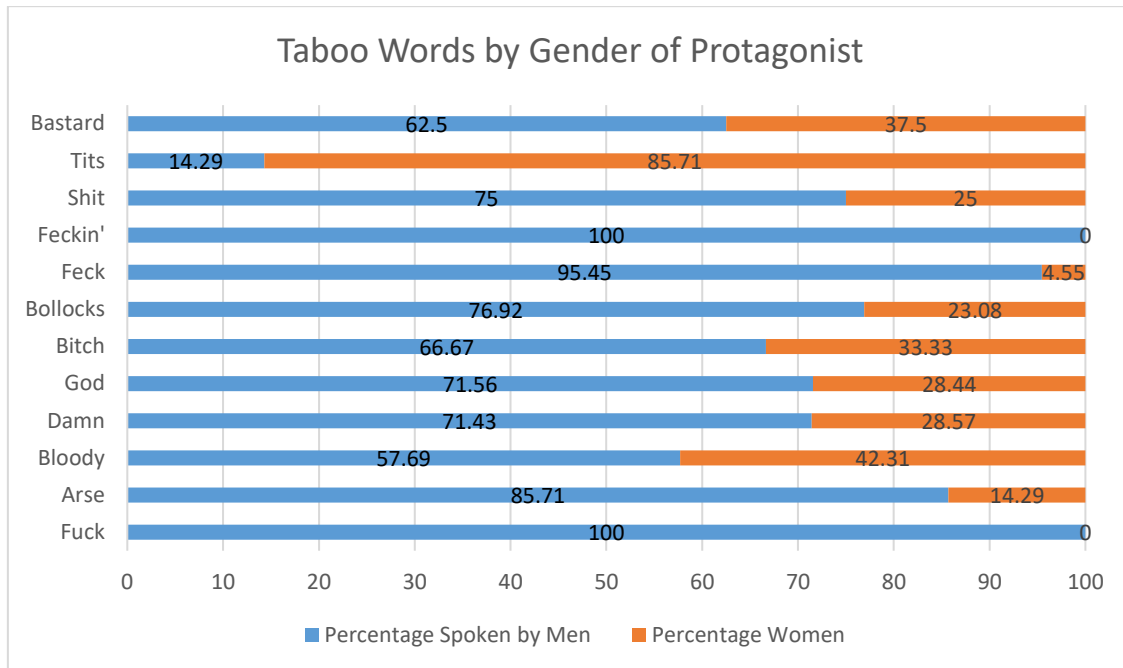
Firstly, the results show that female speakers uttered at least one instance of all taboo terms except *feckin'* and fuck. Crucially, *fuck* is the 'strongest' taboo word that appears in my data set. That it (and the contracted form *feckin'*) is not used by females perhaps confirm McEnery's proposal that stronger taboo words are more associated with male speech (2006:34). Likewise, *feck* is also predominantly used by male characters, with women having uttered the word 4.54% of the time it appears. In table 4-13 below, I rank the taboo words in terms of their usage by female protagonists:

Table 4-13 - Taboo Word Usage Percentage by Gender

Word	Severity	Percentage Spoken by Women	Percentage Spoken by Men
Tits	Medium	85.7	14.2
Bloody	Milder	42.3	57.6
Bastard	Strong	37.5	62.5
Bitch	Medium	33.3	66.6
Damn	Milder	28.5	71.4
God	Milder	28.4	71.5

Shit	Medium	25	75
Bollocks	Medium	23.0	76.9
Arse	Milder	14.2	85.7
Feck	Medium	4.5	95.4
Fuck	Strongest	0	100
Feckin'	Medium	0	100

It appears that in my data set, there is no clear correlative relationship between the severity of the taboo word and its usage by gender. It may be that this is too small a sample to arrive at any concrete resolutions. Despite only having one word for which women were the majority speakers, female protagonists still make fair usage of the milder term *bloody*, a word which McEnery noted to be preferred by females (2006:34) and *bastard*, a word less associated with women's swearing. *Bitch* was high in terms of female usage and is another word associated with female swearing (Jay 2009:156). The majority of my findings for female taboo word use support McEnery and Jay's proposals that the type of taboo word used will be influenced by gender.

Likewise, with male speech, there were some findings that conformed to the expectation of men using stronger, more offensive words. *Feck*, and *fuck* appear as words spoken only by men. *Feckin'* also has a high male usage. The taboo word *bastard* which is classified by Ofcom as 'strong' is lower on the male list of taboo word usage by percentage than for women. However, McEnery doesn't identify this word with either gender.

To sum up, then, all taboo words, except *tits* were found to be spoken more by men than by women. The prevalence of this term denoting a female body part is in part instigated by the bra designing plot of *The IT Crowd* episode in which it is spoken the most. There were some consistencies in terms of swear words favoured in the literature on gender and swearing. However, there wasn't a clear link between gender and Ofcom's assessment of taboo word strength. The fact that women are a minority in the protagonists as they are outnumbered 7:3 by men clearly has an effect on these results. To correct for this, I explored taboo word usage according to gender when taking the disparity between speakers of different genders into consideration.

Female characters speak a total of 2,438 utterances in the data set, which is an average of 812 utterances per female character, an average of 45 utterances per episode, and 90 utterances per hour. Men speak a total of 10,129 utterances in the data set, which is an average of 1,447 utterances per male character, an average of 187 utterances per episode and 375 utterances per hour. In order to explore taboo word usage in light of the minority role women play in my sitcom data which, on account of the fact that women speak less than men, is likely to obscure the prevalence of taboo words in women's utterances, I explored the percentage of female utterances that contained taboo words. Having calculated the total number of utterances spoken by male protagonists, (10,129 utterances) and the total number of utterances spoken by female protagonists (a mere 2,438 utterances), and the total number of utterances that contained taboo words (386 for men and 140 for women), I calculated the percentage of each gender's utterances that contained a taboo word and the incidence of taboo words.

Table 4-14 - Taboo Word use by Gender

	Total Utterances	Total Taboo Utterances	Taboo word incidence	Percentage of Utterances that Contain Taboo Words
Male	10,129	386	1 taboo word for every 26 utterances	3.80%
Female	2438	140	1 taboo word for every 17 utterances	5.74%

The results show that when the minority status of women was accounted for, they actually had a higher percentage of utterances that contained taboo words – with 5.74% of female utterances containing taboo words, which was higher than the male percentage of 3.80%. Female characters were also more likely to utter a taboo word in an utterance, with one in every 17 utterances spoken by women containing a taboo term, compared with one in every 26 utterances for men. Thus, when the results accounted for the gender difference in how often characters speak, number of utterances according to gender, women emerged as the speakers with the highest percentage of utterances containing taboo words and were more likely to swear.

As noted above, McEnery found that taboo words comprised between 0.3% and 0.5% of spoken data. Mehl and Pennebaker (2003) also found a taboo word rate of 0.5% in recordings of 48 hours of speech. Jay found that "taboo word rates varied from a minimum of 0% per day to a maximum of 3.4% per day" (Jay 2009:155). Of course, these researchers may differ in the precise terms they qualify as consisting of taboo words, but these findings give a guide to the incidence of taboo words in spoken real-world data. In order to explore how the protagonist characters' speech compared with the findings for real life data, I explored the percentage of their words that were taboo.

The table below shows the results for the analysis of the percentage of words that are taboo (using Ofcom's taboo word list).

Table 4-15 - Taboo Word Use by Protagonists

	Total Words in Corpus	Total Taboo Tokens	Percentage of Words that are Taboo (Incidence of taboo words)
Male Protagonists	81,370	395	0.4 %
Female Protagonists	21,482	160	0.7 %

Of the 81,370 words that male protagonists (Ted, Jack, Dougal, Bernard, Manny, Moss and Roy) spoke, 395 were taboo terms listed in Ofcom's study. This meant that 0.4% of male protagonist speech consisted of taboo words, which is slightly lower than the average of 0.5% found by McEnery (2006) and Mehl and Pennebaker (2003). Continuing with the finding that female protagonists had a higher incidence of taboo word usage than men, of the 21,482 words spoken by female protagonists (Mrs Doyle, Fran, Jen), 160 of them were taboo words. This meant that the female characters had a taboo word incidence of 0.7%. This is higher than the averages found by McEnery (2006) and Mehl and Pennebaker (2003), continuing the finding that female protagonists have a higher incidence of impoliteness than their male counterparts. This contrasts with how women are expected to speak according to the folk beliefs discussed by McEnery (2006:34) and also with the finding that men either swear more than women (Jay 2009) or that men and women are equally likely to swear (McEnery 2006:34). Likewise, in exploring the use of impoliteness by gender in Geralyn L. Horton's play scripts, Aydinoglu (2013) found that male characters used impoliteness more than female characters. These results suggest that the characters in my sitcom data are using impoliteness in an atypical way. Some of

the humour may derive from seeing women – societally expected to use less impoliteness – use impoliteness with a higher frequency. These female characters (Jen, Fran and Mrs Doyle) thus have atypical speech for their gender and one of the reasons for this will likely be that their impoliteness is used to comic effect. I argue that this is in no small part because female (over)use of taboo words (compared with expectations gathered from the media and from real life) contradicts the way that women are expected to behave and thus is incongruous which generates incongruous humour for the viewer. The fact that women speak less than men and yet have a higher percentage of impolite utterances might suggest that the less a character speaks, the more impoliteness they can 'get away' with. This possibility will be explored further in Chapter 7 where I explore impoliteness and characterisation.

4.5 COMPLAINTS MADE TO OFCOM ABOUT *FATHER TED*, *BLACK BOOKS* AND *THE IT CROWD*

Comedy was the one genre for which participants in the Ofcom study believed taboo word usage was likely and/or legitimised (2016). This suggests that there is already some relationship between impoliteness and humour in the minds of the general public. Ofcom is the organisation to which British television viewers complain if they feel televised content is inappropriate. I wanted to discover whether there were any records held for complaints about taboo language usage in *Father Ted*, *Black Books* and *The IT Crowd*. On 10th October 2016, I placed a Freedom of Information (FOI) request with Ofcom, requesting all information they held for complaints made about the three sitcom series. The Freedom of Information Act (2000 c.36) gives the public a right to access information that is held by public bodies. As a public body, Ofcom is required to respond to FOIs. In my request, I asked for all records Ofcom held of complaints about any episode of *Father Ted, Black Books* and *The IT Crowd* and the outcomes of those complaints (i.e. whether upheld or dismissed). On the 21st October 2016, I received a reply from Ofcom in which data on all complaints made from September 2006 to the date of the FOI were listed. Unfortunately, earlier records were not available:

Unfortunately, in neither the ITC or BSC archives could any information be found pertaining to complaints made about any of the three series under investigation. Thus, only complaints from 2006-2016 can be explored. *Father Ted*, despite being broadcast in the 1990s is frequently broadcast by Channel 4 on its subsidiary channels, More4 and E4. Indeed, repeats of the *Father Ted* are shown weekly on More4 and often these broadcasts occur in the evening but before the 9pm 'watershed'. In Ofcom's large-scale study, the results of which were used to create their categories of taboo words as used above, they actually used a *Father Ted* episode as part of their study, exploring whether participants felt language in the '*fupp off*' exchange was unsuitable for broadcast. *The IT Crowd* was originally broadcast between 2006 and 2013 and so its original broadcast dates fall within the time frame for which complaints were held. *Black Books*, which was broadcast until 2003 is rarely, if ever, repeated on Channel 4 or its subsidiary channels. *Black Books* has disappeared from television schedules, but has been made available on the channel 4 streaming site *All 4* (previously known as *4OD*). As such, between September 2006 and October 2016, it is the repeats of *Father Ted* and the original broadcasts (and subsequent repeats) of *The IT Crowd* that make up the entirety of the complaints.

Between 2006 and 2016, there were with six complaints made about *Father Ted* and six complaints made about *The IT Crowd*, none of which were upheld. The outcome for all 12 of these complaints was as follows: "For all these cases, after careful assessment of the complaints and the broadcast material, Ofcom did not identify any issues which warranted further investigation under its rules" (Personal comm 2016:2), meaning that there were no upheld complaints or fines levied at the broadcaster. Table 4-16 below

shows all the complaints made against the three series between September 2006 and October 2016. Between October 2016 and the time of writing (June 2017), there have been no further complaints recorded in the bulletins regarding any of the three shows. In accordance with the Data Protection Act, Ofcom were unable to give me information as to the content of the complaints beyond the category of complaint to which they were assigned.

Table 4-16- Ofcom Complaints Against Data Set

#	Programme	Transmission Date	Category	# complaints	Bulletin issue
1	The IT Crowd	24-Aug-07	Generally accepted standards	1	93
2	The IT Crowd	7-Sep-07	Generally accepted standards	1	95
3	The IT Crowd	26-Dec-08	Generally accepted standards	1	128
4	The IT Crowd	2-Oct-09	Generally accepted standards	1	143
5	The IT Crowd	16-Jul-10	Product placement	1	164
6	The IT Crowd	8-Aug-12	Disability discrimination/offence	1	213
7	Father Ted	2-Nov-14	Offensive language	1	269
8	Father Ted	2-May-15	Offensive language	1	281
9	Father Ted	9-May-15	Scheduling	1	281
10	Father Ted	23-May-15	Offensive language	1	282
11	Father Ted	6-Feb-16	Offensive language	1	299
12	Father Ted	23-Apr-16	Offensive language	1	304

4.5.1 Complaints against *The IT Crowd*

Figure 4-7 - Distribution of Complaints against IT Crowd
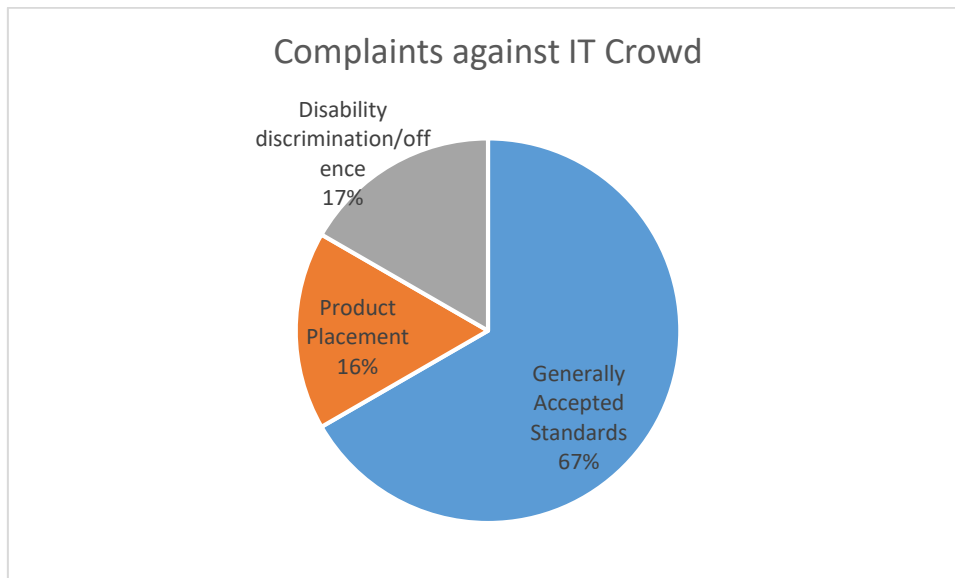
Four of the complaints made against *The IT Crowd* concern breaches of Generally Accepted Standards. This category of Ofcom's broadcasting code is a subsection of Section Two which relates to harm and offence and concerns the principle "To ensure that generally accepted standards are applied to the content of television and radio services so as to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion in such services of harmful and/or offensive material." (Ofcom 2017:16). Within this principle are articles 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 which state that members of the public should be protected from harmful or offensive material (2.1), that documentaries and other factual programmes should not mislead the audience (2.2) and that "material that may cause offence is justified by the context" and this material "may include, but is not limited to, offensive language, violence, sex, sexual violence, humiliation, distress, violation of human dignity, discriminatory treatment or language" (2017:16). It is unfortunate that this category is so broad and appears to include the use of offensive language as complaints within it may or may not relate to offensive language. However, as there is a separate category for 'offensive language' available, it is likely that the standards complained about for *The IT Crowd* refer to issues other than offensive language.

The final two complaints levied at *The IT Crowd* concerned product placement and disability discrimination which, as they do not pertain to offensive language, I will not discuss them further here.

4.5.2 Complaints against *Father Ted*

Figure 4-8 - Distribution of Complaints against Father Ted
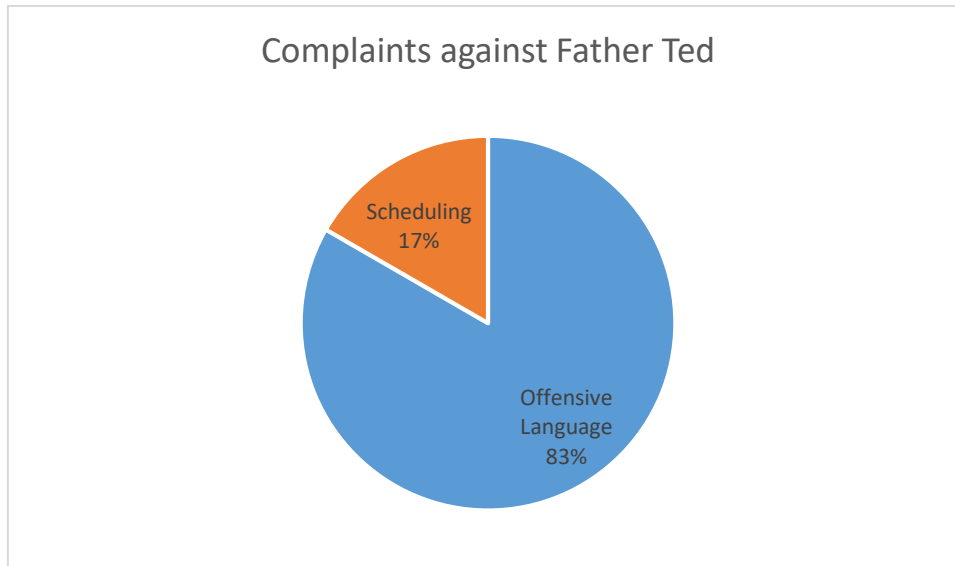
Five of the six complaints made against *Father Ted* related to offensive language. In section 4.4.1, I found that *Father Ted* was the series that contained the most taboo word tokens, with 374 tokens compared with *Black Books*' 87 and *The IT Crowd*'s 251. Thus, the sitcom series with the highest number of taboo word tokens is also the series which attracted the most complaints about offensive language in the last ten years. It is likely there is a relationship between the number of taboo tokens in a series and the likelihood of viewers making complaints. Unfortunately, the absence of complaint data for *Black Books* makes this harder to explore in greater detail. Referring to the finding that *Black Books* had the highest usage of impoliteness but the lowest use of taboo words, if the data were available and conformed to this proposal, it might be suggested that as society is more aware and more proscriptive about taboo words because they are conventionalised impoliteness formulae (as proposed by Culpeper 2011) and thus are primed for impoliteness interpretations and therefore more likely to generate complaints. It could be that the social sanctions on taboo words make them easier to identify than non-taboo impoliteness and thus more likely to be complained about.

Though comedian David Mitchell argued (2009) that taboo word regulation restricts creativity I would argue, however, that the limitations placed on the usage of taboo words in the sitcom by Ofcom is actually somewhat useful to the comedy writer as their policing means that taboo words retain shock value which contributes to the incongruity which generates humour. In Chapter 6, I will explore whether there is a relationship between the severity of a taboo word and its success at generating audience laughter.

One complaint was made against *Father Ted* with regards to scheduling. As with the category 'generally accepted standards' there is some ambiguity here as to whether this complaint might have related to offensive language, i.e. that the material in the programme was unsuitable for the chosen time of broadcast. This scheduling complaint may have inspired Ofcom's (2016) investigation into participants' opinions on the suitability of the 'fupp off' scene for an 8pm pre-watershed broadcast. That Ofcom didn't uphold the complaint suggests that they looked at the likely audience rather than the potential audience (as differentiated in Ofcom 2016:3).

5 DISTRIBUTION OF IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE SITCOM

TED:	The language out of her, you wouldn't hear it from a docker!
DOUGAL:	Ah you would, they use very bad language.
TED:	*Effing* this and *effing* that
DOUGAL:	It was worse than that, Ted, she was saying *fuck*.

<div align="center">- FATHER TED, EPISODE 1.6</div>

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In light of the finding that impoliteness was prevalent in my data set – with, on average, 151.7 impolite acts per hour, I now turn to an exploration of exactly how impoliteness is used – that is, the distribution of the strategies of impoliteness. There are two parts to this results chapter. Firstly, I compare the results for quantities of impoliteness generated when coding with the three different frameworks. Secondly, I explore the distribution of strategies for the Spencer-Oatey (2000,2008), Culpeper (2011) and Leech (2014) analyses.

5.2 COMPARISON OF THREE FRAMEWORKS

5.2.1 Average number of impolite utterances per episode

Figure 5-1 below shows the average number of impolite (or rapport-threatening) utterances coded per episode, according to the three frameworks. The green bars represent the *Father Ted* results, the black represent the *Black Books* results and the red bars represent *The IT Crowd* coding.

Figure 5-1 - Average Number of Impolite Utterances per Episode - All Sitcoms
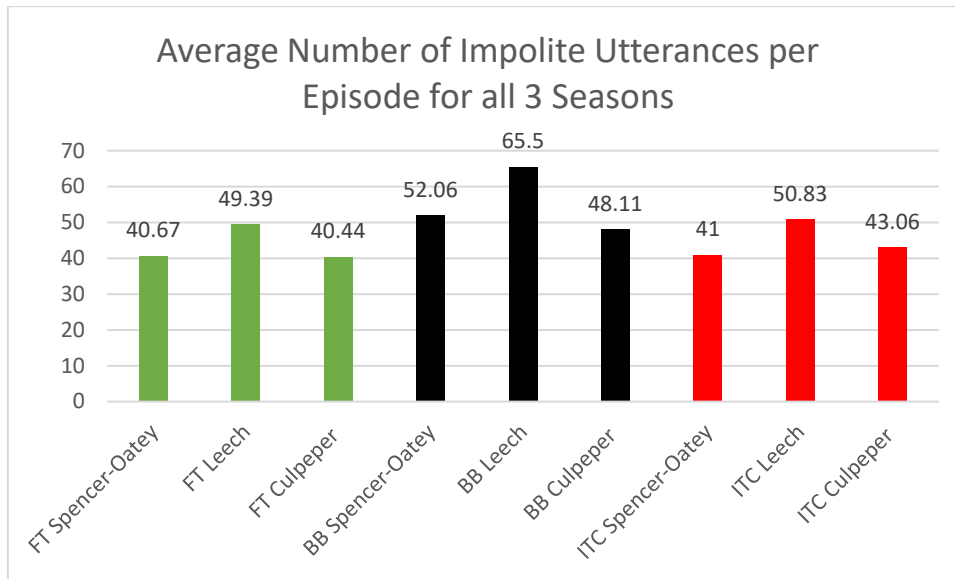
Looking at *Father Ted* (FT), the coding with Leech's framework generated the highest average number of impolite utterances per episode (49.3), with Spencer-Oatey (40.6) and Culpeper (40.4) being very close to one another with a difference of 0.2 recurring. The range from the lowest to highest number of utterances identified as impoliteness was 8.9 utterances. That the range was so small might suggest a general congruence between the three frameworks with regards to the types of utterances that qualify as impoliteness.

The *Black Books* (BB) results follow a similar pattern; the analysis using Leech's framework resulted in the highest number of utterances being coded as impoliteness (65.5). Spencer-Oatey (52.0) and Culpeper (48.1) analyses were fairly close together, with a difference of 3.9 utterances. Additionally, as with *Father Ted*, Spencer-Oatey was the second highest result, with Culpeper's being the lowest. The range for this set of results was higher (17.1), suggesting a greater distinction in the data set between which utterances qualified as impoliteness when coding with the three frameworks.

Finally, *The IT Crowd* (ITC) results also show Leech's framework analysis to be the one that generated the highest number of impolite utterances (50.8). The Spencer-Oatey (41) and Culpeper (43) results are, again, close, with a difference of 2 utterances, however this time it is Culpeper's framework that generated the second highest number of impolite utterances. The range for this set of results was 9.8 utterances. This, again, suggests that there is a general agreement between the three frameworks as to what impoliteness is. That Leech's framework generated the highest number of impoliteness might be a

139

direct result of it being the only framework that contains a category for taboo word usage. The complexity of the framework appears not to be an indicator of how much impoliteness will be coded, as Culpeper's framework is the second most complex but for *Father Ted* and *Black Books,* Culpeper's framework coded the lowest number of impolite utterances.

Another interesting point is that the three frameworks all showed agreement in terms of fluctuations across the three series. For all three frameworks, the lowest number of impolite utterances were recorded for *Father Ted*, the next highest number of impolite utterances were recorded for *The IT Crowd* and the highest number of impolite utterances recorded for each framework were found in *Black Books*. That the fluctuations in the quantity of impoliteness across the thee sitcoms is mirrored in the three frameworks might suggest that the frameworks are all measuring the same thing.

Looking at the more generalised findings from the three frameworks, figure 5-2 below shows the average number of impolite utterances identified during the coding with the three frameworks. On average, Culpeper's framework analysis resulted in the lowest average impolite utterances per episode, with 43.8, Spencer-Oatey had the second highest with 44.5 and Leech, whose framework is the most complex, resulted in 55.2 impolite utterances on average.

Figure 5-2 - Average Number of Impolite Utterances per Episode for Whole Data Set, by Framework
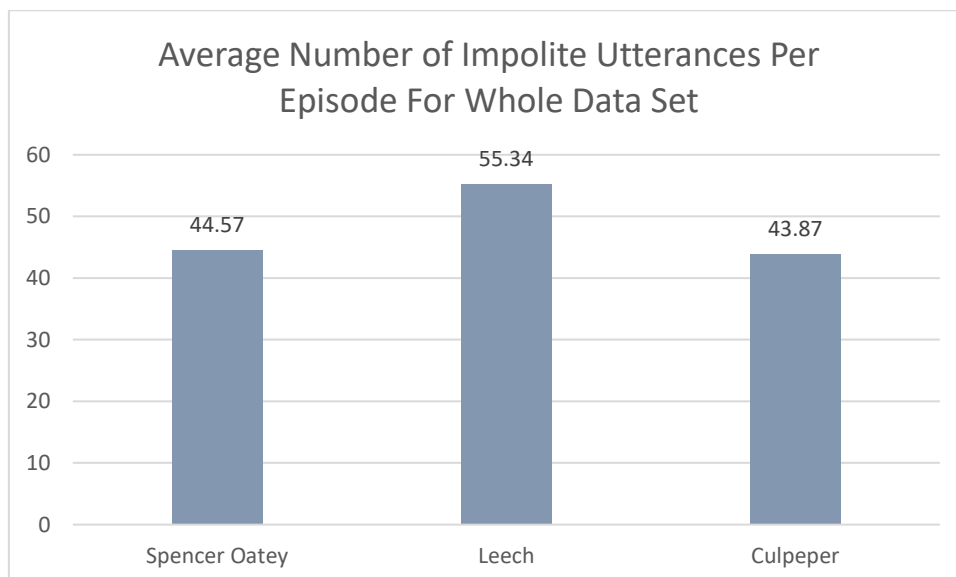
This result suggests that the significant difference in complexity between the frameworks (Spencer-Oatey having 4 categories and Culpeper having 15) has not significantly impacted the quantity of impolite utterances that can be coded by the frameworks. This

suggests that though Spencer-Oatey's framework is the simplest, it is not necessarily to the detriment of the framework's ability to identify impolite (or rapport-threatening) utterances. Indeed, it is possible that the simplicity and broad definitions of the framework enabled a wider variety of utterances to be coded under its categories.

Though the frameworks differ in the number of impolite utterances coded per episode, the standard deviation was low (SD=3.72), suggesting a certain level of agreement between the frameworks with regards to how frequently impoliteness occurred per episode.

5.2.2 Agreement Between Frameworks

In Chapter 4, any utterance that was coded as being impolite by one or more of the frameworks was counted as constituting impoliteness. This explains why the average number of impolite utterances per episode for Leech (55.2) is lower than the average found per half-hour (75.85) but also implies that there are occasions when the three frameworks do not agree. As such, I explored the percentage of all utterances coded as impolite that were coded as such by Leech, Culpeper and Spencer-Oatey. In other words, I wanted to pose the question; 'what percentage of impolite utterances were coded as such by all three frameworks?' As I could find no existing work that quantitatively compares the outcome of the application of these three (or indeed, any) impoliteness frameworks, I had no existing prediction for the percentage of agreement I would find in the data set.

Table 5-1- Percentage of Agreement between Three Frameworks

Percentage of impolite utterances for which all three frameworks made a coding of impoliteness
36.6%

Overall the percentage of agreement was relatively low. Only 36.6% of utterances coded as impolite were coded as such by all three frameworks. However, given the theoretical and methodological differences in the frameworks, it could also be argued that this is not necessarily surprising.

An example utterance for which all three frameworks coded impoliteness is Ted's turn 195 in *Father Ted* episode 2.5. In this episode, Ted and Dougal are competing in *A Song for Ireland*. Ted's nemesis Dick Byrne has also entered a song and the two meet in the dressing room.

FT 2.5	194	Dick	You ready to be beaten, then?				
FT 2.5	195	Ted	I'd say your song is terrible anyway.	conventional	Personalised negative references	M3 Violation of Approbation	Quality Face

Ted's response to Dick's proposition that he and Dougal will be beaten functions as a conventional personalised negative reference according to Culpeper's framework (in that it follows the pattern 'Your X is X'). It is a Leechian violation of Approbation in that it assesses Dick's song negatively and it is a Spencer-Oatey quality face challenge in that it casts negative light on the song, which Dick wrote and in which he has a great deal of face invested. Thus, for this turn, the frameworks all code impoliteness, which here is being termed 'agreement'. Further research would be needed to establish the likelihood of agreement between different impoliteness frameworks for other data set types.

Another way in which the agreement between frameworks can be examined is by looking at the percentage of utterances in an episode that are coded as impolite. The graph below shows the percentage of utterances that were coded as impolite for each episode of *Father Ted*. The three clusters of six dots represent the first 6 episodes of seasons 1, 2 and 3. The blue line represents Spencer-Oatey coding, the orange line represents the Leech coding and the grey line represents Culpeper coding.

Figure 5-3 - Father Ted Percentage of Utterances that are Impolite, Per Episode, Comparison of Frameworks
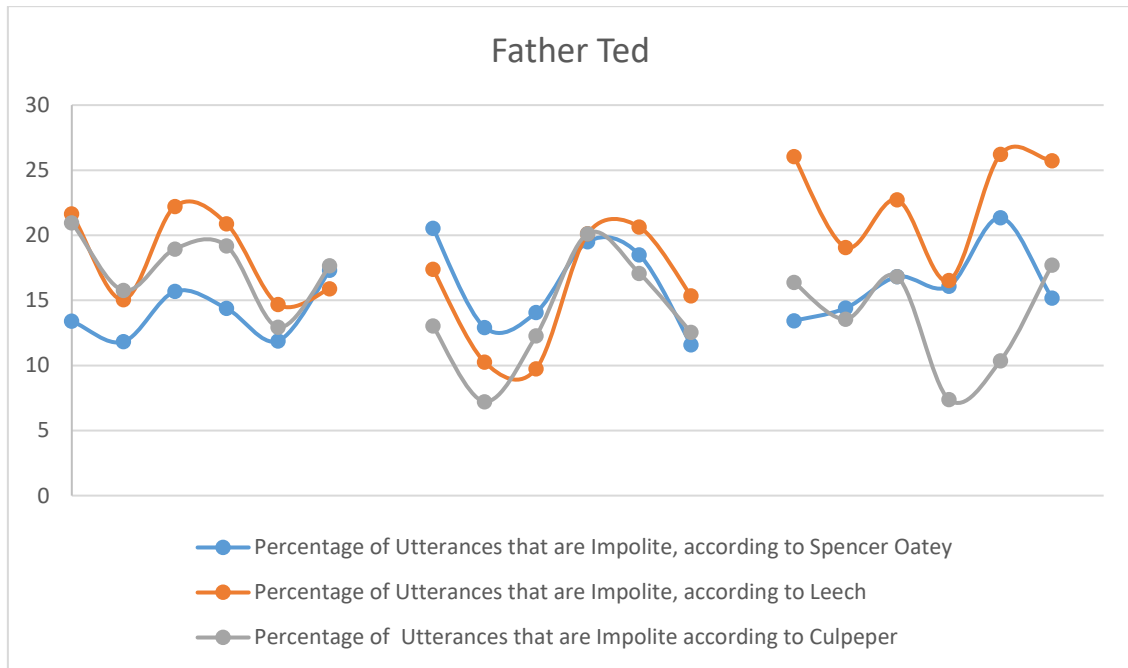
The results show that despite the variance in the quantity of impoliteness that the frameworks capture, there appears to be a general agreement in the fluctuations in impoliteness. Season 1, for example, shows a fairly consistent agreement between the three frameworks – in that from episode 1.1 to 1.2, all three frameworks show a decrease in impoliteness, then from 1.2 to 1.3, the three frameworks all show an increase in the quantity of impoliteness. Though there are some differences with regards to the percentage with which there is an increase, all three frameworks show an increase or decrease with fair uniformity in seasons 1 and 2 of *Father Ted*. In season 3, however, there are some differences between the frameworks in terms of the fluctuations of impoliteness. Though Leech and Culpeper show a somewhat similar pattern of fluctuations, Spencer-Oatey's framework shows a different fluctuation pattern for episodes 3.1 and 3.2. There may be a number of reasons for this – not least that the Spencer-Oatey framework is the simplest of the three.

In general, however, there appears to be a fair level of agreement in the frameworks with regards the ways in which impoliteness fluctuates throughout the series. If the frameworks were identifying unrelated phenomena, there would not be so much apparent agreement in the fluctuations between the episodes. That they appear to largely agree on fluctuations between episodes suggests that the three frameworks are roughly identifying the same thing, though differing in the quantity of impoliteness they code on account of either complexity of framework or the specific elements of the

framework that are or are not codable under one framework but are codable under another.

In figure 5-4 below, we can see the results for the *Black Books* data set. More so than *Father Ted* we can see close levels of agreement between the thee frameworks with regards to the increase and decrease in impoliteness – as one framework records an increase in impoliteness between episodes, so does the other. There are of course some differences in the quantity of increase or decrease, which likely arise out of the frameworks' various discrepancies in coding.

Figure 5-4 - Black Books Percentage of Utterances that are Impolite, Per Episode, Comparison of Frameworks
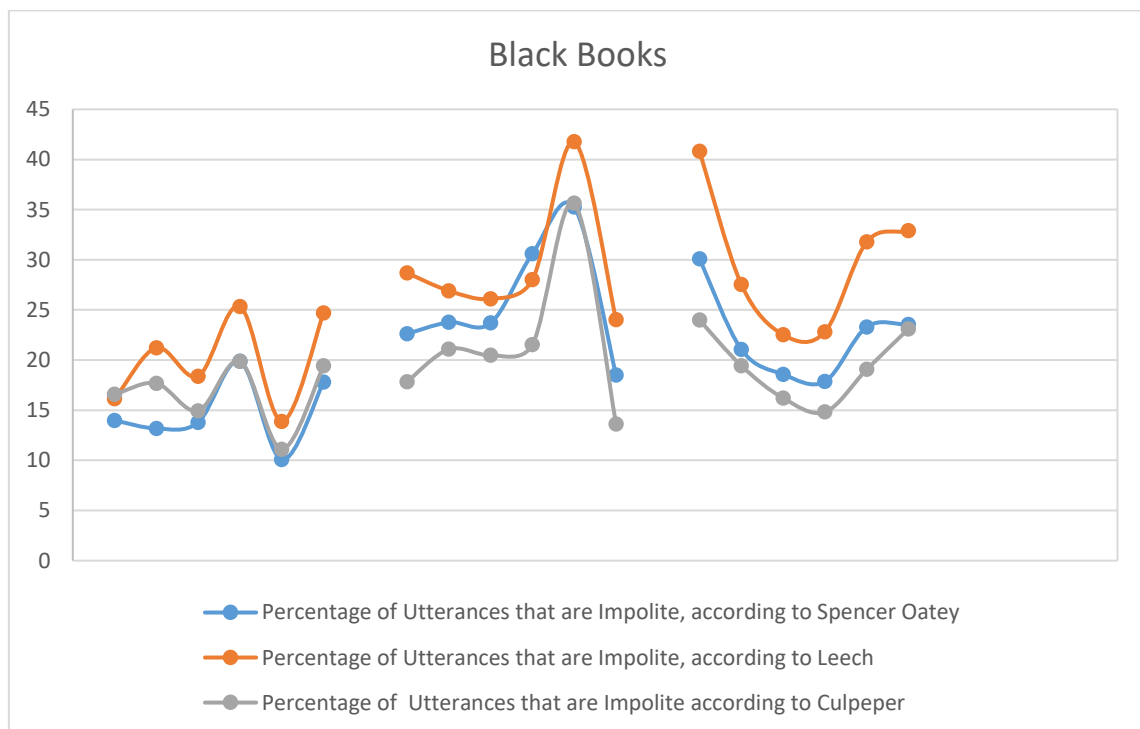
Figure 5-5 below shows the results for the percentages of utterances that are coded as impolite by the three frameworks for *The IT Crowd* data set.

Figure 5-5 – IT Crowd Percentage of Utterances that are Impolite, Per Episode, Comparison of Frameworks
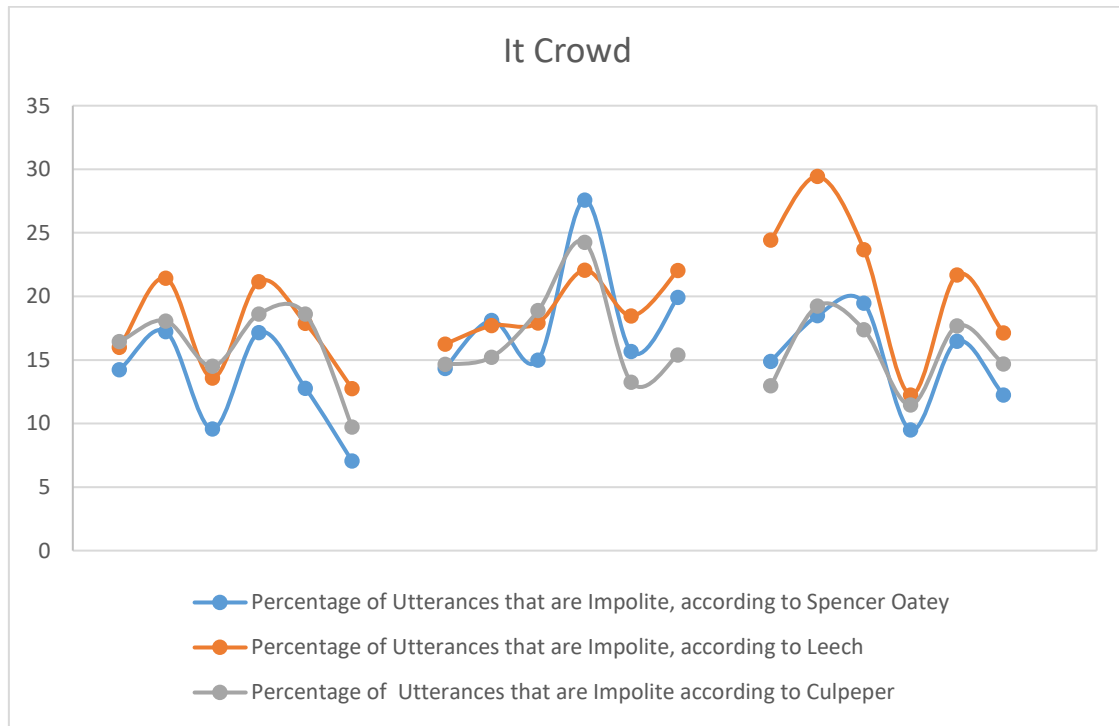
Again, we can see a general agreement among the three frameworks as to the fluctuations of impoliteness. This further confirms that though there are differences in the quantity of impoliteness coded, there is consistency in terms of the fluctuations of impoliteness from episode to episode. This suggests that the three frameworks are coding the same thing. This suggests that what impoliteness is – is in part agreed between the frameworks. If it were not, then the results of the percentages of impoliteness per episode could be expected to vary far more between the frameworks.

Having explored the agreement between the frameworks, I will now explore the results of each framework's application to the data in greater detail, looking at the distribution of impoliteness strategies in my data set. This should give some idea as to the more popular strategies that sitcom characters make use of in order to be impolite to one another.

5.3 SPENCER-OATEY (2000, 2008)

In this section, I will discuss the way in which impoliteness was distributed when the data was coded with Spencer-Oatey's framework. I will look first at the frequency of impolite utterances and will then report on the distribution of impoliteness types in the three series.

5.3.1 Frequency of Impoliteness

As outlined in the first edition of Spencer-Oatey's monograph on cultural communication and politeness theories (2000), rapport can be challenged through face-threatening or rights-threatening behaviour. Spencer-Oatey distinguishes between two types of face-threatening behaviour (quality face [the desire to be approved of] and identity face [the maintenance of social identity]) and two types of rights-threatening behaviour (equity rights [the desire to act unimpeded] and association rights [the desire to have social involvement appropriate to the level of the relationship as we understand it]). As such, Spencer-Oatey's framework is the simplest of the three frameworks that were applied to the data. However, as the categories of face and rights threatening behaviour are broad, the framework still manages to capture a fair proportion of impolite (or, rapport-threatening) behaviour.

As outlined in the methodology, every utterance of the data set was coded according to Spencer-Oatey's framework for conceptualising impoliteness.

In section 5.2, I compared the results for the three frameworks with regards to the quantities of impoliteness that was identified in the coding process. Those results showed that though Spencer-Oatey's framework had the fewest categories, its breadth definition of those categories meant that it was the framework with the second highest identification of impoliteness. Thus, its simplicity did not mean that it identified a low number of impolite utterances when compared with the other frameworks.

Table 5-2 below shows the frequency of impoliteness results for the Spencer-Oatey analysis.

Table 5-2 - Spencer Oatey Impoliteness Results

Spencer Oatey Results	
Average number of impolite utterances per episode in the data set	44.5
Total number of impolite utterances per episode in data set	2,407
Percentage of utterances that are impolite	17.03%

The average number of impolite utterances per episode (44.5) has been discussed above. There was an average of 261 utterances per episode. Thus, this average constitutes 17% of all utterances in an episode being impolite, when coded with Spencer-Oatey's framework. In total, there were 2,407 utterances that were coded as impolite under the Spencer-Oatey framework. Thus, when Spencer-Oatey's framework was used, the results show that impoliteness was frequent in the data set. I will now explore how the impolite strategies in Spencer-Oatey's framework were used by my sitcom data.

5.3.2 Distribution of Impoliteness (Primary Coding)

Table 5-3 below shows the average number of utterances that were coded as being a threat to quality face, identity face, equity rights or association rights per episode. The results are reported in descending order of frequency.

Table 5-3 - Spencer Oatey Distribution of Strategies

Average Number of Impolite Utterances per Episode by Distribution of Framework	
Equity Rights Challenge	16.92
Quality Face Challenge	16.83
Association Rights Challenge	7.64
Identity Face Challenge	3.16

As Table 5-3 shows, the two most frequent strategies were equity rights challenges and quality face challenges. In Spencer-Oatey's framework, these roughly take up the

position of B&L's positive and negative face. The third most used strategy was the association rights challenge and least used strategy was the identity face challenge. Realised as percentages, viewing an average episode as a value of 100%, as the diagram below shows, quality face and equity rights challenges made up for an equal share of 38%, with association rights challenges accounting for 17% of impoliteness and identity face challenges accounting for 7% of the impoliteness in an average episode.

Figure 5-6 - Spencer-Oatey Distribution
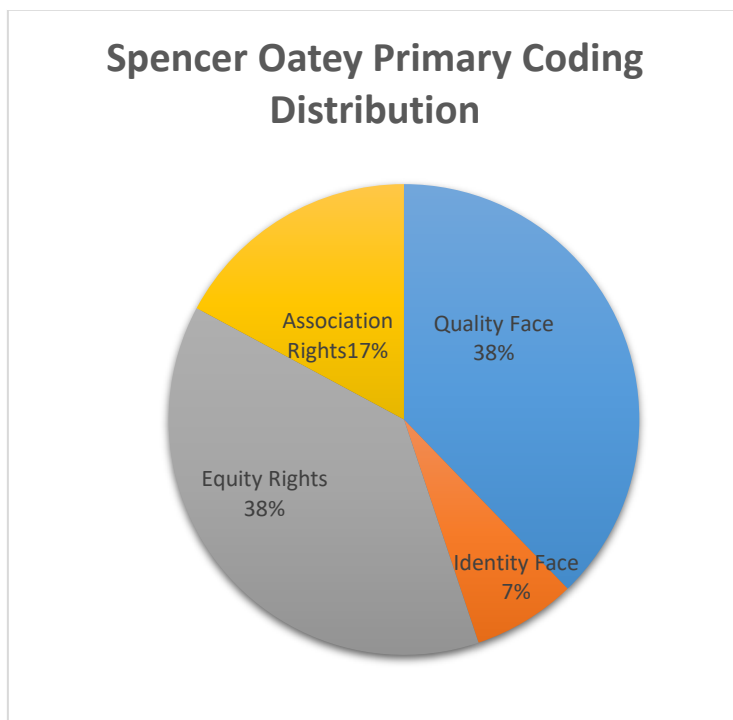
In the following sections, I will discuss these results in greater detail, giving examples from the data set.

5.3.2.1 Equity Rights

The results show that equity rights constituted 38% of the Spencer-Oatey codings and were (by a margin of 0.1%) the most challenged aspect of the four variables in Spencer-Oatey's framework with an average of 16.9 utterances coded as equity rights challenges per episode. Equity rights challenges occur when a challenge is made to the "fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others […] that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon" (Spencer-Oatey 2000:14). Often, these equity rights challenges took the form of orders.

From a narrative perspective, equity rights challenges can be used to further the plot by having characters tell one another what to do, which can later become plot points (for example, in *Father Ted* when Ted tells everyone they must give up a vice for Lent). Additionally, equity rights raise the question of power, as only powerful participants have the legitimated power needed to utter orders. In the case that orders are uttered without the requisite power of the speaker, impoliteness occurs, as the hearer is being 'unduly imposed upon'. Likewise, the type of tasks given can be influential on whether an utterance qualifies as an Equity Right challenge. Such an instance where tasks are too great in quantity, impossible or unpleasant, or a combination of both can be one way in which equity rights are challenged. Such an example comes from episode 3.1 of *Black Books*.

Episode 3.1 opens with Fran returning home from her holiday to find that her best friends, Bernard and Manny have had a big argument. Manny, who is employed in Bernard's bookshop as an assistant, but who actually functions as a caregiver/servant has quit and taken a job at the rival bookshop next door. He and Bernard, who blames Manny for the incident in which he 'introduced' Manny's hand to a sandwich toaster (turn 11), are no longer speaking. The episode is devoted to Fran's attempts to reconcile the pair, who eventually make amends with Bernard appearing to find a new appreciation for Manny when, high on slug repellent and oven cleaner, he rescues him from the abusive manager of the bookshop next door. However, in the final scene of the episode, the following exchange occurs:

BB 3.1	192	Bernard	Manny I'm so sorry that you had to go through that abuse. We're a little hungry now, so fetch up some wine, would you?	

BB 3.1	193	Fran	Oh yes, Manny, go on, get something nice we're really famished.	
BB 3.1	194	Manny	Ok what sort of thing would you like?	
BB 3.1	195	Bernard	Don't ask questions, just do it!	
BB 3.1	196	Bernard	And clean this place up, it's a disgrace. And boil my eye bath and polish the stair rods, de-louse the duvet and tumble dry our doilies, and hoover the roof and whistle down the chimneys	

Turn 196 is coded as an equity rights violation because in it, Bernard is violating Manny's entitlement to personal consideration and fair treatment and is imposing upon him not only unduly but also excessively.

Though the reparations between Bernard and Manny earlier in the episode seemed to imply that Bernard might no longer take advantage of Manny, they have only been reconciled for several minutes before Bernard orders Manny to get him and Fran some wine. This request isn't particularly strenuous, but when Manny replies asking for clarification about the sort of wine Bernard and Fran want, which is geared to help him fulfil their request to their satisfaction, Bernard responds by not only silencing Manny and repeating his order, but pressing a sponge to Manny's face and pushing him through the curtains to the back of the shop. As physical aggression is not the focus of this study, I won't dwell on Bernard's physical aggression towards Manny, except to say that it serves as a visual cue to Bernard's fury.

Turn 196 contains seven imperatives, listed in table 5-4 below.

Table 5-4 - Bernard's Imperatives

1	Clean	This place up
2	Boil	My eye bath
3	Polish	The stair rods
4	Delouse	The duvet
5	Tumble-dry	Our doilies
6	Hoover	The roof
7	Whistle down	The chimneys

Imperative 1 ('clean this place up') co-ordinates two unsurprising elements – Manny is being ordered to clean the shop. Given that Manny is a bookshop assistant this task is, though transgressing the recently-bargained truce between Manny and Bernard, not out of the ordinary. Imperative 2, however, ('boil my eye bath') co-ordinates two much less expected items. An eye bath is a somewhat niche item not typically found in the modern home. Whether the water inside the eye bath must be boiled, or the item itself is unclear. Imperative 3 ('polish the stair rods') returns to a task that is more normal, though might invoke ideas of stately homes as ordinary dwellings do not really require stair rods to be polished. From imperative 4 onwards, the orders take a turn for the bizarre. In imperative 4 ('delouse the duvet'), we have the unusual pairing of the verb 'delouse', meaning to remove lice and other parasites and the noun 'duvet'. This implies that the duvets in *Black Books* are infested with lice. Throughout the series, *Black Books* is depicted as being dirty and run-down as a result of Bernard's apathy and disdain for bookselling. This imperative contributes to the picture of *Black Books* as being infested with insects.

Imperative 5 ('tumble-dry our doilies') invokes ideas of Victorian housekeeping in that it implies that Manny and Bernard own more than one doily. Given the disrepair of the shop and the fact that doilies are associated with Victorian housekeeping and perhaps even invoke some gendered and age implications, this is a surprising order. Indeed, tumble-drying is a luxury that it seems unlikely Manny and Bernard would have. The idea that these fictional multiple doilies must be tumble dried generates an implication that Bernard places great importance on them, as we might expect from someone with an immaculate house and opportunities to entertain. That *Black Books* has been established as being a dirty and poorly maintained building is thus incongruous with imperative 5. Imperative 6 ('hoover the roof') is also absurd. While potentially being physically possible, it would likely be exceedingly dangerous for Manny to attempt to hoover the roof. This communicates Bernard's disregard for Manny's safety and, again, by suggesting that Bernard is so meticulous in his cleaning requirements that he needs the roof to be hoovered is incongruous with the earlier imperative that implied his duvet is infested with lice. Finally, imperative 7 ('whistle down the chimneys') would be a physically dangerous and ultimately pointless task. The order may invoke the phrase '*whistle down the wind*' which is a phrase used in British English often used to mean to leave someone to their own fate, to cast someone loose. The phrase is sometimes attributed to an earlier, similar phrase that appears in Othello, Act Three *I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind, to pray at fortune.* This imperative is the culmination of Bernard's increasingly absurd tasks for Manny to do and shows the extent to which he challenges Manny's equity rights.

For imperatives, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7, the humour arises from the incongruity of the atypical collocations of the ridiculous tasks that Manny is being asked to do which combine verbs of housework with tasks that are atypical of ordinary housekeeping and that imply everything from maintenance of a Victorian stately home to physically hazardous and pointless activities. Simpson summarises Attardo's discussion of the linking of such atypical elements:

> "Attardo talks of simple, playful "juxtapositions" in coordinated noun phrases like "strawberries and zeitgeist" or "asparagus and the immortality of the soul". […] According to Attardo, the resolution works on the assumption that since the two NPs occur as members of a coordinating construction, it follows that they are equivalent and that therefore it should be acceptable to equate them (1997: 412)" Simpson (2003:39)

The imperatives in turn 196 similarly imply that there is an equivalence between the verbs e.g. 'delouse' and the nouns e.g. 'duvet', which are being coordinated by Bernard to form orders that he apparently expects Manny to perform. The incongruity of these orders, as with 'strawberries and zeitgeist', arises from their juxtapositions of possible/impossible ('hoover the roof') and our understanding of modern housekeeping chores ('tumble-dry our doilies').

It is this creative impoliteness that generates humour, working in addition to the ironic contrast between Bernard apologising for Manny's mistreatment at the bookshop next door, from which he has just been rescued, and his subsequent excessive equity rights challenges apparently arising out of his fury that Manny dare to ask what type of wine he would like to drink. Thus, we find the end of the episode gives a sense of everything 'returning to normal' from the state of disequilibrium at the start of the episode. Manny and Bernard are friends again, Manny resumes his job at the bookshop and Bernard goes back to treating Manny as his personal servant.

5.3.2.2 Quality Face

Quality face challenges accounted for 38% of the Spencer-Oatey codings in an average episode and were (by a margin of 0.1) the second most used Spencer-Oatey impoliteness strategy with an average of 16.8 Spencer-Oatey coded utterances per episode. Quality face challenges contest a person's "fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance, etc." (Spencer-Oatey 2000:14). It is interesting, then, that quality face challenges and equity rights challenges emerged as the two most popular methods of rapport threat as they are roughly synonymous with of the traditional notions of 'positive face' and 'negative face' as espoused by B&L and which, ironically, many of the impoliteness research and frameworks have endeavoured to move away from. Looking at the Spencer-Oatey results, it would seem that these conceptualisations of a challenge to our wants to be approved of and a challenge to our freedom of imposition are the most used impoliteness strategies in the sitcom. It may be that, despite the category name change and the fine-tuning of B&L's theory, that Spencer-Oatey's framework points to the enduring worth of B&L's framework.

Because the quality face category is fairly broad, it can capture the communication of disapproval of character, appearance, competence, identity, etc. Continuing with the discussion of Bernard and Manny's relationship in *Black Books*, I will briefly discuss some of the ways in which Bernard challenges Manny's quality face in episode 1.5 of *Black Books*. In this episode, following a burglary, Bernard has had a high-tech bullet-proof security door installed in the shop. Manny, who was present when the door was installed, was supposed to remember the long security code to the door but didn't because he was distracted by a Subbuteo player piece in the workman's hair. Bernard, coming home, realises that he is locked out of the shop and Manny is locked in.

| BB 1.5 | 25 | Manny | The glass is soundproofed**.** The thicker glass… | |
| BB 1.5 | 26 | Bernard | You know what you are? You're a beard with an idiot hanging off it | Quality Face |

In turn 25, Manny is shouting through the soundproofed glass. Bernard, on the other side of the door, poses the question 'you know what you are?' and then answers it 'you're a beard with an idiot hanging off it'. This quality face challenge not only explicitly labels Manny as an idiot, thus challenging his mental competence and intellectual worth, but also implies that, rather than being a man, who has a beard, that the beard is in fact the central (and of course, mindless and useless) entity and Manny, as a human is the adornment, rather than the other way around. This also implies that Manny is a parasitic entity clinging on to a beard.

It isn't clear how much Manny can hear or lipread through the door and so it is ambiguous as to whether he understands the impolite utterance, however, the audience for whom the exchange is designed, do hear it and derive amusement from it. That Manny doesn't definitely hear the impoliteness makes this example similar to the impoliteness used in *Fawlty Towers* (Jobert 2013) where Basil Fawlty's impolite asides are used so that the victim doesn't hear the impoliteness and a) conflict doesn't arise and b) realism is retained.

Manny's beard is the subject of another quality face challenge in turn 75, following his query over whether he should wash his beard.

| BB 1.5 | 74 | Manny | Do you think I should wash my beard? | |
| BB 1.5 | 75 | Bernard | I think you should wash it, yeah. Then shave it off, nail it to a Frisbee and fling it over a rainbow. | Quality Face |

Here Manny's wish to have his physical appearance approved of is challenged as Bernard implies that rather than washing the beard, Manny should get rid of it. The way in which he is suggesting Manny get rid of the beard become increasingly absurd. Overlooking the difficulty entailed in nailing a beard to a frisbee, Bernard's suggestion that it be flung over a rainbow, an obviously impossible thing to do, suggests that Manny should get rid of the beard, but also entails magic, perhaps wizardry and the fact that, ultimately, Bernard doesn't care what Manny does with the beard as long as he gets rid of it.

Manny's appearance, which involves his long hair and beard, is the subject of further quality face challenge in turn 36, where Bernard refers to Manny as 'Gandalf', the wizard from Tolkien's (1954) *Lord of The Rings* series who has long white hair and a beard. Given that Manny is not Gandalf and does not appear to want to be confused for him, this is an example of Bernard mocking Manny by comparing his appearance unfavourably to an old and hairy wizard.

| BB 1.5 | 35 | Manny | Yeah, but what sort of world is it where you can't go away and leave the front door open without being robbed | |
| BB 1.5 | 36 | Bernard | It's this sort of world, Gandalf! | Quality Face |

Later in the episode, Bernard again likens Manny to a character known for their beard. This time, he refers to Manny as Genghis, presumably alluding to Genghis Khan, 13th century founder of the Mongol empire (de Hartog 2004), who is depicted as having a long white beard. Again, this is not a particularly flattering allusion for Manny and serves the purpose of challenging his face wants about his appearance.

| BB 1.5 | 67 | Bernard | Hey Genghis. It's your cinema night tonight, isn't it? | Quality Face |
| BB 1.5 | 68 | Manny | Yeah, I'm going to see Armapocalypse. You wanna come? | |

Manny's response doesn't show any signs of his having taken offence, despite the unfavourable comparison of him to Genghis Khan. This is evidence in support of Dynel's concept of disaffiliative humour in television where impoliteness at the character-character level is in fact created for the audience, and recipients of impoliteness in the film world often do not respond to impoliteness. Indeed, if Manny responded to, and took offence to, every quality face challenge from Bernard in this episode, the episode would have to follow through a number of reconciliations between Manny and Bernard which would slow down the plot considerably. In episode 3.1, discussed above, the entire episode is used for them to reconcile which shows that it is a lengthy process. Additionally, the fact that Manny rarely responds to Bernard's impoliteness can also influence our interpretation of his character – Manny is unassuming and appears not to mind being Bernard's lackey. Until something pushes him over the edge (e.g. the hand-toasting incident that led to the events in episode 3.1) he seems content to not mess with the status quo.

Finally, when Manny proposes that going to the cinema is better than Bernard's usual night of staying home and getting drunk alone with his dead bees, Bernard challenges Manny's quality face again in the same episode when he compares Manny unfavourably to the dead bees on his windowsill.

BB 1.5	82	Manny	Yeah, and you've not been to the cinema since then?	
BB 1.5	83	Bernard	No, it's all tossycock	
BB 1.5	84	Manny	Yeah well, it's better than staying in getting mashed every night with no company except the dead bees on the windowsill.	
BB 1.5	85	Bernard	I like the dead bees on the windowsill, at least they don't go out and leave the front door open and get us robbed. Don't get judgey with me, Ming the Merciless. Listen, show me, what's the story with this alarm thing anyway? How does it work? What do you do?	Quality Face

Manny's turn 84 is also a quality face attack as it negatively evaluates the way that Bernard spends his time, something in which he has face invested. However, Manny's negative assessment comes after Bernard has declared another quality face challenge, by decreeing that all films are 'tossycock', a neologism close to the mild taboo term 'poppycock'. Brown and Levinson (1978) propose that as all speakers have a mutual vulnerability of face, they can be expected to attack another's face when their own is threatened. Thus, Manny's first attack comes only once his face has been threatened,

whereas Bernard's in turn 83 comes after a face-enhancing invitation to the cinema. It is turn 85, however, that I am most interested in. Firstly, Bernard compares Manny with the bees and finds the bees to be preferable because they don't leave the shop vulnerable to burglary, which, as alluded to throughout the episode, is what Manny did which led to the robbery which led to the failed installation of the security door. Next, he orders Manny not to judge him and produces the third negative comparison of Manny to a bearded figure. This time, Manny is compared to Ming the Merciless, a bearded villain from the *Flash Gordon* comic strip (Raymond 1934). Thus, throughout this episode, Bernard uses quality face challenges to vent his frustration with Manny and to amuse himself by generating unfavourable comparisons to bearded cultural icons.

At the end of the episode, Manny gets his revenge by revealing that during his absinthe-induced night locked in the Black Books shop with an SAS survival book as his guide, he ate all of Bernard's bees.

5.3.2.3 Association Rights

The third most used challenge to rights/face when the data was coded using Spencer-Oatey's framework was association rights. On average, there were 7.6 association rights challenges per episode, which constituted 17% of all utterances. A challenge to association rights challenges the "fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them" and relates to "interactional association-disassociation" and "affective association-disassociation" (Spencer-Oatey 2000:14-15). In other words, speakers desire not to be overwhelmed with conversation or ignored, and they also wish to share "concerns, feelings and interests".

A possible criticism of this element is the potential overlap between the affective association-dissociation of association rights and lack of concern for quality face. For example, in affective association-dissociation we share concerns for another's face. In quality face, we wish for people to evaluate us positively. If an interlocutor does not share the concern for our quality face desires that we have, then they have challenged our quality face and yet, by the definition of association rights, they have also challenged our association rights by neglecting to share in our concerns. In fact, when Spencer-Oatey introduces the concept of face, she writes that "people often regard themselves as having certain attributes or characteristics, such as personality traits, physical features, beliefs,

language affiliations and so on […] people have a fundamental desire for others to evaluate them positively and so they typically want others to acknowledge their positive qualities and not to acknowledge their negative qualities" (2008:14). If a person perceives themselves as an excellent dancer, but their interlocutor has no interest in dance, and so does not share concern for their interest in dance, does this not affront the quality face (the person's characteristics as a dancer) but also the association rights of the dancer (by not caring about their face interests)? Furthermore, as Spencer-Oatey notes, we can be face sensitive about matters not only concerning our own face but in areas in which our face is invested, "the attributes that people are face-sensitive about can apply to the person as an individual and also to the group or community that the person belongs to and/or identifies with" (2008:15). So, face can be threatened when interests are not shared, yet this is also a threat to association rights. See the methodology section (3.5.2) for details of the coding process.

Some association rights challenges, however, were very clear in that speakers were either overwhelmed with conversation or ignored by their interlocutors. Such an example of interactional association-dissociation constituting an association rights challenge comes from *Father Ted* episode 2.2. In this episode, Ted and Dougal are throwing a fundraiser raffle at the church hall. Father Purcell, described as "the most boring priest in the world" has cornered Jack in a cupboard at the raffle evening and is talking incessantly. When Ted comes to rescue him, Jack escapes, leaving Ted trapped.

FT 2.2	179	Purcell	Because you know they have no morals and no respect for human life. But what they do have, and no one can deny this, now, they have the finest collection of boilers in the world. And I include Canada in that	Association Rights
FT 2.2	180	Ted	Fine Anthony, I just want to borrow Jack for a moment	
FT 2.2	181	Jack	THANK CHRIST	
FT 2.2	182	Ted	Father?	
FT 2.2	183	Purcell	Ahh God, I remember the first time I saw that boiler now, beautiful!	Association Rights
FT 2.2	184	Ted	I don't suppose you'd like to buy a ticket father?	

FT 2.2	185	Purcell	Did you get them specially, Ted? Because you can buy them down the shop, you know, any number you like now, 1, 7, 20, 112	Association Rights
FT 2.2	186	Ted	112?	
FT 2.2	187	Purcell	All the way up to 409 I think it is, and if you want more, you send off for them and they send them back in an envelope now and you know, normal kind of thing now, rectangular, four corners, you know. That's the way I like them anyway, the old envelopes oh yes, yeah. No round envelopes for me! No way Jose… Sid Vicious now, that was a grand name, wasn't it? He had trouble with the drugs.	Association Rights

Purcell's extended turns, which are spoken quickly and allow little space for interjection or turn-taking, are a good example of interactional association-disassociation where Ted is overwhelmed by the amount of talk (and variety of topics) Purcell covers.

Over his three turns, Purcell's mean utterance length is 48 words, whereas Ted's mean utterance length is 14.75. The actor playing Purcell speaks in a monotonous tone which emphasises the incessant and dull nature of the character, but also speaks in such a way that there are few pauses or gaps in his speech, which makes it harder for his interlocutors to interject.

The fact that Father Jack, the aggressive alcoholic has been unable to escape Purcell once trapped in conversation with him, shows the power of Purcell's overwhelming association challenge.

The topics that Purcell covers are also topics about which people do not typically speak for long periods of time, for example, boilers, all of the numbers of raffle ticket that you can buy and how to send off for more envelopes. That Ted and the viewer(s) and audience are likely to identify these as topics that would be tedious when discussed at length contributes to the incongruity that Purcell would cover them in in such minute detail, which contributes to the feelings of being overwhelmed that his discourse creates.

Interestingly, Ted appears to feel that he cannot escape from the conversation if he is to attend to *Purcell's* association rights. In other words, were Ted to cut Purcell off and point out that he is not interested in the topic of conversation, he would be challenging Purcell's association rights and so it is through this politeness on Ted's part that he gets trapped with Purcell in the cupboard.

As the credits roll on this episode, the scene cuts back to Purcell in the cupboard, still speaking unendingly. Though he now has no interlocutor, there is still humour in his ability to drone on unendingly about all manner of boring and irritating topics.

| FT 2.2 | 262 | Purcell | This is a piece of advice my father gave to me, now this not only refers to lagging but all forms of insulation. He said 'don't ever' no no wait 'always, always' no, it was 'never' oh I've forgotten. Never mind, what's your favourite humming noise? would it be hmmm or would it be hmmm-mmmm the first one there now that's the sound of a fridge and the second one that's the sound of a man humming, you never hear a woman humming. I knew a woman once, but she died soon afterwards. Now if you push me to it, I'd have to say my favourite colour was grey, no blue, a soft blue with a hint of grey, no orange, orange that's it, I remember. I have an extension put on the house now, I put it on the extension so the house is in a circle now, you see? |

5.3.2.4 Identity Face

Challenges to identity face were the least frequent strategy to emerge from the Spencer-Oatey coding. On average, there were 3.1 identity face challenges per episode, which made up 7% of the Spencer-Oatey data. Identity face is challenged when others do not uphold or acknowledge our "social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend." (Spencer-Oatey 2008:14)

The lower frequency of identity face challenges may be a result of the fact that characters (as is the same for real people) only have so many identities or social roles in any given

situation, meaning that there are fewer opportunities to challenge someone's identity face. Another reason for the low average number of identity face challenges could be that there are fewer ways of challenging them, whereas quality face challenges can challenge many areas of quality face (e.g. wealth, appearance, friends, family, interests, job competence, etc) and in a variety of ways. In section 5.3.2.2, I showed how Bernard attacked Manny's appearance, his competence at his job and his intelligence in his various quality face attacks.

Identity face challenges were fairly easy to identify given the explicitness with which one must call into question another's identity or role. One such example comes from episode 1.6 of *Father Ted*. In this episode, following Father Jack's (apparent) death (which is later revealed to be a cleaning substance-induced coma), Ted and Dougal are visited by a young female solicitor named Laura who outlines Jack's will to them.

FT 1.6	173	Ted	[…] anyway, we can discuss it with the solicitor	Identity Face
FT 1.6	174	Laura	I am the solicitor	
FT 1.6	175	Ted	No, you're not	Identity Face
FT 1.6	176	Laura	I'm sorry, but I'm a senior partner in Corless, Corless and Sweeny	
FT 1.6	177	Ted	Now come on, now. Just because we're from the island, you think you can have a bit of fun with us	Identity Face
FT 1.6	178	Laura	I assure you	
FT 1.6	179	Ted	Alright alright. The big thickos from the island, but we're not as thick as we look, eh?	Identity Face
FT 1.6	180	Dougal	No way, José	Identity Face
FT 1.6	181	Laura	Now wait a second, why do you think I've been talking to you for the last hour and a half?	
FT 1.6	182	Ted	Look, you're a lovely girl, but I really think we should talk to the solicitor	Identity Face
FT 1.6	183	Dougal	If you're a solicitor, I'm Boy George.	Identity Face

Here, it would seem that because of her gender, Ted and Dougal refuse to acknowledge or uphold Laura's identity as a senior partner at a law firm. Therefore, her sense of public and professional identity and even her ability to conduct the meeting she is having with them are being called into question. In turn 175, Ted explicitly claims that Laura is not the solicitor. When she rejects this challenge by re-stating her professional title, Ted implies that Laura is pulling some kind of prank on Dougal and himself. When she again attempts to refute this in turn 178, Ted continues to believe that Laura is playing a prank on them because they live on the remote Craggy Island and thus are perceived as stupid. That Ted is willing to believe that Laura is involved in some kind of large-scale prank before he will believe she is a lawyer speaks to the institutionalised sexism in society and the Catholic church at that time. Additionally, the fact that Ted believes only a 'thicko' would be tricked into believing a woman could be a solicitor further speaks to Ted's perspective on women's ability to have legal careers. In turn 182, Ted tries to minimise the face-damage inherent in challenging her identity face by attending to her quality face in telling her that she is a 'lovely girl'. This suggests that all she need worry about is whether or not she be lovely and need not continue in her (in Ted's eyes) bizarre prank in which she pretends to be a solicitor to the grieving priests.

Dougal's identity challenges to Laura's face include that when Ted argues that he and Dougal won't be fooled by her claims that she is indeed a solicitor, he concurs 'no way, Jose' and his turn in 183 when he uses a metaphor to express his disbelief that Laura is solicitor, by claiming that her being a solicitor is as true as his being androgynous DJ and singer, Boy George.

Both Ted and Dougal, over these seven turns, challenge Laura's identity face in her professional identity as a solicitor. We the audience accept that she is a lawyer and so Ted and Dougal's sexist inability to conceive that a woman can be a solicitor is being mocked. Though co-writer Graham Linehan has stated (2013:np) that *Father Ted* "didn't take the hard-edged satirical approach", McGonigle argues there is certainly an element of satire to the series (2016:n.p) and it would seem there is satire this scene in particular. The scene sends up the antiquated view of women's roles still held within the Catholic Church at that time, as well as wider societal misogyny in which a solicitor might always be expected to be male, with a female solicitor being a significant deviance from the schemata of the type of jobs women can do.

In a similar scene in *Fawlty Towers* discussed by Jobert (2013), in which a husband and wife, who are both doctors, check into the hotel, Basil Fawlty refuses to accept that a woman can be a doctor, instead believing her husband to be two doctors. The scene in *Father Ted* is, like that in *Fawlty Towers*, used to highlight the stupidity of those unwilling to appreciate that women can have careers (of any kind) but may also reference the outdated perception of women in the church.

At the end of the scene, there is a smash-cut to Ted and Dougal looking worse for wear. They have a meta-linguistic discussion of the language Laura used in defending her identity face to them. Dougal's enquiry as to the state of Ted's head implies that Laura may have physically attacked him in the intervening time between the end of the scene where she was being told she wasn't a solicitor and now, when she has departed.

FT 1.6	185	Dougal	Oh, how's your head, Ted?
FT 1.6	186	Ted	Not too bad
FT 1.6	187	Ted	But it's true what they say about these career women, they're very aggressive.
FT 1.6	188	Dougal	Yeah, she was very aggressive, wasn't she, Ted?
FT 1.6	189	Ted	Oh, and the language out of her, you won't hear it from a docker
FT 1.6	190	Dougal	Ah you would, they use very bad language.
FT 1.6	191	Ted	*F-ing this* and *F-ing that*.
FT 1.6	192	Dougal	It was worse than that, Ted, she was saying *fuck*

We see here that Ted and Dougal's negative perspective on 'career' women is unchanged in that they both agree she was aggressive (a quality discouraged in females and preserved for hegemonic masculinity) and they perceive her use of taboo language to be noteworthy is likely because, for them, it is atypical of her gender.

5.3.3 Secondary Coding Results

In the literature review, I noted that Lachenicht (1980) was one of the first researchers to suggest that (im)politeness strategies could be used in combination, despite B&L's view of the opposite. Because of the complex and multifaceted nature of impoliteness and the inherent subjectivity in the qualitative coding of qualitative data, I decided to allow for each utterance to be coded twice under the three frameworks. This was done to address the potential issue that many utterances can challenge more than one type of face/sociality right. However, to prevent the coded data from becoming unmanageable, and because Spencer-Oatey's framework only has 4 categories, I capped the coding at a maximum of two codes per framework (as of course, some have only one code, or indeed none). Though I accept and acknowledge that some utterances contain three or more multiple strategies of impoliteness, I wanted to focus on the types of impoliteness which emerged as the most prominent for each utterance.

In this section, I will briefly discuss the secondary coding results for the Spencer-Oatey analysis, looking in particular at the differences between the primary and secondary codes.

Table 5-5 - Secondary Coding Results for Spencer-Oatey

Average Number of Impolite Utterances per Episode: Secondary Coding for Spencer-Oatey	
Number of Utterances	8.15
Identity Face	2.67
Association Rights	2.09
Quality Face	1.85
Equity Rights	1.54

Table 5-5 above shows the average number of secondary codings per episode was 8. Only 18% of the impolite utterances coded using Spencer-Oatey as the primary code were felt by the analyst to require a secondary coding. This lends support to the capping of the coding to two utterances as few had a secondary code, we can extrapolate that even fewer would need a third coding. There were on average 1 quality face 2 identity face, 1 equity rights and 2 association rights challenges per episode.

The implications of the secondary coding results could be interpreted as relating to the robustness of the various frameworks. If, for example, a framework has very few secondary codings, does this mean that it is a superior framework to those with multiple secondary codings? Do the secondary codings hint at the categories of the framework not adequately capturing the elements of language under investigation? It could be interpreted thus and if so, then Spencer-Oatey's low number of secondary codings could be interpreted to suggest that, for the most part, her categories of impoliteness work well in adequately describing a particular type of impoliteness. However, it could be argued that the number of second codings simply attests to the complex nature of impoliteness as a phenomenon as there are other classifications of language for which an utterance might be multiply coded which are not interpreted as being to the detriment of the framework or method of analysis.

An example of an utterance that has been multiply coded comes from *Father Ted* episode 1.3. John and Mary are recurring, but not main characters in *Father Ted*. They are a married couple who pretend to be deeply in love and happily married when in front of any of the priests, but as soon as they are alone are verbally and physically abusive to one another. In turns 200 and 201, they are having a private conversation before Ted turns up.

| FT 1.3 | 200 | John | Are you going to stand there all day, you fat old bitch? | Quality Face | |
| FT 1.3 | 201 | Mary | Don't talk to me like that, you big pile of shite. | Equity Rights | Quality Face |

Mary's utterance in 201 was attributed a primary code of equity rights challenge in that it functions as an order for John to desist in speaking to her in such a way. Secondly, turn 201 functions as a quality face challenge because the address Mary uses for John is 'you big pile of shite' which directly communicates a negative evaluation of him and his self-worth. The codes were applied in such an order as to reflect the order of the utterance – in that the first part of the utterance communicates an order and the second part of the utterance communicates a negative evaluation of John. As such, the utterance's coding reflects the order in which the rights and face are challenged.

In addition to the primary and secondary codes, Mary's turn in 201 could also be coded as a tertiary higher-level challenge to John's identity face in that it affronts John's identity

as her husband. As has been discussed in the methodology, however, I capped the coding at two codes per utterance in order to prevent the coding results from becoming unmanageable.

In order to compare the impoliteness distribution between the four strategies, the results for the primary and secondary coding are reported in table 5-6 and figures 5-8 and 5-9 below:

Table 5-6 - Secondary Coding Results for Spencer-Oatey

Average Number of Impolite Utterances per Episode: Secondary Coding for Spencer-Oatey		Primary Coding
Number of Utterances	8.15	44.5
Identity Face	2.67	3.16
Association Rights	2.09	7.64
Quality Face	1.85	16.83
Equity Rights	1.54	16.92

Figure 5-8 - Spencer-Oatey Primary Coding Distribution
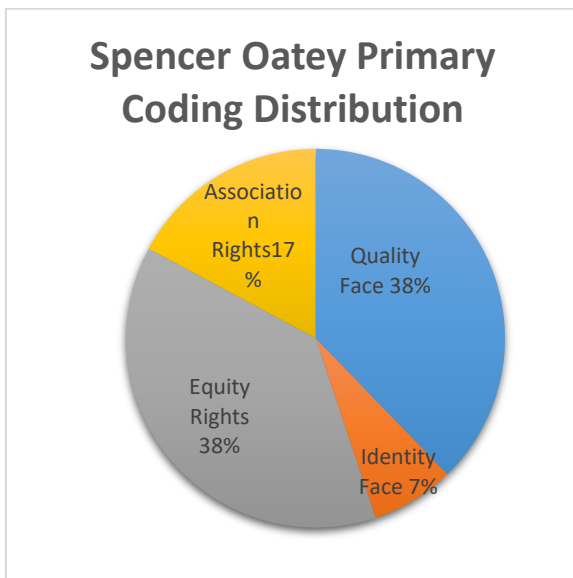
Figure 5-9 - Spencer-Oatey Secondary Coding Distribution
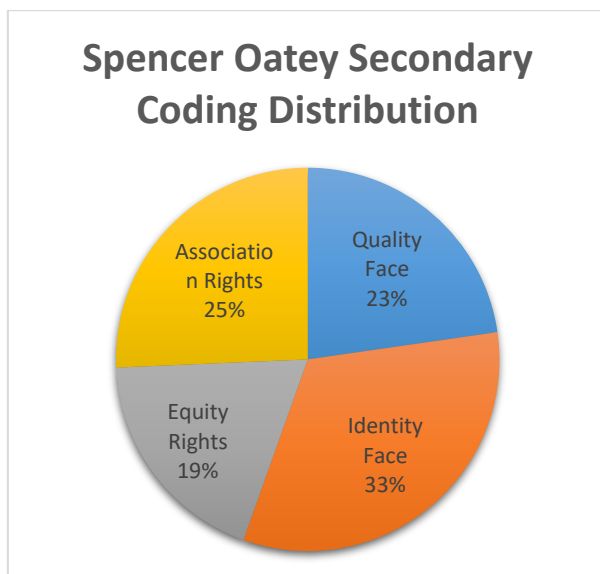
Unlike the primary coding, the most frequent second strategy coded was identity face; this category is the least frequent primary coding (7%) and the most frequent secondary coding (33%). This is an interesting finding because it suggests that identity face functions as an additional aspect of face challenge following from another type of face or rights challenge. So, while the example with Laura the solicitor in *Father Ted* (above) was a clear example of an explicit identity face challenge and was given a primary coding, other identity face challenges occurred as part of strategy mixing.

It may be that, as highlighted in the example above, that quality face and identity face tend to overlap one another and so identity face is coded second as an utterance often offends both at once.

The second most frequent secondary code is association rights (25%) which were the second least frequent coded in the primary distribution (17%). This is again interesting as it suggests that the least frequently coded utterances in the primary distribution were the most coded in the secondary distribution. Based on these results, it appears that association rights and identity face are perhaps secondary and additional challenges following the more obvious quality face and equity rights challenges. If this were found to be the case by other analysts exploring other data sets, it could perhaps be suggested that association rights and identity face challenges are second-order strategies typically invoked when one of either quality face or equity rights are challenged. I would not at this stage suggest that association rights is a second order strategy of equity rights, or

that identity face always follows from quality face as there isn't enough data to support this yet.

5.4 CULPEPER (2011)

In this section, I will explore the results of the analysis of impoliteness using Culpeper's framework. I will begin by exploring the frequency with which impoliteness occurs in episodes when using Culpeper's framework of impoliteness, and I will then explore the distribution of impoliteness strategies for the primary and secondary codings.

5.4.1 Frequency of Impoliteness

Figure 5-10 below shows the overall average number of impolite utterances per episode, as yielded by the three impoliteness analyses.

Figure 5-10 - Average Number of Impolite Utterances per Episode
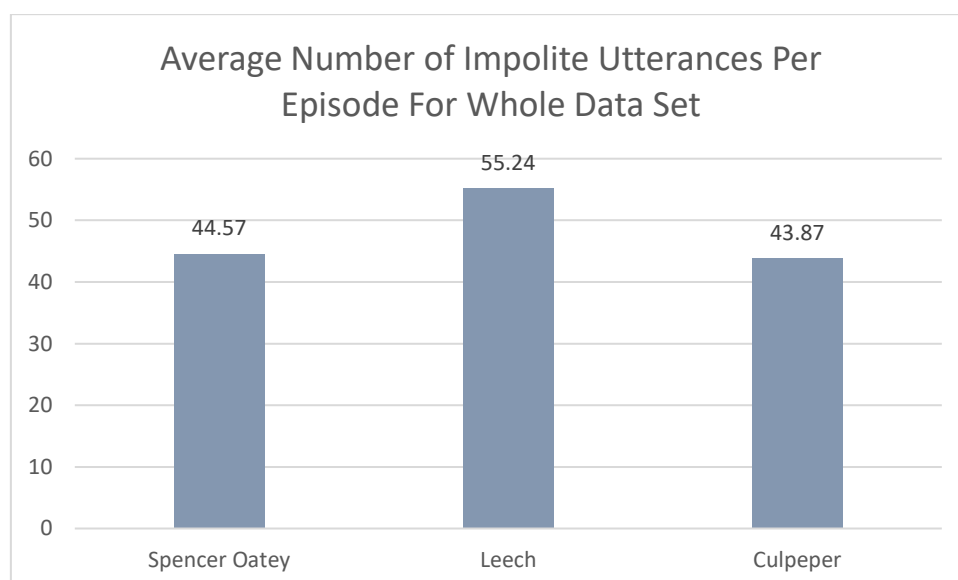
Culpeper's framework is the most complex of the three frameworks in this study, partially because it contains the highest number of categories (15), but also because of the distinctions made between conventionalised impoliteness and implicational impoliteness which function as a higher-order- differentiation before the main strategies can be applied. As such, it might have been expected that Culpeper's framework would capture the highest number of impolite utterances and indeed the pilot study showed this to be the case. However, within the data set as a whole, the Culpeper analysis yielded the lowest number of impolite utterances for the entire data set, with an average of 43.8 impolite utterances per episode.

Figure 5-11 below shows the breakdown of the average number of impolite utterances per episode for the three series:

Figure 5-11 - Average Number of Impolite Utterances per Episode for all 3 Seasons
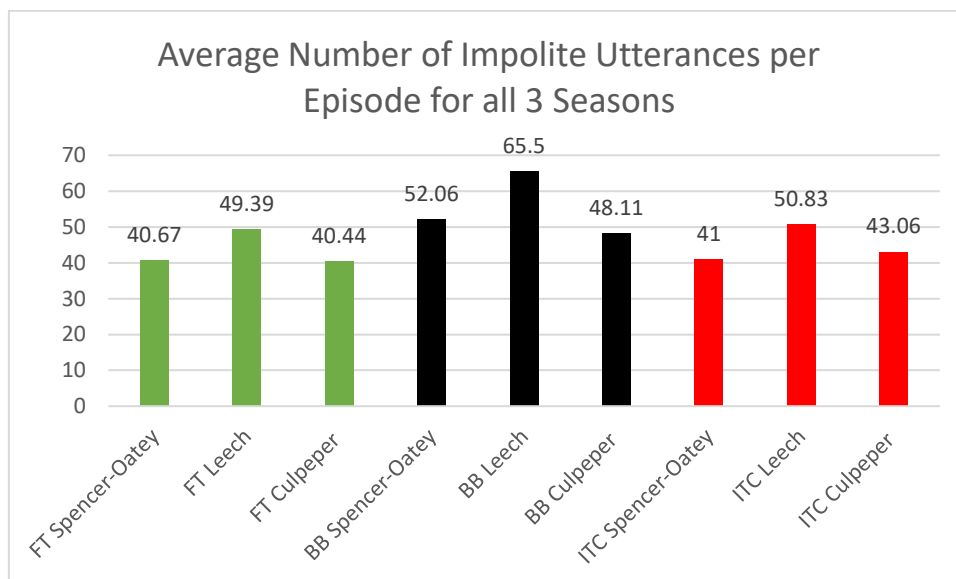
Looking at the three sitcom series, the Culpeper analysis yielded the lowest number of impolite utterances for *Father Ted* and *Black Books* and codes the second fewest impolite utterances for *The IT Crowd*. This suggests that despite its relative complexity, there are aspects of the framework which do not code impoliteness where other frameworks have a relevant category and do code impoliteness. Indeed, when coding the data set, I found that one significant absence of a concept of impoliteness was that of orders, for which Culpeper's framework did not have a relevant category. Orders are coded in the Spencer-Oatey framework as equity rights violations and in the Leech framework as violations of Tact. Thus, every time an order appeared in the data set which impeded the hearer's free will, Culpeper's framework had no relevant category and thus no code could be applied. Another category absent from Culpeper's framework is that of disagreements and/or contradictions, for which Leech has a relevant category (violations of Agreement). This meant that, particularly for orders and demands, both Spencer-Oatey and Leech's frameworks coded impoliteness where Culpeper's framework did not. This may account for part of the discrepancy between this and the other two frameworks in terms of the quantity of impoliteness coded but also highlights how a comparative analysis with more than one impoliteness framework enabled an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses therein.

5.4.2 Distribution of Impoliteness

In this section, I will explore the distribution of Culpeper's impoliteness strategies in the data set as a whole. Unlike Spencer-Oatey and Leech's frameworks, Culpeper's framework makes a first-order distinction between conventionalised and implicational impoliteness. Thus, the first distributional element I will report on is the distribution of conventionalised vs implicational impoliteness.

Figure 5-12 below shows the distribution of impolite primary coded utterances according to Culpeper's conventionalised and implicational impoliteness categories.

Figure 5-12 - Culpeper Distribution of Strategies
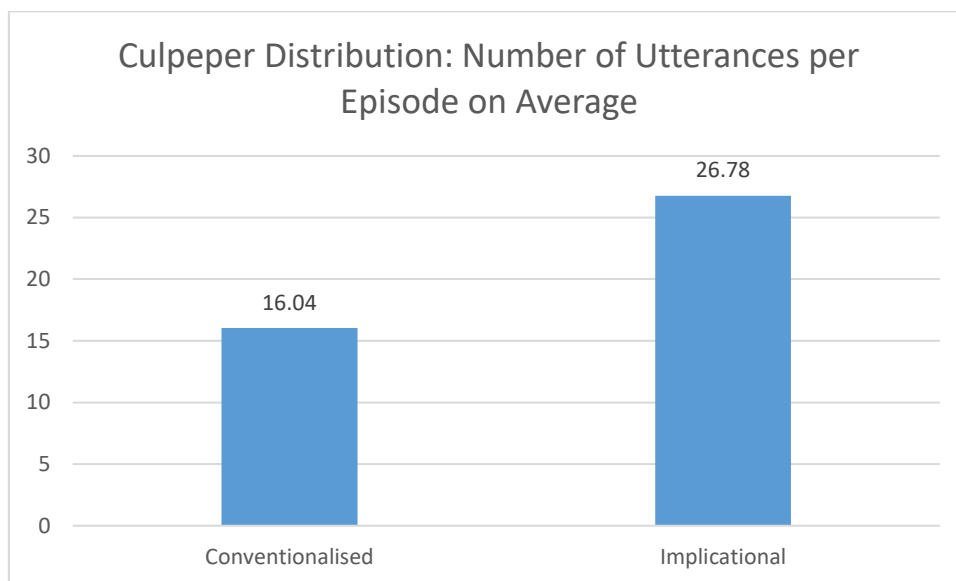
The results show that, in an average episode from the data set, there were 16 conventionalised impoliteness utterances and 26 implicational impoliteness utterances. In other words, 63% of impolite utterances were implicational and 37% were conventionalised. In Culpeper's (2011) monograph, he reports the results of a study in which student informants were asked to write self-report data about an impoliteness event. He found that 59% of these reports involved implicational impoliteness (2011:155), where "what was said (or done) was not 'pre-loaded' for impoliteness" but participants interpreted impoliteness anyway. My results conform to Culpeper's finding in that implicational impoliteness was more frequent than conventionalised impoliteness, with my own results showing an even higher percentage for implicational impoliteness. This suggests that implicational impoliteness may be found more frequently than conventionalised impoliteness in a number of domains, with British sitcoms potentially being one of those domains. This is perhaps unsurprising given that implicational

impoliteness, through its nature of relying on hearer inference, is much easier to cancel, should the need arise. Conventionalised utterances, however, such as 'fuck/screw/sod + you' are, of course by their very nature of being conventionalised, pre-loaded for impoliteness and thus much harder to cancel.

There may be an additional pleasure in the sitcom gleaned from the effort required in implicational impoliteness in that the audience must process the transgression in both politeness and humour terms in order to be rewarded with the impoliteness inference.

That is not to say that conventionalised utterances are not useful. Indeed, the fact that they appear with a frequency of 37% suggests that there is strength to the proposal that impoliteness can indeed be conventionalised. In proposing the conventionalisation of impoliteness Culpeper countered the discursive argument that impoliteness relies on context. That on average 16 utterances per episode in my data set fit one of Culpeper's conventionalised utterance structures is actually quite remarkable and shows that speakers can and do use these formulaic impolite constructions to signal impoliteness. Moreover, we might consider conventionalised impoliteness structures a useful tool to the sitcom writer on account of their pre-loaded and generally understood currency in (British-Irish) society. Perhaps the lower incidence of conventionalised impoliteness is on account of the creative restriction inherent in using formulaic impoliteness.

Turning now to the distribution of primary strategies, the table below reports the distribution of the Culpeper strategies in an average episode of the data set:

Table 5-7 - Distribution of Culpeper Strategies

Conventionalised or Implicational Strategy?	Culpeper Overall Totals	
	Total Number of Impolite Utterances	43.87
Implicational	Form driven implication	20.94
Implicational	Context-driven implication	3.43
Conventionalised	Pointed criticisms/complaints	2.52
Implicational	Convention-driven implication	2.41
Conventionalised	Unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	2.19
Conventionalised	Personalised negative vocatives	1.78

Conventionalised	Personalised negative assertions	1.61
Conventionalised	Threats	1.61
Conventionalised	Personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)	1.57
Conventionalised	Dismissals	1.52
Conventionalised	Negative expressives	1.44
Conventionalised	Silencers	1.37
Conventionalised	Personalised negative references	0.19
Conventionalised	Message enforcers	0.19
Conventionalised	Condescensions	0.06

What is striking about the distribution of Culpeper's framework is that there is one category which is significantly more frequently coded in the data than any other. Form-driven implications occurred on average 20 times per episode, 17 more occurrences than the next most popular strategy, context-driven implication which appears on average 3 times per episode. Thus, this would suggest that form-driven implications were highly important to the data or perhaps that the category was too broad and thus enabled the identification of utterances that might be better served by dividing the categories further. The third most used strategy came from the conventionalised set of strategies and was pointed criticisms/complaints. I will discuss these three most used Culpeper strategies in turn.

5.4.2.1   Form-Driven Implication

A form-driven implication is achieved when "the surface form or semantic content of a behaviour is marked" (Culpeper 2011:155). This category deals with such impoliteness as "the various phenomena to which everyday terms such as 'insinuation', 'innuendo', 'casting aspersions', 'digs', 'snide comments/remarks' and so on refer" (Culpeper 2011:156). Culpeper notes that many of his examples make use of "some kind of marked surface form or semantic content relative to Gricean cooperativeness" (2011:157). Thus form-driven implications can include Gricean maxim flouts and violations. On account of Grice's inclusion in the framework, a possible issue arises that when flouting or violating maxims, speakers are still being cooperative as they are using the strategies to generate desired implicatures. Culpeper proposes that a possible solution to this is to view cooperation as occurring on only the linguistic level and not on the social.

Form-Driven implications were the most frequently used impoliteness strategies according to the Culpeper coding, with an average of 20 form-driven implications per episode, suggesting that form-driven implications are a popular way for sitcom writers to generate impoliteness.

An example of an utterance coded as a form-driven implication comes from *Father Ted* episode 2.6. In this episode, Ted and Dougal are preparing to go on a picnic and their housekeeper Mrs Doyle has made them a large basket of egg sandwiches despite the fact that Ted hates egg.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Line	Type of Culpeper	Primary Culpeper Coding
FT 2.4	17	Dougal	I'll eat them, Mrs Doyle, I love egg! Sometimes I think I like egg so much that one day I'm going to turn into a big giant egg.		
FT 2.4	18	Ted	I think that process has already begun	Implicational	Form driven implication
FT 2.4	19	Dougal	Sorry, Ted?		
FT 2.4	20	Ted	No nothing, nothing nothing. So, ready...?		

Ted's utterance in turn 18 is coded as a form-driven implication because, though it is not pre-loaded for impoliteness, it implies through a flout of the maxim of quality that Dougal is in the process of turning into a giant egg.

Looking at the utterance from a Gricean perspective, Ted's utterance is a flout of the Gricean Maxim of Quality in that it is false, or untrue to say that Dougal is turning into a giant egg. Through this flout, Ted creates a metaphoric comparison between Dougal's attributes and those of a giant egg which can be mapped onto him. Such qualities of a giant egg might include that it is giant, mindless, a useless entity, without cognition or speech, absurd, nonsensical, smelly etc. Of course, not all of the attributes of a supposed giant egg can be metaphorically mapped onto Dougal but the flout enables Ted to

express the opinion that Dougal is mindless, useless and absurd without going on-record as saying so. Indeed, when Dougal seeks clarification in turn 18, Ted uses the aforementioned cancelability of implicational impoliteness and refuses to restate his implication, meaning that Dougal does not ever hear the implicational impoliteness, but the audience does. This links back to the discussion in the literature review regarding Jobert's (2013) study of impoliteness in *Fawlty Towers*, in which Jobert argues that some of the realism of the sitcom is retained by having protagonist Basil Fawlty uttering his impoliteness in asides that only the audience hears. Thus, preventing Basil from over-using impoliteness in such a way that his interlocutors would likely challenge or question. The example above from *Father Ted* works in a similar way in that Ted communicates the impoliteness and though his target does not hear, the audience does. When given the option, Ted uses the cancelability of the implicational impoliteness to save himself the trouble of uttering the impoliteness again. Dynel's concept of disaffiliative humour is also relevant here, but in this case not only is the humour communicated only to the audience, but the impoliteness is as well, given that since Dougal has not heard it, the audience are the only participant who hear the impoliteness.

It may be that the popularity of form-driven implications is a result of the creativity allowed, the enjoyment gleaned from the audience's inferential processes and the cancellability which can save narrative realism.

5.4.2.2   Context-Driven Implication

A context-driven implication relates to a behaviour with unmarked surface form or semantic content which doesn't match the context, or the absence of a behaviour which mismatches the context. In other words, an "impoliteness interpretation is primarily driven by the strong expectations flowing from the context" (Culpeper 2011:180). Though context-driven implications were the second most used of the Culpeper strategies, they occurred with a much lower frequency than form-driven implications (20), appearing on average 3.4 times per episode.

A context-driven implication can come from the absence of a behaviour that might be expected in the context. In the example below, Ted is rushing to meet the producer and camera crew of a television programme who want to interview him for *Faith of Our Fathers*. Tom, a local man who is presented as being unhinged, dangerous and who is

wearing a t-shirt that says 'I shot JR', (JR being a character from US soap *Dallas*), stops Ted and makes a confession:

FT 1.1	181	Tom	Father!
FT 1.1	182	Ted	Yes, Tom
FT 1.1	183	Tom	I've killed a man
FT 1.1	184	Ted	Did you Tom? I'll have to talk you about that later, I'm doing an interview for the television

In turn 183, Tom confesses not only to a serious crime, but also to a 'mortal sin' in Catholicism in the form of murder. This act, were it true would result not only in Tom's potential incarceration but also would have serious spiritual ramifications in the eyes of the Catholic Church. As Tom's Parish Priest and also as a (supposedly) law-abiding citizen, Ted has a duty to find out more about Tom's confession and to counsel him to not only make spiritual reparations, but also to confess his crime to the Police. If Tom is telling the truth and has indeed committed murder, Ted's failing to report this to the authorities make him guilty of being an accessory to a crime and thus also likely to be prosecuted. Likewise, Ted's failing to talk to Tom in detail about this confession and to discuss its significance also contravene the expected moral duty of a priest.

So, the fact that Ted responds in turn 184 by failing to condemn or counsel Tom and in fact tells him they'll have to postpone the topic because of Ted's impending television interview makes Ted's turn a context-driven implicational impoliteness instance as, within the context, it is impolite to Tom to not engage in these matters. We also learn about Ted as a character from this exchange, as we see that his small chance at fame is far more important to Ted than his duty as either a Parish Priest or as a law-abiding citizen.

5.4.2.3   Pointed Criticisms/Complaints

Pointed Criticisms/Complaints are a conventionalised pattern of words that constitute the acts of criticising another or complaining about them. Pointed Criticisms/Complaints follow the pattern:

[that/this/it] [is/was] [absolutely/extraordinarily/unspeakably/etc.]
[bad/rubbish/crap/horrible/terrible] (Culpeper 2011:135)

Pointed criticisms/complaints were the third most used Culpeper strategy, occurring on average 2.5 times per episode. They are the only conventionalised strategy to appear in the top three strategies. Due to their structural nature, conventionalised utterances are easier to objectively identify in the data set as they involve little interpretation on the researcher's part, merely needing to meet certain structural criteria in order to be considered eligible.

An example of a pointed criticism/complaint comes from episode 3.6 of *The IT Crowd*. In this episode, Roy, in his attempt to impress an attractive colleague, has agreed to photograph and produce a Reynholm Industries charity calendar. Following Jen's complaints that the original idea of a 'sexy girls' calendar was sexist, Roy was tasked with creating a 'geek chic' calendar starring Moss and his awkward friends.

ITC 3.6	255	Douglas	Whoa, someone's played an awful prank. There's nothing here but gloomy pictures of morons.		
ITC 3.6	256	Jen	No, not morons, geeks. They're sexy now, you know, geek chic.		
ITC 3.6	257	Douglas	Geek chic? I wanna tear my eyes out!	Implicational	Form driven implication
ITC 3.6	258	Office Worker	This is horrible! Horrible!	Conventional	Pointed criticisms/complaints

In turn 258, one of the members of staff comments, 'This is horrible!', which meets the structural requirements of a 'pointed criticism/complaint' utterance [this] [is] [X] (see above) and is coded as such. The utterance echoes the earlier negative comments by Douglas, what the calendar comprises 'gloomy pictures of morons' and that he would rather be blind than look at it. The office worker's pointed criticism attacks Roy's work

and the calendar itself, upon which Roy and Jen's professional identities are reliant. Thus, the office worker's comment consists of conventionalised impoliteness that serves to underline the universally negative reaction that the Reynholm Industries staff have to Jen's failed idea at making a 'geek chic' calendar. There is perhaps an irony in that Jen, in trying to prevent the company making a sexist calendar, fails to make a sexy enough male calendar and thus puts her career at risk. This could also be argued to underline the idea that only women can be marketed as sexual commodities.

5.4.3   Secondary Coding Results

In this section, I will explore the secondary coding results for the Culpeper analysis. Figures 5-13 and 5-14 below show the average number of utterances per episode of the entire data set that were coded with secondary codings. In an average episode, only 2 utterances were given secondary code. This equates to 4% of utterances having a primary and a secondary code.

Looking first at the distribution between conventionalised and implicational impoliteness, figures 5-13 and 5-14 below show the distribution between conventional and implicational utterances for the secondary coding alongside the results for the primary coding.

Figure 5-13 - Culpeper Primary Coding Results

177
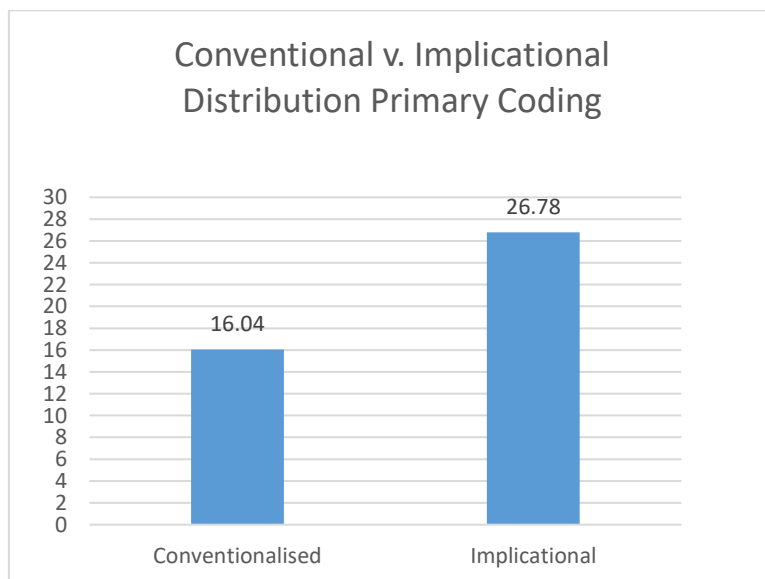
Figure 5-14 - Culpeper Secondary Coding Results
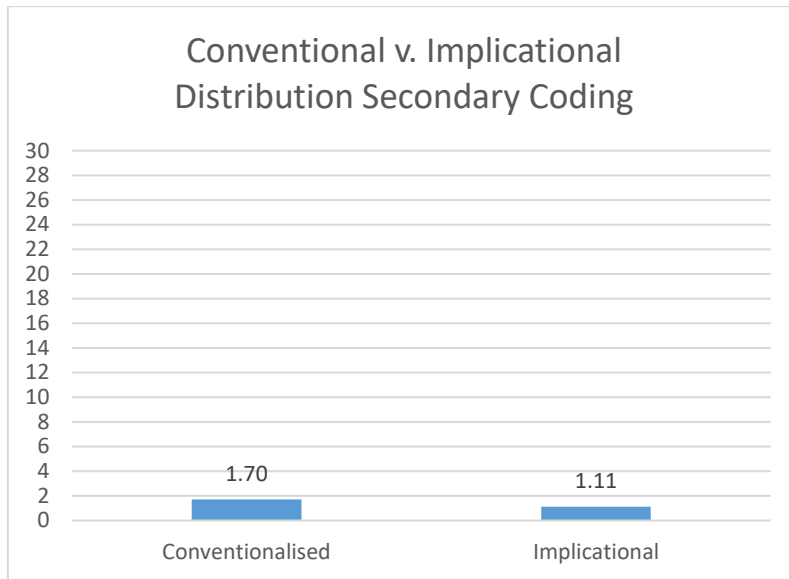
The results show that, for the secondary coding, conventionalised utterances were marginally more popular that implicational, it may be that conventionalised impoliteness forms the second part of an impolite utterance, with implicational impoliteness being front loaded and hence coded first, though on account of the small numbers available for the secondary coding, more data would be required to make any conclusions on mixed conventional and implicational strategy use.

The table below shows the distribution of strategies according to strategy frequency. The left shows the primary coding results and the right table shows the secondary coding results.

Figure 5-15- Culpeper Primary and Secondary Coding Results

#	Culpeper Primary Coding Results		Culpeper Secondary Coding Results	
1	Form driven implication	20.94	Form driven implication	0.78
2	Context-driven implication	3.43	Personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)	0.44
3	Pointed criticisms/complaints	2.52	Unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	0.31
4	Convention-driven implication	2.41	Personalised negative assertions	0.19
5	Unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	2.19	Pointed criticisms/complaints	0.19
6	Personalised negative vocatives	1.78	Negative expressives	0.17
7	Personalised negative assertions	1.61	Convention-driven implication	0.17
8	Threats	1.61	Context-driven implication	0.17
9	Personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)	1.57	Dismissals	0.13
10	Dismissals	1.52	Threats	0.11
11	Negative expressives	1.44	Personalised negative vocatives	0.07
12	Silencers	1.37	Message enforcers	0.04
13	Personalised negative references	0.19	Silencers	0.04
14	Message enforcers	0.19	Personalised negative references	0.02
15	Condescensions	0.06	Condescensions	0

Given the low number of secondary codings per episode, none of the strategies occurs once per episode on average. The most frequent secondary Culpeper coding was form-driven implication, which occurred on average 0.7 times per episode. Given that form-driven implications were also the most frequent secondary code, it may be that this

category is too broad and might be usefully further broken down into the types of Gricean form-driven implication in order to give clearer results. Indeed, it may even be possible to subsume some of Leech's Gricean-inspired maxims within this category.

Personalised third-person negative references were the second most used secondary strategy and did not occur in the top 5 strategies for the primary coding. This suggests that this strategy may function as a secondary method through which impoliteness is achieved or that it often occurs in an utterance in which there is more than one strategy going on. In other words, when a person is spoken about in the third person with negative references there are other forms of impoliteness working in synchrony.

The third and fifth most used strategies according to the secondary coding (unpalatable questions/presuppositions and criticisms/complaints, respectively) also appeared in the top five used strategies for the primary coding. This confirms the popularity of these strategies for achieving impoliteness in the sitcom. Personalised negative assertions were the fourth most used strategy in the secondary coding and was the only other of the top 5 secondary codings that was not in the top 5 primary codings. Personalised negative assertions appeared as the 7th most used strategy in the primary coding. It may be that the structural restrictions of the conventionalised utterances have meant they are more popular in conjunction with other strategies rather than alone.

An example of a multiply coded utterance from the Culpeper analysis comes from *Black Books* episode 3.6. In this episode, Manny is telling Bernard about Rowena, a woman he has previously met and who he hopes to impress at the party they're going to.

BB 3.6	70	Manny	Rowena. She's a friend of Ann's.			
BB 3.6	71	Bernard	Oh I see. Roweeena. Roweeeeeena	Implicational	Form driven implication	
BB 3.6	72	Bernard	AND WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN YOU'RE DOING THE UNDERPANTS CHARLESTON WITH THIS INSANE BLIND TART?	Conventional and Implicational	Unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	Form driven implication

In turn 72, after mocking Rowena's name by extending the 'e' /iː/ vowel sound, Bernard's utterance contains an unpalatable question/presupposition as well as a form-driven implicational impoliteness. The codes are applied in order of appearance, thus as Bernard's utterance begins with the question wh- structure, it is coded primarily as an unpalatable question and secondly as a form-driven implication as the form-driven component 'insane, blind tart' comes at the end of the utterance.

Looking first at the unpalatable question, Bernard asks Manny how he is meant to amuse himself whilst Manny has relations with Rowena, which implies it is Manny's job to keep Bernard occupied as well as containing the presupposition that Manny will be having sex with Rowena, which Bernard expresses with the novel idiom 'underpants Charleston'. This is a presupposition that Manny and Rowena are promiscuous which is also impolite given that Manny has merely expressed an interest in having the opportunity to speak to her and has made no mention of more amorous designs.

Moving on to the form-driven implication, Bernard violates the maxim of quality in positing that Rowena, whom he has never met, is a) insane and b) blind and c) a 'tart' (term used to denote a sexually promiscuous female [Ofcom 2016:8]). This implies that Rowena must be a) not in full control of her faculties, b) visually impaired and c) sexually promiscuous in order for her to find Manny attractive or want to initiate a sexual

relationship with him. This then contains within it the inherent impolite implication that Manny is repellent in his physical appearance (thus, Rowena must be blind in order to want to see him again) and in his personality (thus, Rowena must be insane to want to date him). Both of these assumptions are impolite and damaging to Manny's self-esteem.

5.5 LEECH (2014)

In Leech's framework, Impoliteness is achieved when a speaker follows the General Strategy of Impoliteness (GSI) (2014:221) in which the "S[peaker] will express/imply evaluative meanings that are favourable to S[peaker] and unfavourable to O[ther]" (2014:221). This goal is achieved through violating the constraints of the GSP (General Strategy of Politeness) in the form of 10 Maxims and 3 additional categories of sarcasm (or conversational irony), rudeness (the use of taboo terms) and mock impoliteness (banter) (Leech 2014:221-241). With 13 categories, Leech's framework is the second most complex of the frameworks and it is the only framework of the three to contain a category for taboo language.

5.5.1 Frequency of Impoliteness

Figure 5-16 below (discussed in section 5.2) shows the average number of impolite utterances per episode for the three series as captured by the three impoliteness frameworks.

Figure 5-16 - Average Number of Impolite Utterances for All Seasons
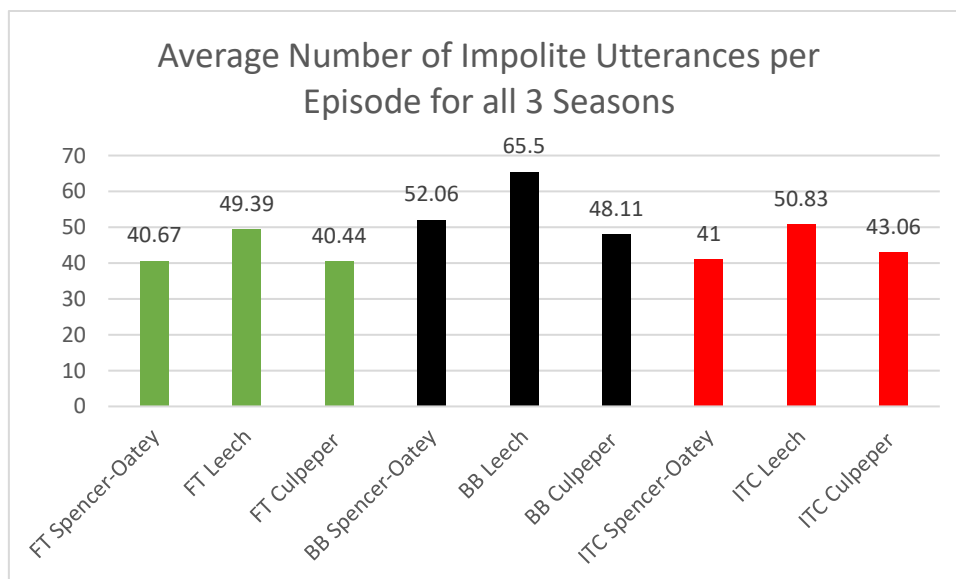
For every series, the analysis using Leech's framework identified the most impolite utterances. On average, the Leech coding resulted in 10.7 more utterances of impoliteness per episode than Spencer-Oatey and 11.4 more impolite utterances per episode than Culpeper. This might suggest that Leech's framework is the broadest and succeeds in enabling the coding of more utterances because it accommodates some types of impoliteness that the other two do not. Though Leech's framework was the second most complex, having fewer categories than Culpeper's framework, the difference between them was only one strategy. Leech's categories, while providing a list of speech acts which are typical of the violation of the various maxims, is less prescriptive in terms of the type of impoliteness it can identify when compared with Culpeper's conventionalised utterances. It may be that the slightly more open nature of Leech's maxims influenced its ability to capture the most impoliteness. Another reason for Leech's framework being used to identify the most impoliteness may be that his framework has a specified category for the coding of taboo terms (Leech 2014:229). Unlike the other frameworks, for which taboo language would be absorbed into the larger category of quality face challenge (as in the case of Spencer-Oatey) or into one of the many conventionalised utterances (as in the case of Culpeper), Leech's separate category enables a much easier capturing of utterances which contain taboo language.

5.5.2 Distribution of Impoliteness

Table 5-8 below shows the distribution of impoliteness across the Leech framework on average in an episode, ordered according to their frequency.

Table 5-8 - Leech Strategy Distribution

Strategy	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
Violation of Approbation	870	16.11 (rank 1)
Violation of Tact	761	14.09 (rank 2)
Violation of Generosity	426	7.88 (rank 3)
Violation of Agreement	286	5.29 (rank 4)
Violation of Opinion reticence	170	3.14 (rank 5)
Rudeness	168	3.11 (rank 6)
Sarcasm	127	2.38 (rank 7
Violation of Sympathy	54	1 (rank 8)
Violation of Modesty	50	0.93 (rank 9)

Violation of Feeling reticence	50	0.93(rank 10)
Violation of Obligation to O	9	0.17 (rank 11)
Banter	5	0.092 (rank =12)
Violation of Obligation to S	5	0.092 (rank =12)
Total	2,981	165

Figure 5-17 below represents these results.

Figure 5-17 - Distribution of Leech Strategies
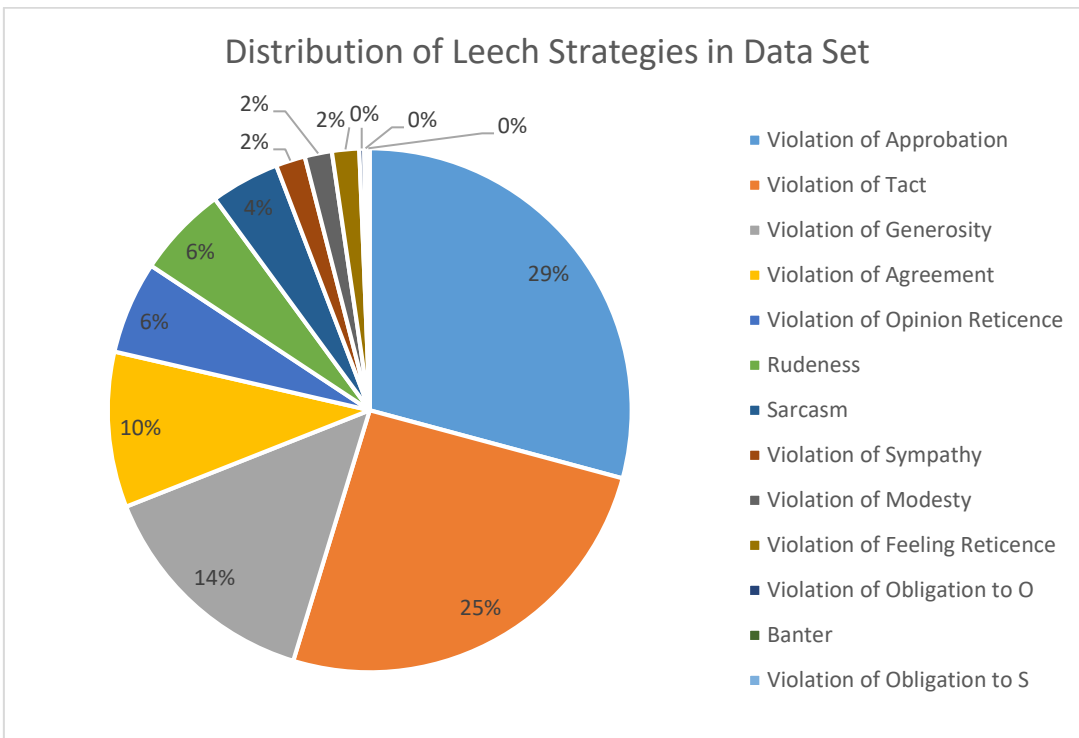
As depicted in the figure and table above, the distribution results show that violations of Approbation, Tact, Generosity and Agreement were the most used strategies in an average episode. Approbation and Tact violation strategies accounted for over 50% of all of the strategy use in an average episode, with violations of Approbation constituting 29% of the strategies and violations of Tact accounting for 25%. In the Spencer-Oatey results, I showed that equity rights and quality face challenges were the most used strategies. I noted how these two strategies are roughly equitable with Brown and Levinson's concept of negative and positive face, respectively. Similarly, the two most

used strategies in Leech's framework were violations of Approbation (those which give an unfavourable [low] value to the hearer's qualities) and violations of Tact (those which give a favourable value to the speaker's wants, typically realised through orders and demands) which are also roughly equitable with Brown and Levinson's positive and negative face, respectively. It may be that B&L's early framework of politeness identified something essential to impoliteness, at the very least, in British-Irish culture and is thus essential in fictional dialogue intended to convey impoliteness. Over the next sections, I will explore the two most frequently used strategies in Leech's framework.

5.5.2.1   Violation of Approbation

The Approbation Maxim is violated when the speaker gives "an unfavourable value to O[ther]'s qualities" (2014:221). Speech acts typically associated with this maxim are "insulting, complaining and telling off". Approbation violations were the most used impoliteness strategy in the data set, accounting for 29% of the impoliteness used, with an average of 16.1 Approbation violations per episode. I noted above that the Approbation maxim can be roughly equated with the B&L concept of positive face which is interesting because in Spencer-Oatey's framework, the strategy that is congruent with positive face and Approbation violations, was tied for the most used strategy. The finding that Leech's framework also found a 'positive face' style strategy to be among the most used in the data set suggests that there is indeed an importance to the attacking of personal qualities in British-Irish impoliteness and thus this is frequently used in order to generate impoliteness.

This suggests some agreement in the frameworks between these two elements – that Approbation violation and quality face challenge may code similar items and that both frameworks determined affronts to personhood to be one of the most common forms of impoliteness in the data set. The findings so far would indicate that impoliteness, at least in the sitcom, is often an affront to one's sense of self-worth, appearance, competence etc.

A straightforward example of a violation of Approbation in the data set comes from *Black Books*. In this scene, Bernard is staring at an attractive female customer. His friend Fran then questions why she herself hasn't been the object of his staring.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Line	Leech Primary Coding
BB 2.2	11	Fran	You haven't stared at me	/
BB 2.2	12	Bernard	You're my oldest friend. Anyway, you look like you just fell out of a tree. Go home and get some rest, will you?	M3 Violation of Approbation

Leech states that violations of Approbation can take the form of insults, complaints or tellings off. The part of Bernard's line 'you look like you just fell out of a tree' is the part of the utterance that constitutes a violation of Approbation as Bernard is insulting Fran's physical appearance and is implicating that he hasn't been staring at her in a romantic way because her physical appearance isn't attractive. Additionally, stating that she looks as though she has fallen out of a tree invokes an interpretation that Fran looks unkempt, perhaps invoking birds, monkeys or other tree-dwelling animals.

5.5.2.2   Violation of Tact

The second most common Leech coding was the violation of Tact, occurring on average 14.0 times per episode and accounting for 25% of the strategy use. This maxim is violated when a speaker gives "a favourable value to S[peaker]'s wants" and is typically realised through speech acts of "ordering, demanding" (Leech 2014:221). This is interesting as this violated maxim closely resembles the Spencer-Oatey category of equity rights challenge. In the Spencer-Oatey data, equity rights challenges were the most popular strategy by a narrow margin. In the Leech data, this is the second most popular strategy by a fairly narrow margin as well. So far, then, the top two strategies of Leech and Spencer-Oatey concern utterances which target autonomy (equity rights and violation of Tact) and personal esteem/qualities (quality face and violation of Approbation). This not only suggests agreement between the frameworks about the most salient types of impoliteness in the data set but also suggests that in sitcom writing, impoliteness which targets autonomy and personal qualities is emerging as the primary mechanism for impoliteness (and thus, as will be established later, humour). Again, the popularity of these strategies which echo Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative face is noteworthy. There are of course likely to be cultural constraints upon the extent to which the targeting of these elements of the person (freedom and personal qualities)

result in impoliteness. However, this data from British sitcoms does suggest that these are the two most vital elements of personhood that can thus be exploited for impoliteness and comedic gain.

In the example below of a Tact violation taken from *Father Ted*, Ted has just invited Polly, a famous and attractive writer of erotic novels on whom he has a crush, to stay at the Parochial house while her home is being renovated. As Mrs Doyle and Polly exit the living room for Polly to see the guest room, Ted attempts to make Polly an offer.

FT 1.5	54	Ted	Have a shower	M2 Violation of Tact
FT 1.5	55	Ted	I mean, have a shower if you want! I mean, I don't want you to have a shower, I just mean that you might like to get out of your clothes. Though obviously that's no concern of mine.	

This is a violation of Tact because it functions as an order and gives apparent favour to Ted's (covert) desire for Polly to get naked. Ordering her to have a shower not only implies she needs one (i.e. is dirty or dishevelled) but also carries sexual overtones as well as more generally being a potential imposition for Polly if at that time she neither needs nor wants to shower. Ted, however, quickly realises the inappropriateness of his Tact violations and in his following turn attempts to repair the damage made by the Tact violation.

In an attempt to undo the Tact violation, he directly states that it is not his desire for her to have a shower – this not only acknowledges the element of Tact that has been violated (that his first turn makes it seems that he wants her to shower) but also goes on record as re-stating the Tact violation as in fact being an offer designed to appeal to her potential desires – i.e. that she may want to shower. Thus, Ted re-frames his Tact violation as an adherence to the politeness maxim of Generosity, "Give high value to O[ther]'s wants" (Leech 2014:91). This shows Ted's awareness of his mistake that attempts to repair the affront he has made. Unfortunately for Ted, however, his wording of this clarification sets off another potential impolite utterance whereby Ted may be implicating a sexual motive to his offering Polly to take a shower in order to have her remove her clothes. Again, he attempts to repair this by re-stating that he does not desire her to be naked. In sum, the

Tact maxim is not only violated in turn 54 but is overtly (though unsuccessfully) repaired as Ted realises that his original utterance gave an overly high value to his wants and he repairs this by framing his original utterance as a concern for Polly's wants, though in doing so, he generates another set of sexual implications by attempting to use the idiom 'to get out of one's clothes' often used to mean getting changed into cleaner clothes or to have a shower or bath.

5.5.3 Secondary Coding Results

In this section, I will report the results of the secondary coding for Leech's framework. Table 5-9 below shows the distribution of secondary-coded Leech strategies for all episodes.

Table 5-9 - Leech Secondary Coding Distribution

Average Number of Secondary Codings per Episode – Leech's Framework	
Total Number of Utterances	9.52
Rudeness	2.43
M2 Violation of Tact	1.74
M3 Violation of Approbation	1.69
M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	1.28
M1 Violation of Generosity	0.87
M10 Violation of Feeling reticence	0.52
M9 Violation of Sympathy	0.33 =
M7 Violation of Agreement	0.33 =
M5 Violation of Obligation to O	0.09
M4 Violation of Modesty	0.04
M6 Violation of Obligation to S	0.02
Sarcasm ("conversational irony")	0
Banter ("mock impoliteness")	0

The average number of impolite utterances that received a secondary coding for the Leech analysis was 9 per episode. In total, there were an average of 55.2 utterances coded as constituting impoliteness using the Leech category. This means that only 16% of utterances that were coded as impolite received a secondary coding. Spencer-Oatey results showed that 18% of impolite utterances were given a secondary coding. In

addition to confirming that a tertiary coding category may have been unnecessary, this suggests that for 84% of Leech-coded impolite utterances were felt by the researcher to have been adequately addressed by the framework, but also further suggests that utterances using multiple strategies constituted less than 20% of the impolite utterances, suggesting that the majority of impolite utterances did not mix strategies. There has been little research into the mixing of (im)politeness strategies, though it has been suggested that strategy mixing is possible (e.g. Lachenicht 1980). These results then go some way to examining the prevalence of impoliteness strategy mixing in fictional dialogue.

Looking at strategy distribution, for the secondary coding, the most frequently used strategy per episode was rudeness, with an average of 2.4 secondary codings per episode.

One of the ways in which Leech's framework differs from Spencer-Oatey and Culpeper's is in its inclusion of a code specifically for taboo terms. It is unsurprising that this useful category was the most used secondary coding as the framework allows the identification of an impoliteness move via a violated maxim as well as the ability to note that a taboo term was used.

An example of a multiply coded, mixed strategy impolite utterance comes from *Black Books* episode 2.5. In this episode, Fran has recently taken up 'clean' vegan living. Despite having only adopted this lifestyle the day before, she has made it her mission to convert Bernard:

| BB 2.5 | 85 | Fran | It is a shame the way people pollute themselves, I mean look around you, just look. What do you see? | M3 Violation of Approbation | |
| BB 2.5 | 86 | Bernard | I see intelligent, attractive, charming people who smoke and drink all the time and never get sick or die or bore the bollocks off their friends**. […] | M3 Violation of Approbation | Rudeness |

In turn 85, Fran encourages Bernard to look around the café in which they are they are sitting to see the other patrons drinking, smoking and eating. In turn 86, Bernard uses implicature to violate the maxim of Approbation "give an unfavourable value to O's qualities" (2014:221) by implying that the people in the restaurant do not "bore the bollocks off" their friends, as Fran is doing, hence the primary coding is as a violation of

Approbation as he has insulted her ability to hold interesting conversations. The utterance also contains the term "bollocks" which is a taboo term coded by OFCOM as "medium language, potentially unacceptable pre-watershed. Not generally offensive but somewhat vulgar when used to refer to testicles" (Ofcom 2016:5). Thus, the secondary coding of rudeness is applied to the utterance.

Following rudeness, violations of Tact and Approbation are second and third most coded secondary codings, respectively. Again, it seems that attacks on free will and one's sense of their competence, appearance etc. are important elements of impoliteness.

Table 5-10 below shows the results of the primary and secondary coding, giving the average number of impoliteness strategies per episode.

Table 5-10 - Leech Primary and Secondary Distribution

Rank	Primary Coding Leech – All episodes		Secondary Coding Leech – All episodes	
1	M3 Violation of Approbation	16.11	Rudeness	2.43
2	M2 Violation of Tact	14.09	M2 Violation of Tact	1.74
3	M1 Violation of Generosity	7.89	M3 Violation of Approbation	1.69
4	M7 Violation of Agreement	5.30	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	1.28
5	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	3.15	M1 Violation of Generosity	0.87
6	Rudeness	3.11	M10 Violation of Feeling reticence	0.52
7	Sarcasm ("conversational irony")	2.39	M7 Violation of Agreement	0.33
8	M9 Violation of Sympathy	1	M9 Violation of Sympathy	0.33
9	M4 Violation of Modesty	0.93	M5 Violation of Obligation to O	0.09
10	M10 Violation of Feeling reticence	0.93	M4 Violation of Modesty	0.04
11	M5 Violation of Obligation to O	0.17	M6 Violation of Obligation to S	0.02

=12	M6 Violation of Obligation to S	0.09	Sarcasm ("conversational irony")	0
=12	Banter ("mock impoliteness")	0.09	Banter ("mock impoliteness")	0

The six most used strategies for the primary coding make up the seven most used strategies for the secondary coding, with violation of Opinion reticence being the addition, ranked in sixth place in the secondary codes.

Thus, the strategy mixing was predominantly confined to the six strategies that were the most used in the primary coding. In the secondary coding, violations of Tact and Approbation remain high, as discussed above, this may give credence to the argument that B&L's positive and negative face attacks identified two vital components of impoliteness.

6 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IMPOLITENESS AND AUDIENCE LAUGHTER

> TED: July the 19th, why does that strike me as important?
>
> DOUGAL: Er, July 19th? I wouldn't know Ted, you big bollocks.
>
> *The audience laugh for 7.19 seconds*
>
> - FATHER TED, EPISODE 2.1

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I found that impoliteness is prevalent in the data set, with 29% of utterances containing impoliteness and an average of 151 impolite utterances per hour; a result three times higher than that found by Glascock (2008). Additionally, when exploring the speech of protagonists, I found that, 3.80% of male protagonist utterances contained taboo words and 5.74% of female protagonist utterances contained taboo words. Thus, I have established that impoliteness is prevalent in my sitcom data set and I will now move on to the second part of my argument which is that impoliteness is prevalent in the sitcom because it is a tool used to generate humour. As such, I will now quantitatively examine the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter.

I argued in the literature review that the small amount of existing research into the ability of linguistic impoliteness to incite audience laughter has failed to quantitatively explore the strength of this association. In Dynel's work (2013), the notion that the selected material from *House MD* is humorous relies upon researcher intuition, and though her work is indispensable in arguing for the humorous potential of impoliteness, the reliability of such ascriptions is unclear. As I observed in the methodology, using the audience laughter as indicative of successful humour uptake will allow me to determine the humorous success of the sitcom content and so explore the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter. This is based on the position that "Audience members' unconstrained laughter is valid social proof of the humorous quality of material" (Lawson, Dowling and Cetola 1998:244).

Glascock (2013:261) has argued that viewers are more likely to imitate an act of aggression seen on television if the aggressor is seen to be rewarded for their behaviour. Audience laughter is regarded as a reward for impoliteness and as such may function to normalise impolite behaviour for viewers which then increases the likelihood of behaviour imitation. Glascock found that, "audience laughter was the most common" positive outcome following verbal aggression on television (Glascock 2013:267). Exploring the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter will allow me to investigate the extent to which impoliteness is positively rewarded through audience laughter as well as arguing that impoliteness is used as a humour trigger. This may then support further research into the behavioural effects on the viewer of impoliteness used as a humour trigger on television.

In this chapter I will report the results of the Chi Square test of independence for 'audience laughter' and 'impoliteness', I will then report the percentage of impolite utterances that generate audience laughter and the percentage of audience laughter that follow from an impolite utterance. Next, using Leech's framework, I will report the types of impoliteness that generate the most audience laughter. I will then report the audience response to the taboo words that appear in the data set, using Ofcom's list of generalised taboo words as outlined in section 2.1.5.

6.2 CHI SQUARE TEST OF INDEPENDENCE

In this section, I am going to report the results of the Chi Square test of independence for the variables 'impoliteness' and 'audience laughter'. All episodes of the data set were included in this analysis and any utterance that was coded by one or more of the frameworks as impolite was counted as 'impolite'. The presence of audible audience laughter during or immediately following an utterance was recorded. Both of these categories were recorded as categorical data with *Laughter* having either Yes/No and *Impoliteness* having Yes/No as mandatory binary options. As such, the data was well suited to a Chi Square test of independence. This Pearson's Chi-square test is a "test of independence of two categorical variables" which can be used to explore whether "two categorical variables forming a contingency table are associated" (Field 2009:783). One of the central tenets of this thesis is that there is a relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter as a result of the potential for dramatic impoliteness to act as a trigger for humour. As such, the hypothesis for this test is the following:

Hypothesis: There will be a statistically significant result from a Chi Square test showing dependence between impoliteness and audience laughter.

All utterances from every episode of the data set were included which resulted in 14,132 utterances in total. Using SPSS software, a Chi Square test was run and the results tables are shown below.

Table 6-1 - Chi Square Results

Impoliteness * Laughter Cross-tabulation

Count

		Laughter		Total
		no	yes	
Impoliteness	no	7474	2561	10035
	yes	1717	2380	4097
Total		9191	4941	14132

Table 6-2 - Chi Square Results

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1357.254[a]	1	.000		
Continuity Correction[b]	1355.822	1	.000		
Likelihood Ratio	1321.674	1	.000		
Fisher's Exact Test				.000	.000
N of Valid Cases	14132				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1432.44.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

The results show that there is a significant association between linguistic impoliteness with a p-value of p<.001. This suggests that there is a statistically significant dependent relationship between the two phenomena, which supports the hypothesis that there is a relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter. Taking audience laughter as

an indicator of successful humour uptake, this result also shows support for the wider hypothesis that impoliteness is useful as a tool to generate humour.

That the significance of the dependence is so strong suggests strength in the relationship between the two phenomena. As the crosstabulation shows, when impoliteness was coded (4097), there was a significantly higher number of laughter responses (2380) than not-laughter responses (1717). These results suggest a relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter.

6.3 PHI VALUE

Phi is the "measure of association between two categorical variables" (Field 2009:791). The table below shows the results of the Phi statistical test for my data set.

Table 6-3 - Phi Results

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.310	.000
	Cramer's V	.310	.000
N of Valid Cases		14132	

The results in the table above show that there is a positive correlation between impoliteness and audience laughter with a statistical significance of $p<.001$ with a mid/low strength correlation of .310. Though the strength of the association is lower than might have been anticipated, the results still show that there is a positive correlation between impoliteness and audience laughter which suggests that impoliteness is functioning as a trigger for the audience laughter response.

6.4 WHAT PERCENTAGE OF IMPOLITE UTTERANCES GENERATE AUDIENCE LAUGHTER?

In this section, I will explore the audience response to utterances coded as impolite. The table below shows the cross tabulation of the data generated in SPSS, where audience

response and impoliteness are recorded as binary yes/no categories. Figure 6-1 below shows the percentage of impolite utterances that generated audience laughter.

Table 6-4 - Impoliteness x Laughter Crosstabulation

Impoliteness * Laughter Cross-tabulation

		Laughter		
		no	yes	Total
Impoliteness	no	7474	2561	10035
	yes	1717	2380	4097
Total		9191	4941	14132

Figure 6-1 - Audience Response to Impoliteness
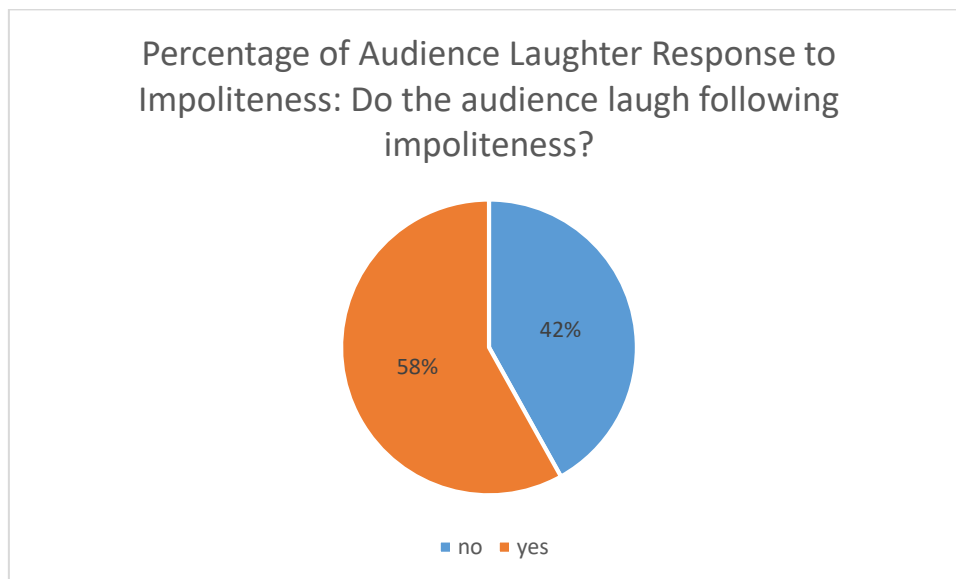
The table above shows that there were 4097 utterances coded as impolite within the data set, of these, 2,380 triggered audience laughter, which equates to 58%. In other words, 58% of impolite utterances were responded to with audience laughter. Thus, the majority of times that impoliteness occurred in the data set (as defined by the three impoliteness frameworks), it was followed by audience laughter. Though the percentage

of success that impoliteness has at generating audience laughter is lower than might have been anticipated, the findings still suggest that impoliteness can be used as a trigger for audience laughter.

The majority of impolite utterances are responded to with audience laughter. This may have an influence on viewer behaviour, given that Glascock (2013:265) has shown that antisocial behaviour which is responded to in media by 'positive outcomes', of which audience laughter is a member, may, according to Bandura's social learning theory (1977), increase the likelihood of viewers replicating the behaviours they witness. That the majority of impolite utterances are positively rewarded through audience laughter confirms that this behaviour is commonly portrayed as positively rewardable and could have implications for the scheduling and age restrictions of such programming.

6.5 WHAT PERCENTAGE OF AUDIENCE LAUGHS ARE AT IMPOLITENESS?

I am now going to explore the percentage of audience laughter that directly follows utterances containing impoliteness. Table 6-5 below shows the total number of audience laughs across the whole data set. The table shows the number of utterances that contained laughter, and the number of those that contained laughter during or immediately following impoliteness. From which the percentage of audience laughter that arose following an utterance meeting the criteria of one or more of the three frameworks as containing impoliteness was calculated.

Table 6-5 - Audience Laughter Following Impoliteness

Episode	Number of Utterances Containing Laughter	Number of Utterances Containing Laughter and Impoliteness	Percentage of Laughs which are at Impoliteness
TOTAL	4941	2379	48.14

The results show that 48% of all audience laughter arose following an utterance coded by one or more of the three frameworks as impolite. As stated in the methodology, it is not my argument that impoliteness is the *only* mechanism in the sitcom that generates humour, merely that it is one of the contributing factors to humour in the sitcom. As such, this result is higher than might have been expected and suggests that impoliteness accounts either solely, or in conjunction with another mechanisms, for nearly half of the audience laughter responses. That impoliteness constituted nearly half of the audience laughter triggers suggests that impoliteness' influence on the audience and its success as a humour trigger are significant. It may even be that impoliteness is one of the most

important tools of the sitcom writer, given that nearly half of audience humour responses followed impoliteness. At least within this data set, there is evidence of a British-Irish cultural appreciation for dramatic impoliteness in the sitcom. Exploring the other triggers for humour (such as parody, farce, word-play, character quirks) might be a potential area for future research using this data set.

6.6 WHICH IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES ARE THE FUNNIEST?

The findings from sections 6.2-6.5 show that impoliteness generated audience laughter on 58% of the occasions it appears and that 48% of all audience laughs were immediately following an utterance coded as containing impoliteness. This suggests that impoliteness is functioning as a tool for occasioning audience laughter. In this section, I will take a closer look at impoliteness' success at triggering humour by seeking to answer the question 'which types of impoliteness are the most successful humour triggers?' This might be reformulated asking 'which impoliteness strategies are the funniest?'

Given the wealth of data generated through the three impoliteness analyses, I will select just one framework for this exploration in order to give a detailed exploration of the success of the strategies therein.

Leech's (2014) framework identified the most impolite utterances in the analysis. It also was felt to be the broadest in that it accommodates taboo words, which Spencer-Oatey and Culpeper's frameworks did not. Thus, Leech's (2014) framework is the focus of this section which aims to discover the most successful impoliteness strategies, where success is determined by a strategy's ability to trigger audience laughter.

As no research could be found which explores this particular facet of Leech's (2014) framework, there was no context of research on which to base a hypothesis. However, it was expected from the process of coding and the status of taboo terms in English that the category 'rudeness' would feature as a significant trigger of humour. Also, owing to the popularity of strategies roughly equating to the positive and negative face attacks in the Leech and Spencer-Oatey analyses, I expected the violations of Tact and Approbation to feature as some of the more successful humour triggers.

Figure 6-2 below shows the results for the analysis of the success of impoliteness strategies in Leech's framework. These results were calculated based on the number of times that a strategy appeared in the entire data set and the number of times that strategy

was successful in occasioning audience laughter. Thus, the percentages shown represent the percentage of times that a strategy appears *and* generates audience laughter. The strategies are shown in descending order of success.

Figure 6-2 - Leech Strategy Success at Generating Laughter
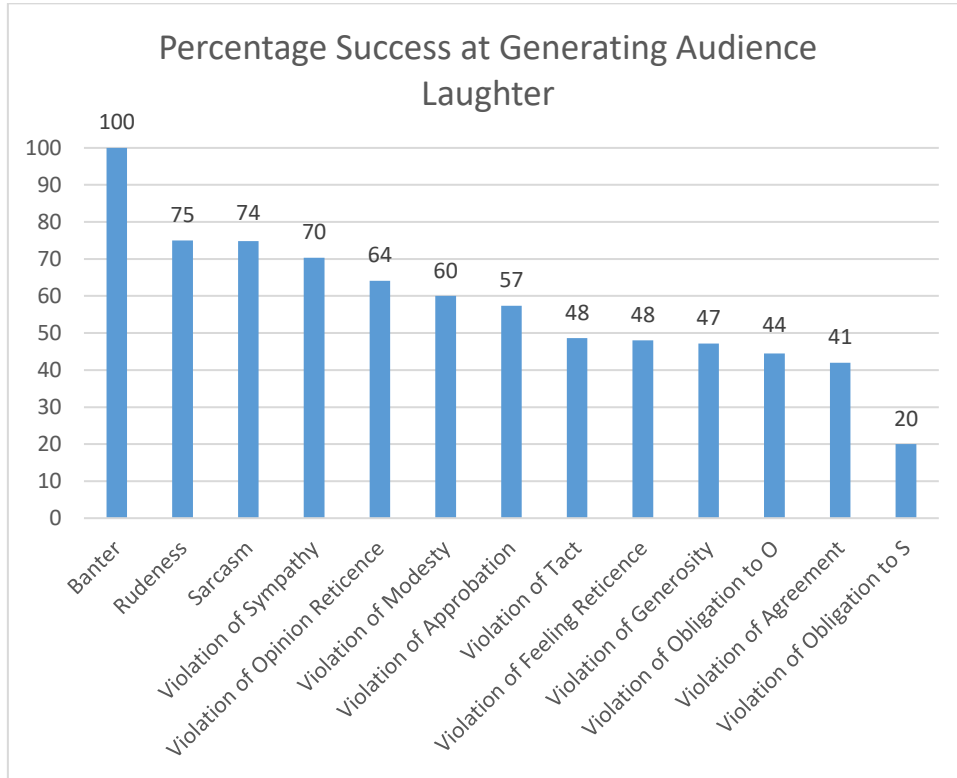
Table 6-6 below shows the data used to create figure 6-2 above. The table shows the strategies in descending order of success, the percentage of their appearances in the data set that were followed by audience laughter, the total number of instances in the data set and the average instances per episode, for which each strategy is ranked according to their prevalence.

Table 6-6 - Leech Strategy Success at Generating Laughter

	Strategy	Percentage Success at Triggering audience laughter	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
1	Banter	100	5	0.09 (rank =12)
2	Rudeness	75	168	3.1 (rank 6)
3	Sarcasm	74	127	2.3 (rank 7
4	Violation of Sympathy	70	54	1 (rank 8)
5	Violation of Opinion reticence	64	170	3.1 (rank 5)
6	Violation of Modesty	60	50	0.93 (rank 9)
7	Violation of Approbation	57	870	16.1 (rank 1)
8	Violation of Tact	48	761	14.0 (rank 2)
9	Violation of Feeling reticence	48	50	0.93 (rank 10)
10	Violation of Generosity	47	426	7.8 (rank 3)
11	Violation of Obligation to O	44	9	0.17 (rank 11)
12	Violation of Agreement	41	286	5.2 (rank 4)
13	Violation of Obligation to S	20	5	0.09 (rank =12)

Table 6-6 above shows that the highest percentage of success for a Leech strategy was 100%, and the lowest percentage of success 20%. There is a considerable range of 80% between the least and most successful strategies. It may be that not all strategies are created equal when it comes to their humour potential, at least in this context of British-Irish sitcom data. In other words, for this data set and this audience, some types of impoliteness are clearly much funnier than others. Thus, it is useful to explore the most and least successful impoliteness strategies.

Looking at the strategies in terms of their support of my central argument that impoliteness can be used to generate humour, the results show that 12 of the 13 strategies have a success rate of 40% or above. 7 of the 13 strategies have a success rate of over 50%. This lends support to my over-arching hypothesis that impoliteness can be used to generate audience laughter. The average percentage of success for the

13 strategies was 57.8%, again suggesting support for the argument that impoliteness can be used to incite audience laughter.

The three most successful strategies all have a success rate of over 70%, which can be considered relatively high. Banter is the most successful strategy, generating audience laughter on 100% of its appearances. However, it has a low incidence – appearing only 5 times in the data set and being joint least used impoliteness strategy in the data set. Rudeness was the second most successful strategy and occasioned audience laughter on 75% of its appearances. Unlike Banter, this strategy was frequent in the data set, occurring 168 times in total and ranked as the 6th most frequently used strategy. I have discussed above that the legislative regulation of taboo terms in television impacts on the use of impoliteness in the sitcom. The success of rudeness therefore might rest on its novelty in the sitcom compared with normal spoken interaction and other genres of television. Sarcasm, the 3rd most successful strategy with 74.8% of utterances generating audience laughter, was the 7th most used strategy.

Looking at the three least successful strategies, violation of Obligation to S(peaker) was the least successful strategy, occasioning audience laughter on just 20% of occasions. However, it is interesting to note that violation of Obligation to S(peaker) was the joint least frequently used strategy, tied with Banter and occurring only 5 times in the data set, the same as Banter. Thus, the two least used strategies were the least and most successful at generating audience laughter. This suggests that there may not be a direct a relationship between frequency of occurrence of a strategy and its success at generating audience laughter, which is a useful finding not only for this study into the interaction between impoliteness and audience laughter, but also for practitioners in writing comedy as it suggests that familiarity with a strategy doesn't necessarily impact its success at generating audience laughter. The second least successful strategy at generating audience laughter was violation of Agreement which generated audience laughter 41.9% of the times it appeared. With 286 instances in the data set, violation of Agreement was the 4th most used strategy. Violation of Agreement occurs when a speaker contradicts or disagrees with another speaker. It is possible that these violations of Agreement are less successful at generating audience laughter than other strategies because they can be minor plot-based disagreements with little impact on the victim. The third least successful strategy was violation of Obligation to O(ther). This strategy generated audience laughter 44.4% of the times it occurred. Like violation of Obligation

to S(peaker) this was a rarely used strategy, occurring only 9 times in the data set and ranked as the 11th most used strategy.

The above summary has suggested that there is no direct positive or inverse relationship between a strategy's frequency of appearance and its success at generating audience laughter. Figure 6-3 below compares the ranked position of the different strategies for the (1) rank frequency of appearance (blue dot) and (2) the rank success at generating audience laughter (orange dot), where 1 indicates the highest frequency and success and 13 indicates the lowest frequency and success.

Figure 6-3 - Strategy Success and Strategy Frequency of Appearance
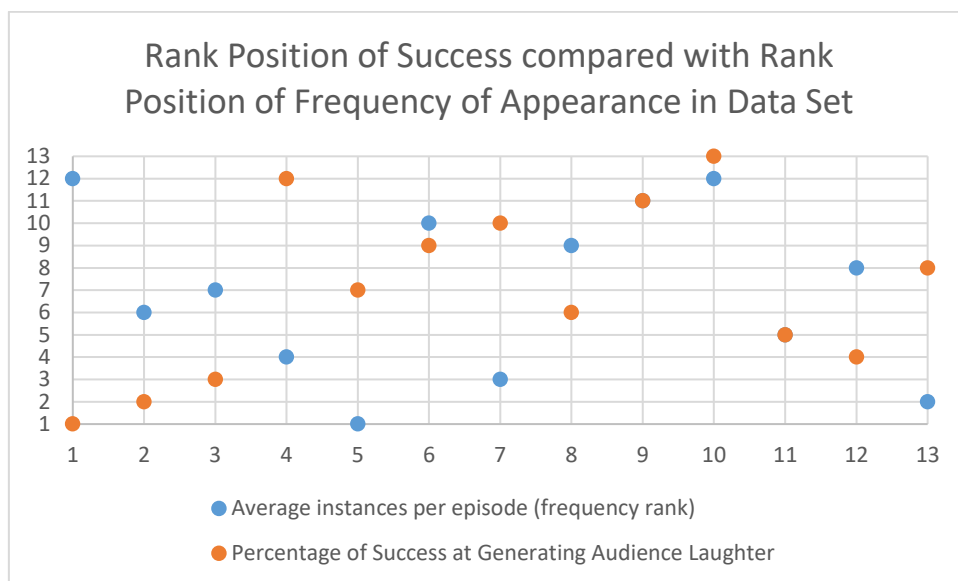
Table 6-7 - Key for Figure 6-3

Key for Figure 6-3	
Number	Strategy
1	Banter
2	Rudeness
3	Sarcasm
4	Violation of Sympathy
5	Violation of Opinion reticence
6	Violation of Modesty
7	Violation of Approbation
8	Violation of Tact
9	Violation of Feeling reticence
10	Violation of Generosity
11	Violation of Obligation to O

12	Violation of Agreement
13	Violation of Obligation to S

The results suggest that there is not a correlative relationship between the frequency of appearance of a strategy and its success at generating audience laughter.

In the following sections, I am going to explore the 3 most and least successful strategies in greater detail, giving examples of their use in the data set.

6.6.1 Most Successful Strategies: Banter

Table 6-8 - Banter Results

Success Rank	Strategy	Percentage Success	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
1	Banter	100	5	0.09 (rank =12)

Banter, in which "overt impoliteness leads to a cameraderic interpretation" (Leech 2014:238), was the most successful of Leech's 13 strategies, with a success rate of 100%. In other words, 100% of the times that an utterance coded as banter appeared, it generated audience laughter. However, the strategy was the joint least-used strategy appearing only 5 times in the data set. Naturally, having such a low incidence means that further data would be required in order to see whether banter is consistently successful at generating audience laughter. The low incidence rate of banter and its high success might lead one to think that it is the rarity of the strategy that gives it such a high success rate, however, as I showed in section 6.6 above, when looking at the data set as a whole, there appeared to be no correlative relationship between the frequency of a strategy's use and its humorous success. Bearing in mind that caution is needed with so few examples, I'll explore some of the instances of banter in the data set.

Four of the five uses of banter come from one character (Father Noel Furlong) in one episode (Episode 2.1 of *Father Ted*, '*Hell*'). In this episode, Fathers Ted, Dougal and Jack have gone on their annual summer holiday. Mutual friend Father O'Rourke has said that Ted et al can borrow his (tiny) caravan in another rain-soaked spot on Craggy Island.

After a day out, Ted, Dougal and Jack return to their caravan to find the overbearing Father Noel Furlong (played by Graham Norton) and five teenagers from his St. Luke's Youth Group have also been promised the use of Father O'Rourke's caravan. In the extract, Fathers Noel, Ted, Dougal and Jack are squeezed into the tiny caravan when Noel tries to convince Ted to sing and dance.

FT 2.1	179	Ted	Actually, actually Noel, I'm quite tired				
FT 2.1	180	Noel	What ah maybe you're right, actually, we're all a bit exhausted from the old singing. Some of us overdid it down the old local last night! Gerry Fields knows who I'm talking **about!** Huh, what, Eh?	Banter	Yes	0.00.46	
FT 2.1	181	Gerry	Yeah				
FT 2.1	182	Noel	**Ahaha** oh, anyway, we arrived back at, God, it must have been half **ten!** And some of us crawled in. Janine Reilly knows what I'm talking about, don't you, don't you?	Banter	Yes	0.01.83	0.01.15
FT 2.1	183	Janine	Yeah		Yes	0.00.39	
FT 2.1	184	Noel	And she wasn't the only one, Tony Lynch... **TONY LYNCH!** He knows! Look at him there all sweetness and light! He wasn't like that when he crawled into bed at ten past the **eleven**	Banter	Yes	0.01.06	0.01.20

In the extract below, taken from a little later in the scene, they are all still crammed into the caravan.

| FT 2.1 | 189 | Noel | Oh God Ted, they have me worn out, they're a mad crowd | | | Yes | 0.01.19 | |

FT 2.1	190	Noel	What time is it? Half **ten?** Know what? We should all go to bed. Where's Tony Lynch off to? Probably to get some **heroin.**	Banter		Yes	0.00.63	0.01.34
FT 2.1	191	Tony	No, I'm just going to the toilet, Father.					
FT 2.1	192	Noel	Oh **right.** Anyone else need to go? Ted? Dougal? Are you okay?			Yes	0.00.80	
FT 2.1	193	Ted	We're grand, thanks, Noel.					

Father Ted Episode 2.1 17:43 "*They have me worn out, they're a mad crowd".*

Noel's turns 180, 182, 184 and 190 are coded as constituting banter because they have a surface form that may be considered impolite accusations of…

(1) Over-consumption of alcohol (turn 180, directed at Gerry)

(2) Drunken-ness and undignified behaviour (turn 182, directed at Janine)

(3) Drunken-ness and non-innocence, undignified behaviour (turn 184, directed at Tony)

(4) Consumption of Class A drugs/ procuring of illegal, banned substances. (turn 190, directed at Tony).

…but they have an intention of camaraderie, that is, of generating a group identity of a fun-loving, raucous group of friends. Thus, they are coded as constituting banter because "in the case of banter, the contrast is between the overt meaning, which is impolite, and the implicated meaning which is its opposite" (Leech 2014:216).

Noel attempts to engage in 'banter' in which he is teasing the members of the Catholic youth group about their allegedly wild night the previous evening, the wildness of which is extremely doubtful. In turns 180, 182 and 184, the 'wild' things Noel is bantering with the group about are drinking alcohol, arriving home at 22:30 and going to bed at 23:10. Indeed, we can consider that these acts are a *priest's* interpretation of a wild night, not comparable to what the average person might consider wild. Indeed, as Arthur Mathews, co-writer of the episode, notes of Father Noel "We just liked the idea of a priest who is simply incredibly excited to be around young people, so excited that he interprets their really quite sensible lifestyles as unbelievably dangerous and exciting." (Mathews in Linehan and Mathews 1999:93). Thus, his attempts to evoke locker-room style banter with these mild-mannered Christian teens are far too safe to be successful banter. In turn 190, however, Noel goes too far the other way. When Tony gets up to exit the caravan, Noel accuses him of going out to buy heroin, a Class A drug. This is too wild an accusation and Tony feels the need to defend himself from the accusation by clarifying that he is in fact getting up to go to the toilet. Retaining the polite salutation 'Father' further reinforces that Tony is a polite and obedient child which creates incongruity between his mild-mannered self-defence and Noel's accusation that he is a Class A drug user. Indeed, building on Mathews' description of Noel we might consider that he is using a 'slippery slope' reasoning where, to Noel, going to bed at 23:10 is so wild that taking heroin is likely to be around the corner. This reinforces Noel's sheltered character as being someone who grew up within the strict rules of seminary life.

So, what we have here is not just banter, it is *failed banter* – banter that is either meekly agreed to on account of its content being inappropriately un-wild (turns 180, 182 and 184) – or banter that is rejected because it is inappropriately too wild (turn 190). Much of the humour that arises from these extracts comes from the incongruity of the physical performance (the teens are sitting around looking bored, some of them are asleep), the vocal performance (the teens' meek agreement Gerry's 'yeah' and Janine's 'yeah' and Tony's polite defence and explanation that he is going to the toilet) and the recounted

off-screen wild night (where they were all in bed before midnight). Finally, there is the fact that these teens are electing to be members of a Catholic youth group – thus they are unlikely candidates for wild behaviour or substance abuse. And contrasted with this is Noel's excited enthusiasm for banter used to brag about the 'wild' things the youth group get up to. It is interesting that Noel's rather poor attempts at engaging in banter are met with audience laughter. It would appear that failed attempts at banter may be just as amusing as those which succeed (of which there is only one other example in the data set).

Looking at the audience laughter, the utterance in turn 180, "Gerry Fields knows what I'm talking about!" is met with 0.46 seconds of laughter. Likewise, turn 182 is met with audience laughter following Noel's laughter and his assertion that they arrived home at 22:30. Janine's sullen response of 'yeah' after much cajoling from Noel ('don't you? Don't you?') is also met with 0.39 seconds of laughter. Noel's turn 184, in which he calls out Tony Lynch, Tony's name is met with 1.06 seconds of audience laughter and Noel's failed banter accusing Tony of going to bed at 23:10 is met with 1.20 seconds of audience laughter. Thus, all of Noel's failed banter attempts are met with audience laughter.

Looking at Noel's failed banter that over-sells the wildness of Tony Lynch, the accusation that Tony is off 'to get some heroin' is met with 1.34 seconds of audience laughter.

There were only a small number of instances of banter in the data set, but of those, all five instances generated audience laughter. From exploring the banter in detail, we can see that it is the fact that Noel's banter fails that generates the humour – where he tries to create jocular feeling with too mild an exploit and then when he tries to accuse Tony of consuming heroin. Thus, banter may be more complex than outlined in Leech's (2014) framework and may warrant further exploration in a larger data set and could perhaps be subdivided into 'successful' and 'failed' banter.

6.6.2 Rudeness

Table 6-9 - Rudeness Results

	Strategy	Percentage Success	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
2	Rudeness	75	168	3.11 (rank 6)

Rudeness, the use of taboo terms to exacerbate emotion and/or offence in an utterance, was the second most successful impoliteness strategy, with 75% of the 168 instances of rudeness in the data set triggering audience laughter. This conforms to expectations I outlined above arising on account of the fact that certain words are not only socially prohibited but can be legally prohibited in certain contexts. The restricted use of these words in every day interaction would likely increase the incongruity of hearing them spoken on television. Utterances coded as containing rudeness occurred on average 3 times per episode, making rudeness the 6th most used strategy.

An example of a taboo word usage comes from episode 3.2 of *The IT Crowd*. In this episode, Moss and Roy, fearing they are not 'proper men' on account of their unfamiliarity with football and disinclination to go to the pub, strike up a conversation about football at a local bar with a group of football fans. It later emerges these men are actually organised criminals and Roy and Moss are briefly embroiled in their world and nearly implicated in a bank robbery. Back in the office, having escaped the gang, when postman Harry tries to strike up a conversation about football, Roy, apparently scarred from the experience of bonding with 'real men' over football, tells Harry to 'fuck off'.

| ITC 3.2 | 262 | Harry | Anyone see the final last night, then? | | |
| ITC 3.2 | 263 | Roy | Fuck off, Harry. | Yes | 0.07.00 |

'Fuck' is classified by Ofcom as "strongest language, unacceptable pre-watershed. Seen as strong, aggressive and vulgar. Older participants more likely to consider the word unacceptable" (Ofcom 2016:6). Roy's turn contains the conventionalised structure 'X off' where X in this case is the taboo term 'fuck'. This utterance can be seen not only as a rejection of Harry's attempt to start a conversation but also a rejection of the content and the implied requirement of men to be able to converse about football. Harry, however, has no knowledge of Roy and Moss' misadventures and so this utterance, for him, is not mitigated by such prior knowledge. From Harry's perspective, then, his attempt at small talk with his co-workers is brutally rebuffed. The utterance generates audience laughter of 7 seconds. This is not only one of the longest laughter responses of the episode, but also of the season. This, then, is a prime example of successful use of taboo language in the sitcom. And it is the lack of context for Harry that contributes to this as it exacerbates the face threat of Roy's utterance.

Taboo language, or 'rudeness', is used as an incongruity device where the social (within and without the sitcom world), legal and broadcast (external to the sitcom world) restraints typically placed on such language are breached and the words we can rarely speak without some form of ramification are spoken freely. It is perhaps not surprising that rudeness is the second most successful impoliteness strategy. I will explore audience response to taboo terms in greater detail in section 6.7.

6.6.3 Sarcasm

Table 6-10 - Sarcasm Results

	Strategy	Percentage Success	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
3	Sarcasm	74.8	127	2.38 (rank 7)

Sarcasm was the third most successful strategy – occasioning audience laughter 74% of the 127 times it appeared in the data set. Sarcasm is defined by Leech as occurring when there is a contrast in an utterance between "the overt meaning, which is polite, and the covert of implicational meaning, which is its opposite" (2014:216). Leech states that the reason, aside from prosodic delivery, for "treating an apparently polite utterance as impolite" is that "the polite interpretation is unsustainable – and presumably meant to be so" because "the polite interpretation is not felicitous in the context (because of exaggeration, understatement, manifest falsehood, etc.)" (Leech 2014:233-234).

An example of sarcasm comes from Episode 3.3 of *Black Books*. In this extract, Manny's elderly parents (Ma and Pa Bianco), who Bernard finds extremely irritating, are staying at the shop. In his letters to his parents, Manny has been lying about his life to make himself seem more successful, telling them that Bernard has made him a partner in the shop which will now be known as 'Black and Bianco Books'. This is unknown to Bernard and also unknown to the audience. Pa, when alone with Bernard, uses his opportunity to hint about what he believes is the impending name change.

BB 3.3	97	Pa	The shop's still called Black Books I see?				
BB 3.3	98	Bernard	**Yeah,** I was gunna call it World of Tights, but you know how stupid people **are,** you have to spell everything out	Sarcasm	Yes	0.00.74	0.01.80

Pa's question is intended as a hint relating to his hope that Manny's name be included in the shop title now that he is a partner. Bernard, unaware of this, interprets the question as an illogical one and responds with an utterance meeting the criteria as being sarcastic. A sarcastic interpretation is applicable here on account of the fact that Bernard's claim that he was going to call his bookshop 'World of Tights' is manifestly false. Calling a book shop 'World of Tights' would obviously be illogical. In addition, Bernard's claim that people are stupid and need to have things 'spelled out' for them can be seen as an implicational attack on Pa for being stupid enough to question such a straightforward shop name as 'Black Books'. The implication here is that Black Books is the shop name in order to spell things out for stupid people which, incidentally, Bernard is doing in answering Pa's question. As Loveday notes, "sarcasm is built on the absurd gap between the language used and the true circumstances of the context" (Loveday 2016:181). The audience laughter response to Bernard's sarcasm comes following the word 'are' and lasts for 01.80 seconds.

6.6.4 Least Successful Strategies: Violation of Obligation to Speaker

In the following three sections, I am going to explore the three Leech strategies that were the least successful strategies at occasioning audience laughter. The least successful strategy at occasioning audience laughter was violation of Obligation to S(peaker).

Table 6-11 - Violation of Obligation to Speaker Results

	Strategy	Percentage Success	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
13	Violation of Obligation to S	20	5	0.09 (rank =12)

A Violation of Obligation to S[peaker] occurs when the speaker gives a "favourable/high value to Other's Obligation to Speaker". They often take the form of the Speaker "demanding thanks and apologies" (Leech 2014:221). Violations of Obligation to Speaker were rare – occurring only 5 times in the data set and tied with banter as the least used of Leech's strategies. Of the 5 instances in the data set of violations of Obligation to S, only 1 (or, 20%) incited audience laughter, making it the least successful of Leech's strategies.

A violation of Obligation to Speaker can occur when a speaker insists on an apology from the Other regardless of whether there is a social/moral/linguistic contextual feature that legitimates the demand. In many contexts, for example as in parent-child discourse, the demand for thanks or an apology can be legitimated by speaker power and social rules. However, violations of Obligation to Speaker are arguably more suited to an ascription of impoliteness when they are *not* legitimated by the context. That is, when the demand for thanks or apologies is unsupported by the context and is thus unreasonable. This generates incongruity between the context and the demand and thus humour. However, the felicity conditions that must be met for this strategy are very specific – a situation must arise in which the Other is not obligated by the context to thank or apologise to the Speaker, yet the Speaker must demand thanks and/or apologies from the Other.

An example of a violation of Obligation to S in which the speaker's demand for an apology does not match the context comes from *Black Books* episode 1.4, '*The Blackout*'.

In this episode, Bernard returns from a dinner at his friend Gerald's house having blacked out – he has no memory of what happened the night before, but he knows he was very drunk. That day, on the street, he sees Gerald and his wife Sarah, who 'blank', that is deliberately ignore him. This sets Bernard on the track to try to discover what he did at the dinner party that caused Gerald and Sarah to 'blank' him. He returns to Gerald and Sarah's house to apologise where they inform him that he urinated in their wicker chair in their kitchen.

BB 1.4	268	Bernard	I thought I did something bad. Alright so I go to the toilet in your wicker chair, it's a faux pas	M7 Violation of Agreement	Yes	0.01.65	

BB 1.4	269	Gerald	Faux pas?				
BB 1.4	270	Bernard	I thought I drank all the booze or something	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence			
BB 1.4	271	Sarah	You *did* drink all the booze				
BB 1.4	272	Gerald	Look at Jimmy				
We see Gerald and Sarah's son Jimmy, whose face is set in an expression of complete shock.							
BB 1.4	273	Bernard	What? What? What? He looks surprised, all children look surprised. Everything's new to **them.** Have I told you by the way that er, he, he, er, he smokes?	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	Yes	0.01.09	0.02.52
BB 1.4	274	Sarah	He does not smoke	M7 Violation of Agreement			
BB 1.4	275	Bernard	Well he's up to something. I've never said this before because I was being nice, but your son has the, er, the cold dead eyes of a **killer.** I mean, I come to your house, I bring a bottle of wine	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	Yes	0.02.14	
BB 1.4	276	Sarah	You brought a policewoman	M7 Violation of Agreement			

BB 1.4	277	Bernard	Police woman, bottle of **wine,** the point is, I made an **effort.** And you know, okay I was slightly indiscreet, and I'm sorry, I am. But you... you blanked me. So...	M3 Violation of Approbation	Yes	0.00.86	0.00.41
BB 1.4	278	Sarah	So, what?				
BB 1.4	279	Bernard	Well, I think I deserve an apology	M6 Violation of Obligation to S			
BB 1.4	280	Sarah and Gerald	Out	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.01.18	

Bernard's utterance in line 279 is coded as a violation of Obligation to Speaker because he explicitly demands an apology. In this context, given what the audience know about Bernard's behaviour (that he turned up drunk with a policewoman who had arrested him, that he drank all the alcohol and urinated in their kitchen) we can understand why Gerald and Sarah were annoyed enough with Bernard to 'blank' him on the street. On balance, Bernard's social misbehaviour, particularly in the middle-class dinner party setting is much more offensive than Gerald and Sarah ignoring him on the street, and yet it is Bernard who insists on an apology. Thus, his violation of Obligation to S is not supported by the context and so his demand is in spite of the context. Despite this, it does not trigger audience laughter on this occasion. Indeed, the other examples of violations of Obligation to Speaker were similarly unsuccessful at generating audience laughter.

6.6.5 Violation of Agreement

Table 6-12 - Violation of Agreement Results

	Strategy	Percentage Success	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
12	Violation of Agreement	41.96	286	5.30 (rank 4)

Violations of Agreement are instances where the speaker "gives an unfavourable/low value to O's opinions". They take the form of "disagreeing" and "contradicting" were the second least successful strategy (Leech 2014:221). 41% of the 286 instances of violations of Agreement elicited audience laughter. Though still a relatively high success rate, this strategy was ranked 12th out of the 13 strategies for success.

One of the reasons why violations of Agreement were less successful at generating audience laughter may be because many of the violations of Agreement are about minor matters and tend to have less to do with damaging the face of the hearer, but are used for disagreement relating to small matters, often used to further the plot of an episode.

An example of a violation of Agreement that fails to trigger audience laughter comes from *The IT Crowd* episode 1.4. In this episode, Jen, the newly appointed head of IT, is trying to improve the dirty and cluttered basement office in which the IT Department work. In turns 40 and 52, Jen tries to get Moss and Roy to clean the window. Roy contradicts her, claiming that the space she's pointing to isn't a window and that the room doesn't need more light.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Leech Primary Code	Leech Secondary Code	Laughter
ITC 1.4	50	Jen	[…] I mean, for starters you could clean that window and then you'd have a bit of light in here.	M3 Violation of Approbation	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	No
ITC 1.4	51	Roy	What window?			No
ITC 1.4	52	Jen	That one up there			No
ITC 1.4	53	Roy	Yeah, that's not a window.	M7 Violation of Agreement		No
ITC 1.4	54	Jen	Yes, it is. Get it clean, you'll have some light in here.	M2 Violation of Tact		No
ITC 1.4	55	Roy	I think that we have plenty of light	M7 Violation of Agreement		No

Clearly, Jen and Roy's difference of opinion is not a huge threat to either of their faces. In fact, it appears that Roy simply doesn't know that there is a window and thus doesn't believe Jen's assertions that what appears to be a wall is actually a dirty window. Though we learn from this interaction that Roy is resisting Jen's attempts to improve the office, but more so from a point of laziness than as a direct challenge to Jen's attempts to improve the office conditions. Neither of Roy's violations of Agreement in turns 53 and 55 are met with audience laughter and they have no real ramifications for the rest of the plot.

Perhaps another reason for the low success of violations of Agreement is that the violation of Agreement strategy allows for a broad spectrum of different levels of offense allowing for a greater degree of freedom in regards to the topic, intensity and importance of the disagreement between two or more characters. Disagreeing about the cleanliness of a room, for example, doesn't inherently threaten Jen's or Roy's face. So, while some

disagreements might be highly face threatening, there are a number of trivial items about which two characters can disagree without interaction becoming emotionally loaded or face-threatening. Rudeness, in contrast, is a strategy which contains conventionalised tokens of impoliteness and thus, though there is a range of degree of severity of taboo words (as exemplified by Ofcom's categorisation) allows for less freedom with regards content. A taboo word is inherently marked by society as containing the potential to cause offense. Therefore, rudeness as a category might be more successful because it is a less broad and more defined category.

In addition, the extent to which incongruity can be guaranteed by a category also might have influence on the success of a category. Rudeness, the second most successful strategy, has a high degree of incongruity on account of the aforementioned societal and broadcast regulations over taboo terms rendering those terms low-frequency on television and in society in general. Sarcasm, the third most successful strategy is incongruous by nature given that it is an overtly polite message with a covertly impolite meaning. Likewise, banter, the most successful strategy is also inherently incongruent given that it relies on an overtly impolite message with a covertly polite meaning. Violations of Agreement can contain incongruities of varying degrees but can also, as can be seen, pertain to mundane differences of opinion with low stakes in the plot. Thus, it may be that the inherent incongruities in the more successful strategies enable them to be more successful.

6.6.6 Violation of Obligation to Other

Table 6-13 - Violation of Obligation to Other Results

	Strategy	Percentage Success	Number of Instances in Data Set	Average instances per episode (frequency rank)
11	Violation of Obligation to Other	44.44	9	0.17 (rank 11)

Violations of Obligation to Other involve the speaker giving "an unfavourable/low value to Speaker's Obligation to Other" (Leech 2014:221) and constitute acts of "withholding thanks or apologies" (Leech 2014:221). Of course, the felicity conditions that must be in place for these speech acts are far more specific than those in place for most other strategies. For an utterance to qualify as a withholding of thanks or apologies, the

audience must be signalled that under normal circumstances, thanks or apologies would be due, and then the speaker must fail to utter thanks or an apology. This is the only strategy that is essentially a category of absence – utterances that occur when thanks or apologies should take place constitute violations of Obligation to Other. This may mean that the strategy is more complex for the audience to interpret and thus less likely to arouse humour. There were just 9 instances in the data set, with a frequency of less than 1 utterance per episode. The fact that violations of Obligation to Other require such a specific set of contextual conditions may be one of the reasons for their low incidence in the data set. This was the third least successful strategy with 44.4% of the nine utterances generating audience laughter. With a success rate of just less than 50% we can conclude that this isn't a consistently successful strategy, however, the low number of instances may preclude any certainty on that conclusion.

An example of a violation of Obligation to Other in which the audience does not laugh comes from episode 1.3 of *Black Books*. In this episode, Freddie, Bernard's posh friend has given him a gift of an oddly-shaped neck massager. The scene opens with Bernard holding the device without the audience having seen the gift giving or knowing the context.

Episode	Line	Speaker	Utterance	Primary Leech Coding	Audience Laughter?
BB 1.3	8	Bernard	I don't want this, Freddie	M5 Violation of Obligation to O	No
BB 1.3	9	Freddie	It's a gift		No
BB 1.3	10	Bernard	You can bribe me any way you like, I'm not house sitting for you	M5 Violation of Obligation to O	No
BB 1.3	11	Freddie	Put it on your neck it gives you a shiatsu massage. Look you put it here, see		No

Rather than thanking Freddie, in turn 8, Bernard tells him he doesn't want the gift. This constitutes a violation of Obligation to O as societal mores dictate that the recipient of a gift thanks the sender. Again, once Freddie has explicitly stated that the neck massager is gift, in turn 10 Bernard again does not thank Freddie and accuses him of trying to bribe Bernard to house-sit for him. Neither of these violations of Obligation to O generate

audience laughter and I would argue that this is because, given that the audience hasn't seen Freddie give the gift, there is not enough clear signalling before the exchange, particularly in turn 8, for the audience to know that the oddly shaped item Bernard is holding is a gift. Thus, it is not humorous when the thanks are withheld because the audience did not know to expect them. The category of violation of Obligation to O relies upon the audience expecting thanks or an apology. Therefore, as a strategy, certain contextual conditions must be met in order for the audience to expect an apology or thanks, as appropriate and to have those expectations subverted and thus incite incongruity. In the *Black Books* example from episode 1.3, Bernard is holding an unwrapped gift, we haven't seen him be presented with it, or unwrap it from gift paper (some of the schematic expectations of gift giving). The gift itself is a strange shaped mechanical device, which we can't necessarily identify without being told what it is. As such our expectations that he would utter thanks to his interlocutor are relatively low as we do not know he has been given it, or that it is in any way a desirable or heartfelt gift. Neither do we know that Freddie is a friend and not a customer. When Bernard accuses Freddie of trying to blackmail him, we have another reason not to expect thanks, as a present being used as a bribe is not a real present at all. Therefore, in this context, we are not necessarily primed to expect Bernard to thank Freddie and so there is no incongruity when Bernard does not thank Freddie. This means that the violation of obligation is not humorous and so the audience does not laugh. It is an essential component of this category then, for its success, that the audience must receive clear signalling that thanks or apologies are owed in order to find it amusing when they are not.

6.7 AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO TABOO WORDS

The exploration of which impoliteness strategies were the most successful at generating audience laughter revealed that rudeness was the second most successful impoliteness strategy, with 75% of utterances coded as containing rudeness generating audience laughter, and with a much higher rate of appearance in the data set than banter. Given that the most successful strategy consisted of very few data samples, rudeness could be argued to be a more reliably successful and more pervasive impoliteness strategy.

In Chapter 4, I found that taboo words were prevalent in my data set with an average of 41.5 taboo words (as defined by Ofcom) spoken per episode in my data set. I now explore the audience response to those taboo words, firstly exploring whether the audience gives a laughter response to utterances containing taboo words and then

looking to see whether there is a relationship between taboo word severity (as rated by Ofcom) and the audience laughter response. Of course, for some of these lexical items, particularly the words categorised as 'strongest' (i.e. most taboo), there are only a few instances in the data set. However, the findings from this analysis may point to areas for future research.

Given the tenets of the incongruity theory, that humour arises from the unexpected, the taboo words which are most key to my data set when compared with the BNC might be predicted to occasion audience laughter more successfully than others. This is because the rarity of these words in general spoken and written English would make them more incongruous, thus more surprising in their context, and so more humorous. Likewise, the censorship of UK television in general by Ofcom which involves the restriction of taboo language until after the 9pm watershed would also add to the rarity of taboo words against the context of other genres of television such as news, drama, film, entertainment etc.

Table 6-14 below shows the results of the exploration of the success of the taboo terms Ofcom defines as 'general' in the data set at triggering audience laughter. Only those words that appeared in the data set 10 or more times are included. The exception to this rule is 'fuck', which is the only word in its category with tokens in the data set and so is included despite only appearing three times, so that all categories are represented. The success percentage relates to the percentage of times that the word appears in an utterance that generates audience laughter. The data in table 6-14 below is presented in descending order of success.

Table 6-14 - Taboo Word Success at Triggering Laughter

#	Taboo word	Number of times term appears in data set	Keyness against BNC Wordlist	Percentage of times a word appears in an utterance that generates audience laughter
1	Shit	15	84.185	100
=1	Fuck	3	2.076	100
3	Bitch	12	90.997	91.6
4	Feckin'	20	10905.7	90
5	Feck	48	28810.68	87.7
6	Bollocks	16	896.632	87.5

7	Arse	53	3660.853	81.1
8	Tits	10	275.412	80
9	Bastard	38	718.144	77.5
10	Damn	13	38.475	61.5
11	Bloody	48	295.868	50
12	God	421	4466.558	46.3

The most important finding from these results is that, with the exception of 'God', the taboo words occurred in utterances generating audience laughter on 50% or more of their appearances. This applies to all words except 'God', the 12th most successful word. The significantly high number of tokens of 'God' in the data set as well as its mildness may have contributed to its slightly lower success. In general, though, the success of utterances containing taboo words at generating audience laughter was high – with 8 of the 12 words occurring in utterances generating audience laughter 80% or more of the time that they appeared. This suggests that these words are indeed being used by the writers as a humour device and that their use may be part of what makes an utterance humorous.

Of course, an important caveat to the following results is that while the taboo word appears in an utterance, the context and the rest of the content of the utterance may also have a bearing on whether the audience laughs. Though some utterances, such as 'fuck off Harry' (explored in 7.7.2) have the taboo construction as their central thrust, there are other utterances where taboo words work alongside other impoliteness strategies. These results look only at the presence or absence of a taboo word in an utterance and the presence or absence of audience laughter in order to explore whether the presence of a taboo word affects the humorous success of an utterance.

6.7.1 Severity and Success

Looking at the severity of the offensiveness of a taboo word in relation to its success reveals an interesting picture. Table 6-15 below shows the taboo words ordered in descending order of success, with the Ofcom rating of severity included. There are four possible categories a taboo word can belong to: Strongest, strong, medium and mild. On

average the taboo words had a success rate of 79.4% of a word's appearances being in an utterance that generated audience laughter.

Table 6-15 - Taboo Word Success and Ofcom Severity

#	Swear Words	Success Percentage	Ofcom Rating
=1	Fuck	100	Strongest
1	Shit	100	Medium
3	Bitch	91.6	Medium
4	Feckin'*	90	Medium
5	Feck	87.7	Medium
6	Bollocks	87.5	Medium
7	Arse	81.1	Mild
8	Tits	80	Medium
9	Bastard	77.5	Strong
10	Damn	61.5	Mild
11	Bloody	50	Mild
12	God	46.3	Mild

The more taboo a word, the more incongruous its use on television, and so following the incongruity theory, it might generally be expected that the more taboo a word is, the more successful it would be at generating audience laughter. The table above shows that the strongest taboo word 'fuck' was the joint most successful word in the data set, generating audience laughter 100% of the times that it occurred. The only 'strong' word to appear more than ten times, 'Bastard' was slightly less successful, preceding audience laughter 77% of the time it appears, ranked 9th most successful. Though this deviates from the expected pattern to some degree, the rest of the results are more consistent with the prediction that the more offensive a word was deemed to be, the more successful it would be at generating laughter. The top 6 most successful taboo words are all medium words, and the bottom three words are all mild. These findings generally suggest stratification of success based on offensiveness with some minor deviations, such as the mild word 'arse' and medium word 'tits' are in reverse of the order that might have been expected. Generally, these findings suggest that offensiveness in many cases predicted success. A much greater data set would be required to see whether this holds for a wider variety of taboo words in a number of different comedy genres.

6.7.2 Frequency and Success

It is possible that the frequency of a word's appearance in the data set might also influence its success. Looking at table 6-14 above, the results show that the word with the highest frequency ('God') also has the lowest percentage of success (46%) and the word with the lowest frequency ('Fuck') has the joint highest percentage of success (100%). This suggests that the less frequent taboo words are funnier and this would again confirm the incongruity theories of humour. However, the results from the rest of the taboo words are less indicative of a direct correlation between word frequency and laughter success. Figure 6-4 below shows the relationship between the number of times a taboo term appears in my data set and the percentage success of that word.

Figure 6-4 - Relationship Between Taboo Word Frequency and Success
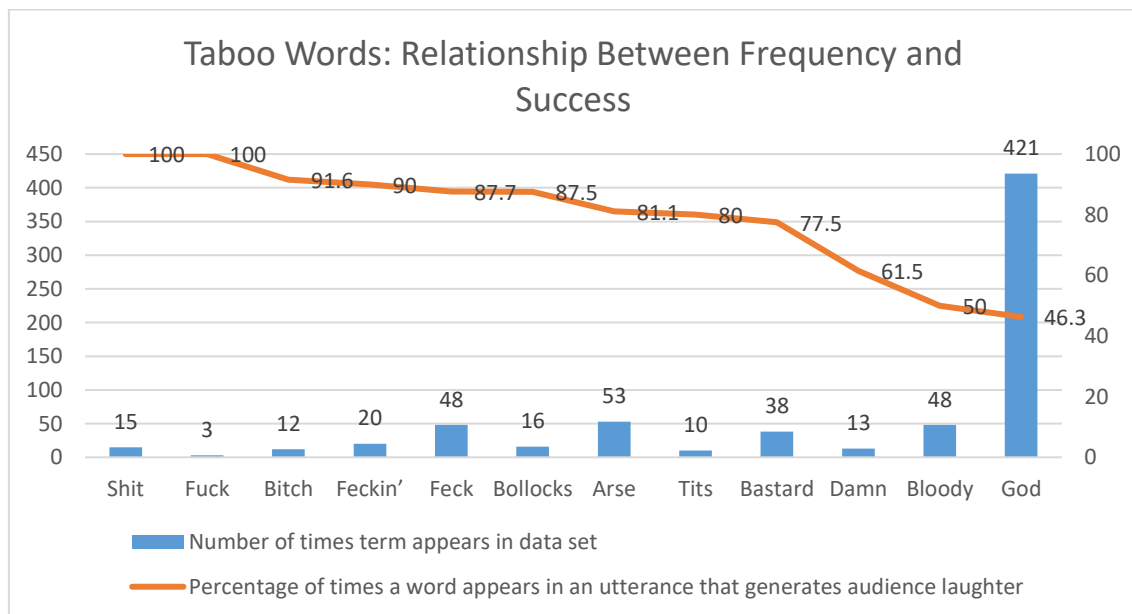
Figure 6-4 above shows the taboo words in descending order of success at generating audience laughter (orange line), and the number of times each token appears in the data set (blue bar). This graph suggests that there is not a direct correlation between the frequency of appearance of a taboo word in the data set and its success. Further studies could examine a wider range of taboo words in order to confirm this finding. The severity of the word, as shown above, may have a greater influence on the word's success than its frequency.

6.7.3 Keyness and Success

In this section, I explore the relationship between the keyness of a word against the BNC and its success. Keyness is an indicator of a word's under or -over-representation in a corpus. Given the tenets of the incongruity theory, where events that contrast expectations are likely to trigger humour, it could be expected that a word that is strongly positively key, that is, is over-represented in the data set, will be more successful than a word that is not key, because its novelty will generate surprise which will lead to incongruous humour.

Figure 6-5 below shows the keyness of a word (blue bar) and the percentage success at generating audience laughter (orange line).

Figure 6-5 - Relationship between Taboo Word Keyness and Success
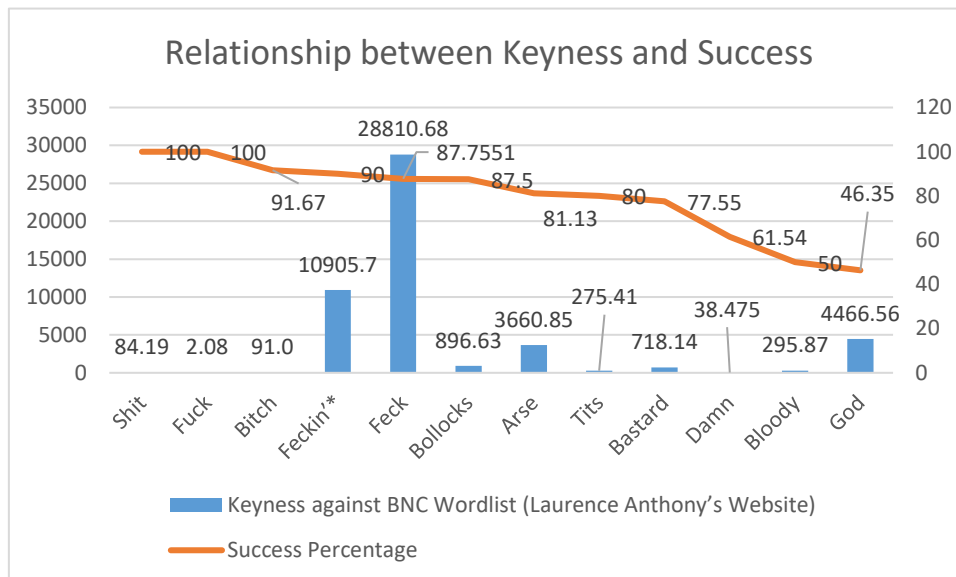
Firstly, the graph above suggests that the keyness of a word against the BNC doesn't directly correlate with the percentage of success in my data set. This means that the uniqueness of a word against general spoken English is not a matter which determines the humour success of a word. For example, the three most successful words, 'shit', 'fuck' and 'bitch', respectively have relatively low keyness. However, the two most key words are still in the top 5 most successful words, so there may be a weak association between the keyness of a taboo word and its laughter success. Again, this might be an interesting area for future research.

We might conclude from results in sections 6.7.1- 6.7.3 that utterances containing taboo words generate laughter more often than not (with the exceptions of 'Bloody' and 'God'), that the severity of offense of a word (as ascribed by Ofcom) may be used as a predictor for audience laughter success and that word frequency and keyness do not necessarily have a straightforwardly correlative relationship with a word's success.

I mentioned above that a critical caveat to this section is that the words which appear in the utterances are only a *part* of the utterance content and context. The only way to be able to isolate the effect a taboo word has on audience laughter would be to explore utterances that contained only taboo words. In the next section, I will explore the response to instances where taboo words appeared alone.

6.7.4 Solo Taboo Words

Of course, instances where a turn comprises a solo taboo word are very few and so the data set for solo taboo words is very small. The small size of the data means that results should be interpreted with great caution. However, we can use these few instances to consider whether such an exploration of taboo words which appear solo might be worthy of further investigation.

Table 6-16 below shows the words which appeared alone as utterances in my data set, the number of times they appeared alone, the number of times that the audience laughed and the percentage of success at triggering audience laughter. Text examples are also given. In the case of 'God', the pre-modifying exclamation 'oh' was included as it was considered not to change the meaning of the exclamation. The same goes for 'tits', where 'ahh' was deemed to not alter the meaning of the taboo word enough to be excluded from the data and 'bollocks' where 'oh' was decided to not necessitate its exclusion. The following taboo words appear alone in the data set: *Arse, Damn, God, Bollocks, Feck, Tits* and *Bastard.* The average success rate for these solo words was 61%.

Table 6-16 - Solo taboo words

Word	Number of Times it Appears Alone	Percentage Success When Alone	Text Examples	Turn Number	Speaker	Utterance	Laughter?
Arse	2	50%	FT 1.5	78	Jack	Arse!	
			FT 3.6	182	Jack	Arse.	Yes
Damn	1	0%	BB 2.2	139	Man	Damn,	
God	18	33%	FT 1.2	46	Dougal	Oh god!	
			FT 1.2	259	Ted	Oh god	Yes
			FT 2.2	147	Billy	Oh God	
			FT 2.2	243	Ted	Oh God	
			FT 2.3	215	Ted	Oh God	
			FT 2.5	223	Ted	Oh God!	Yes
			FT 3.5	156	Ted	Oh God!	
			BB 1.4	247	Manny	Oh God.	Yes
			BB 1.6	243	Fran	Oh god	
			BB 2.1	167	Manny	Oh god.	
			BB 3.3	22	Manny	Oh god	Yes
			ITC 1.3	18	Roy	Oh God, Oh God,	
			ITC 1.3	18	Roy	Oh God, Oh God,	
			ITC 1.3	311	Jen	Oh God	
			ITC 3.1	4	Jen	God.	Yes
			ITC 3.1	188	Jen	Oh god	
			ITC 3.1	192	Jen	Oh god!	
			ITC 3.4	209	Douglas	Oh God!	Yes
Bollocks	2	100%	FT 2.2	254	Ted	Oh bollocks	Yes
			FT 3.6	122	Len	Oh bollocks.	Yes
Feck	3	100%	FT 1.5	17	Ted	Feck	Yes
			FT 2.3	78	Jack	Feck!	Yes
			FT 3.1	50	Jack	Feck	Yes

Tits	1	100%	ITC 2.2	193	Douglas	Aahh! Tits!	
Bastard	2	50%	FT 1.4	263	David bowie priest	Bastard	Yes
			ITC 1.5	231	Jen	Bastard!	

Starting with the most successful words, *Feck, Bollocks* and *Tits* had a 100% success rate at generating audience laughter when they occurred alone. Each of these three words are classified as 'Medium' level of offensiveness by Ofcom. *Arse* and *Bastard* each had a 50% success rate and are classified by Ofcom as being 'Milder' and 'Strong', respectively. *God* had a 33% success rate. 'God', as discussed above, has a very high occurrence in the data set, low offensiveness (classified by Ofcom as mild) and an alternate meaning, which all likely contribute to the low success rate of this word when it occurs solo. *Damn* did not occasion audience laughter when it appeared solo. These results, being based on such low numbers of data, cannot be used for any significant conclusions about the success rate of solo taboo words but suggest that it may be worthwhile for future research to explore audience responses to taboo words occurring alone, so as to be able to explore responses to them when there is no contextual utterance that may affect their impact.

7 CHARACTERISATION AND IMPOLITENESS

> *"Don't you dare use the word 'party' as a verb in this shop!"*
>
> - BERNARD BLACK, EPISODE 3.6

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters have explored impoliteness from a top-down, quantitative perspective. In this chapter, I want to explore how impoliteness can be used to generate character in the sitcom and while I will begin with quantitative data, I will give a closer, qualitative analysis of the impoliteness used by the protagonist characters in *Father Ted* (that is, Ted, Dougal, Jack and Mrs Doyle).

Bousfield argues; "a stylistic approach to understanding characters should – indeed *must* – explore the language that those characters themselves are presented as using" because "the style (or way) by which characters themselves interact reveal how we, within the cultural context in which we receive the information, are being invited to see, to understand, do appreciate, empathise, sympathise or antipathize with those characters" (2014:118). Existing research (e.g. Simpson 1989, Culpeper 1996, 1998, Paternoster 2013, Loveday 2016) has shown that the way a character manages (im)politeness can contribute to the audience's understanding of that character. In this chapter, I seek to provide further evidence for the argument that a stylistic analysis of drama can be supported by the analysis of impoliteness in character dialogue, particularly when it comes to interpreting character. Throughout the thesis, I have referred to my support of Culpeper's argument that "in drama, impoliteness is not thrown in haphazardly for audience entertainment" but serves purposes of plot and character (Culpeper 1998:86). If Culpeper's claim is correct, then we would likely find character differences in impoliteness usage. That is, if impoliteness is functioning as a characterisation technique, then we would expect to find that four characters with such disparate characters as Ted, Jack, Dougal and Mrs Doyle, will all use impoliteness differently. If impoliteness is being thrown in ad-hoc as a means of purely generating laughter, then there would likely be no consistent patterning to the impoliteness as it

would be thrown in at random. Thus, the first of my research questions for this chapter asks:

1. Is there a quantitative difference in the way that the characters use impoliteness?

We might also expect to find that the types of impoliteness used by characters are congruent with (and perhaps also partly responsible for) the type of people we perceive them to be. Thus, the second research question for this chapter asks:

2. How are our character interpretations and societal impressions of characters supported by a character's impoliteness use?

Given the wealth of data generated through an analysis of different characters' use of impoliteness, in this chapter I will focus on the characters in *Father Ted*. Throughout, Leech's impoliteness framework will be the one in use. It is worth noting that given the wealth of data, the following analysis focuses on the coding results of the 'primary' codings.

7.2 QUANTITATIVE COMPARISON OF CHARACTERS' USE OF IMPOLITENESS

In this section, I will provide the quantitative results of a comparison of the protagonists' impoliteness use in *Father Ted*. I will begin by exploring the characters' frequency of impoliteness, I will then report the results for the characters' success at generating audience laughter. Then I will turn to the exploration of characters' strategy use – what I am terming their 'impoliteness blueprint'. Though Linehan has proposed that Ted is the only character who is "very nearly a rounded human being" with the other protagonists being "foils who are only really there to torture Ted" (Harrison, 2015:np), this does not preclude an investigation into these characters' speech habits. Indeed the 'flatness' of Dougal, Jack and Mrs Doyle may stem from the domination of particular types of impoliteness in their dialogue – rendering them 'one-note' characters who each adopt a different form of linguistic torture of Ted.

7.2.1 Frequency

Table 7-1 below shows the results of the four protagonists' frequency of use of impoliteness in the data set.

Table 7-1 - Protagonists' Use of Impoliteness in Father Ted

	Use of Impoliteness			
	Father Ted	Dougal	Mrs Doyle	Jack
Total Number of Utterances	2020	980	252	155
Total Number of Utterances that are Impolite	325	119	66	74
Percentage of Utterances That are Impolite	16%	12%	26%	47%
Average Number of Utterances Per Episode	112	54	14	8
Average Impolite Utterances Per Episode	18	6	3	4

Confirming Culpeper's claim that impoliteness use in drama is not ad-hoc, these results suggest that impoliteness is used differently by these four protagonists – none has an identical score for impoliteness prevalence.

Ted has the highest number of utterances – 2,020 in the data set with an average of 112 utterances per episode, but the second lowest impoliteness percentage, with 16% of his utterances being coded as containing impoliteness. Given that from a narrative perspective, Ted 'carries' each episode and is the character around whom the plot revolves, it makes sense that he has relatively low impoliteness use. Were Ted's impoliteness use higher, the resultant conflict and reparations might slow down the plot.

Dougal, Ted's protegee, has the second highest number of utterances with an average of 54 utterances per episode. Dougal accompanies Ted in the majority of his adventures and so it is in-keeping with his character that he has a considerable number of turns per episode. He also has the lowest percentage of impolite utterances (12%) consistent with his sweet, but cognitively challenged character.

Mrs Doyle, the housekeeper has 252 utterances in the data set and an average of 14 per episode. She is a less prominent character and is employed by the parochial house and this makes it surprising that 25% of Mrs Doyle's 252 utterances were coded as containing impoliteness.

Consistent with Jack's lack of verbal skills (his vocabulary predominantly consists of 'drink' 'feck' 'arse' and 'girls') and his tendency to be absent from the majority of the episode, Jack has the lowest number of utterances of the four protagonists, with an

average of 8 per episode. Interestingly, Father Jack has the highest use of impoliteness, with 47% of his 155 utterances being coded as containing impoliteness. Jack's high use of impoliteness not only deviates from the language of the other characters, but also from the general expectations of the language of priests. This deviation then foregrounds Jack's use of impoliteness as a marker of his character.

These findings suggest that there may be an inverse relationship between the number of utterances a character speaks and the percentage of those utterances that constitute impoliteness. Figure 7-1 below plots the average number of utterances per episode (blue line) and the average percentage of those utterances that are impolite (orange line).

Figure 7-1 - Relationship between number of utterances and percentage of impoliteness of Father Ted protagonists
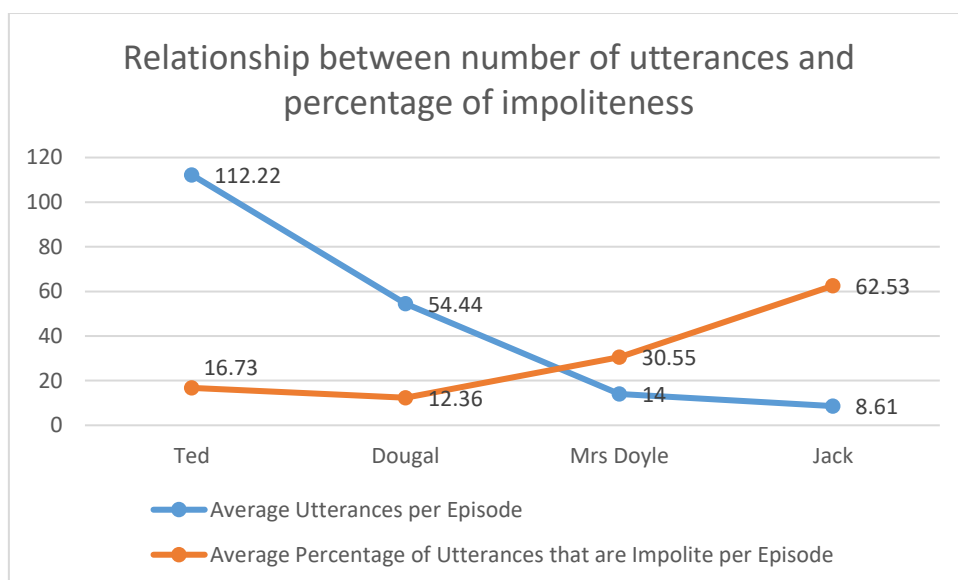
As the graph above shows, there is a roughly inverse relationship between the average number of turns a character has per episode and the percentage of their utterances that are impolite. Ted, who speaks the most is one of the least impolite speakers and Jack, who speaks the least is the most impolite speaker. It appears that the less a character speaks, the more impoliteness they can 'get away' with because they do not have the responsibility of 'carrying' the central narrative of each episode. I use the term 'get away' with not to mean that there are no in-world repercussions for their impoliteness usage (though that is the case in most instances), but to mean that the characters who speak the fewest are able to also speak the most impoliteness as they can enter a scene, impart impoliteness and exit with minimal ramifications. Dougal represents a deviation to the

findings of an inverse relationship, in that he is the least impolite speaker by a margin of 4.4% despite having fewer utterances than Ted. It may be, at least for *Father Ted* that there is an inverse relationship between the phenomena, which may result from the disrupting influence of impoliteness on the plot when spoken by plot-bearing characters.

7.2.2   Success

I use the term 'success' to refer to a character's ability to generate audience laughter, bearing in mind Linehan's statement that *Father Ted* is "just a device for generating laughter" (Linehan 2007:np). Thus, when an audience laughter response is elicited, the preceding material has succeeded in generating laughter and thus meets the sitcom's objectives.

The first question to be asked is:

- How successful are the characters' impolite utterances at generating audience laughter?

Figure 7-2 below shows the percentage of each character's impolite utterances that generated audience laughter.

Figure 7-2 - Father Ted Protagonists' Percentage of Impolite Utterances that Generate Audience Laughter
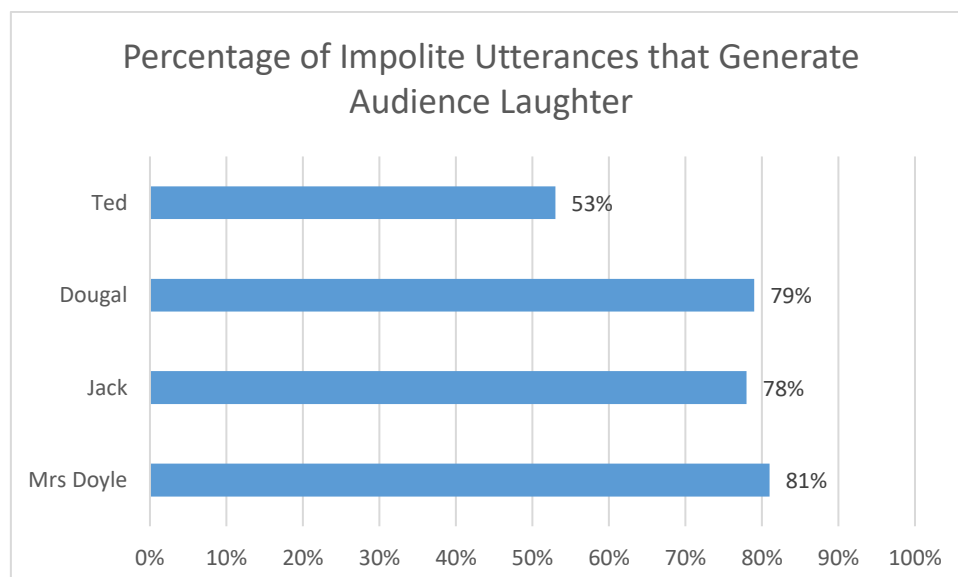
The results show that over 50% of each character's impoliteness generated audience laughter. In other words, when impoliteness appears, it is more often funny than not, which supports my overall argument that impoliteness can be used to trigger audience laughter. For three of the protagonists, those results were even higher, with Dougal, Jack and Mrs Doyle's impoliteness succeeding at generating audience laughter on 77% or more of the occasions it appears.

Ted's result stands out as the lowest of the four main characters. Of all of Ted's utterances coded as impolite according to the Leech framework, only 53% resulted in audience laughter. It's interesting to consider that although Ted is the eponymous protagonist in a comedy series, he is the least 'funny' character when using impoliteness. This reflects Ted's role as the 'straight man', around whom the oddities of Craggy Island and its people operate.

Mrs Doyle is the most successful character at generating audience laughter; 81% of her impolite utterances generated audience laughter. It will be interesting to see whether her impoliteness blueprint points to any differences in impoliteness style which might explain her laughter success. There may be implications of expectations of gender in Mrs Doyle's success in that Mrs Doyle might not be expected to be impolite as she is female and there is a folk belief that women do and/or should use less impoliteness than men (McEnery 2006) – thus when Mrs Doyle breaks this expectation, humour is generated through incongruity. There may also be expectations surrounding Mrs Doyle's power – given that she is the parochial housekeeper and so lower in status than the priests, we might expect less impoliteness from her. These expectations likely heighten the incongruity caused by her use of impoliteness. And this gives rise to the humour.

Mrs Doyle's success at generating laughter through impoliteness is closely followed by Dougal (79%) and Jack (78%). This suggests that any differences in a) quantity and b) type of impoliteness favoured by Mrs Doyle, Jack and Dougal do not greatly affect the success of the impoliteness at generating audience laughter. The success of these characters' impoliteness at generating audience laughter confirms the original hypothesis that there is a relationship between the two phenomena.

7.2.3 Strategy Use

In our everyday interactions, a speaker's use of impoliteness can be taken as a signifier of the type of person that they are. As Jay notes, "an individual's personality […] plays a significant role in frequency of taboo word use" (Jay 2009:156). The same is true for fictional characters - Rossen-Knill notes of dramatic characters, there is an "intimate and indivisible relationship among […] language use and social identity" (Rossen-Knill 2011:45). As Loveday (2016) has shown, a fictional character's impoliteness strategy use can help build up their identity. In this section, I am going to explore the impoliteness strategies used by the four protagonists in *Father Ted*.

What I am calling the 'impoliteness blueprint' for the protagonists will show the breakdown of their usage of Leech's strategies according to frequency of use. Table 7-2 below shows the breakdown of strategy use for the four main characters, Father Ted, Dougal, Mrs Doyle and Jack, ordered by the most used strategy.

Table 7-2 - Father Ted Protagonists' Strategy Use

Rank	Father Ted	Percentage	Dougal	Percentage	Mrs Doyle	Percentage	Jack	Percentage
1	Approbation	33%	Approbation	39%	Tact	45%	Tact	37%
2	Tact	25%	Agreement	21%	Generosity	19%	Rudeness	33%
3	Agreement	13%	Opinion reticence	15%	Approbation	19%	Generosity	14%
4	Opinion reticence	7%	Tact	10%	Rudeness	7%	Approbation	8%
5	Generosity	6%	Generosity	4%	Opinion reticence	6%	Agreement	2%
6	Rudeness	6%	Sarcasm	3%	Agreement	1%	Opinion reticence	1%
7	Sarcasm	4%	Sympathy	2%	Modesty	0	Sarcasm	1%
8	Modesty	1%	Rudeness	2%	Obligation to O	0	Modesty	0
9	Sympathy	0.9%	Modesty	0.8%	Obligation to S	0	Obligation to O	0
10	Feeling reticence	0.9%	Obligation to O	0	Sympathy	0	Obligation to S	0
11	Obligation to O	0	Obligation to S	0	Feeling reticence	0	Sympathy	0
12	Obligation to S	0	Feeling reticence	0	Sarcasm	0	Feeling reticence	0
13	Banter	0	Banter	0	Banter	0	Banter	0
Total	325		119		66		74	

It is perhaps easier to compare the characters' impoliteness use with the help of a visual breakdown. The figures below show the four most used strategies by the four characters in their primary coding results.

Figure 7-3 - Ted's top 4 strategies

Figure 7-3 - Ted's top 4 strategies

Figure 7-4 - Mrs Doyle's top 4 strategies

Figure 7-5 - Dougal's top 4 strategies
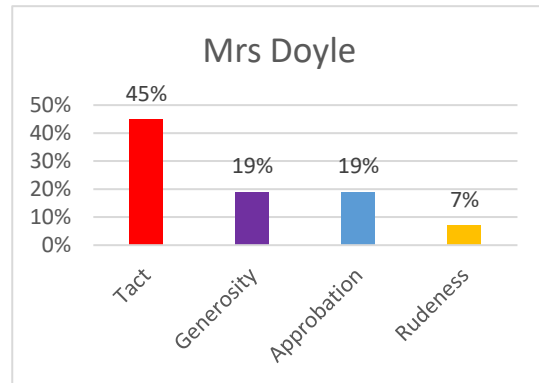
Figure 7-6 - Jack's top 4 strategies
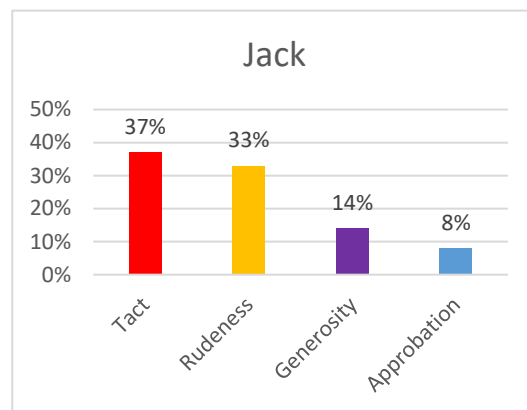
As noted in Chapter 1, Culpeper argues that "In drama, impoliteness is not thrown in haphazardly for audience entertainment […] where there are tensions between characters, we are more likely to see developments in character and plot" (1998:86). The results of the impoliteness blueprints suggest support for this argument – impoliteness hasn't been haphazardly thrown into lines for the characters – there are apparently character-led differences in the strategy use made by the four protagonists. These personal 'styles' of impoliteness may be reflections of, and perhaps contribute to, the creation of their character's 'personality'. These character differences in the usage of impoliteness are likely the "motivated choice" of the writers (Culpeper 1998:87) and may lead the audience to differing interpretations of character based on their styles of impoliteness.

Ted has the broadest range of impoliteness strategy use, using 10 of the 13 Leech strategies. We might consider the broad nature of his strategy use as a reflection that he does not have one particular set of strategies that reflect a particular 'style' of impoliteness. It is possible that this lack of style contributed to his having the lowest success rate (53%) at triggering audience laughter with his impoliteness. It may also

contribute to his roundness of character. Dougal has the second broadest range, making use of 9 of the 13 possible strategies. Jack has the third broadest range, making use of 7 of the 13 strategies, though the majority of his strategies are made up of his top three, suggesting more of a characteristic style and Mrs Doyle has the least broad use of strategies, employing just 6 of the 13 strategies. Her most used strategy, the violation of Tact, made up almost half of her total usage. This suggests that she has a clear characteristic preferred style of impoliteness.

Looking comparatively at the top 4 strategies, Ted and Dougal have the same top 4 strategies (violations of Approbation, Agreement, Opinion reticence and Tact), though they appear in different orders. Ted and Dougal are also the characters with the lowest impoliteness usage and the highest number of utterances per episode. The similarity in their patterning of impoliteness suggests that Ted and Dougal may be similar characters. This makes sense given that Dougal is Ted's protégée and acts as his surrogate son (Harrison 2015:np), thus, Dougal might try to emulate his role model. Also, Ted and Dougal tend to carry the plot of each episode. Impoliteness occurring frequently in the speech of the plot-bearing characters may have a disruptive effect on the plot, forcing the characters into endless cycles of disequilibrium and conflict resolution and this may be one reason why Ted and Dougal make the lowest use of impoliteness.

Jack and Mrs Doyle have similarities in their impoliteness blueprints; they have same top 4 strategies (Tact, rudeness, Generosity, Approbation), though, as with Ted and Dougal, they appear in a different order. Neither Jack nor Mrs Doyle are particularly powerful characters and yet they both have violations of Tact, a strategy of ordering or demanding often associated with characters who are powerful, as their most-used strategy. The mis-match between Jack and Mrs Doyle's power and their use of ordering/demanding in their impoliteness may generate incongruity for the audience.

What is emerging here is a picture of two different types of impolite character. Ted and Dougal – the characters with the most dialogue and around whom the plot usually revolves are making use of one set of strategies, whereas Mrs Doyle and Jack, supporting characters with more outlandish personalities and fewer opportunities to speak, favour another set of impoliteness strategies.

Two strategies appear in all four of the characters' most used strategies – the violations of Tact and Approbation. I have discussed above that these two strategies are roughly synonymous with Brown and Levinson's concepts of positive and negative face. I have noted that the popularity of these strategies points to the continued importance in British-

Irish impoliteness of strategies that attack a person's qualities and strategies that impede their freedom. This also confirms the continued value in B&L's original distinction. It would seem in the British-Irish sitcom, the most popular ways to cause offence entail positive and negative face-style impositions.

None of the protagonist characters in *Father Ted* made use of the strategies Banter or violation of Obligation to S or violations of Obligation to O. Above, I noted that the specificity of the felicity conditions that need to be in place for violations of Obligation to O and S may be one of the reasons for their lack of popularity. Haugh and Pillet-Shore (2018) have suggested that banter is not restricted to use among those with a close relationship, but that it can also be used as an "invitation to intimacy" (2018:248) between speakers. The ambiguity of banter's ostensibly conflictive but genuinely positive motivations may contribute to its scarcity in sitcom.

Impoliteness in the sitcom functions "as a message from the author about an aspect of the fictional world" (Culpeper 1998:87). In this case, the aspect of the fictional world in question is the fictive personalities of these characters. In the following sections, I will explore the protagonists' use of impoliteness in greater detail.

7.3 TED

Father Ted Crilly is the series' protagonist and 'straight man' who is surrounded by the bizarre and frustrating parochial house inhabitants and islanders. Ted desires money, recognition and women and has a penchant for cheating that often gets him into trouble.

Ted is the second least impolite of the four main characters in the series, with only 16% of his utterances being coded as containing impoliteness. He is also the least successful at generating humour through impoliteness with only his 53% of his impolite utterances generating audience laughter. Table 7-7 and figure7-7 below show the distribution of Ted's impoliteness usage:

Table 7-3 - Ted's Strategy Use

Rank	Father Ted	Percentage of all strategies	No. of Instances
1	M3 Violation of Approbation	33%	108
2	M2 Violation of Tact	25%	84
3	M7 Violation of Agreement	13%	44
4	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	7%	23
5	M1 Violation of Generosity	6%	20
6	Rudeness	6%	20
7	Sarcasm	4%	15
8	M4 Violation of Modesty	1%	5
9	M9 Violation of Sympathy	0.9%	3
10	M10 Violation of Feeling reticence	0.9%	3
Total			325

Figure 7-7 - Ted's Strategy Use
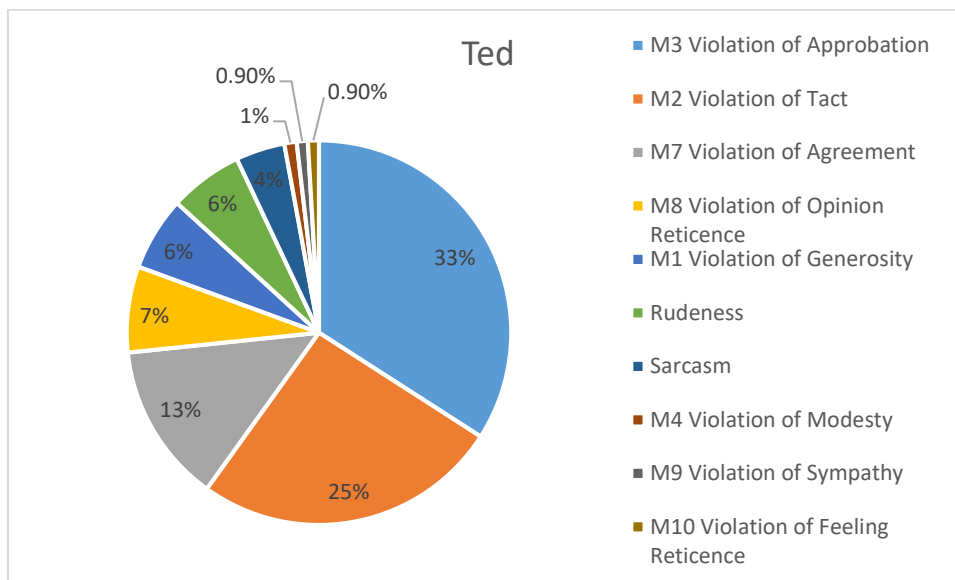
Ted makes use of the broadest range of impoliteness of the four protagonists – using 10 of the 13 strategies. It is possible that the broad nature of Ted's impoliteness limits the extent to which one 'type' of impoliteness is strongly associated with Ted. Indeed, in editorials (e.g. Harrison 2015), Ted's impoliteness is rarely mentioned. His three

most used strategies accounted for 74% of all of his impoliteness usage and consisted of violations of Approbation, Tact and Agreement. In the following sections, I'll explore these strategies further.

7.3.1   Ted's Violations of Approbation

Ted's most used primary strategy is the violation of Approbation, which accounts for 33% of his impoliteness. In violations of Approbation, the speaker gives an unfavourable value to the hearer's qualities through insulting, complaining or telling off (Leech 2014:221). Ted's violations of Approbation, which are often used in correcting Dougal's behaviour, enable us to interpret what he finds wrong with those around him and this can give us insight into his character.

In the extract below, Ted is keen to get Dougal and Father Jack away from the Craggy Island funfair so that he can be interviewed for the television program '*Faith of Our Fathers'* without their distracting influence.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Primary Leech Coding
FT 1.1	214	Ted	Now you're to go straight home, do you hear? I don't want to hear any more nonsense	M2 Violation of Tact
FT 1.1	215	Dougal	Everyone else is here!	
FT 1.1	216	Ted	Dougal you're a priest, you're supposed to show some decorum.	M3 Violation of Approbation

Ted's turn 216 is coded as a violation of Approbation because he tells Dougal off for his desire to remain at the funfair and additionally insults him by implying that Dougal is not showing the decorum appropriate to his role as a priest. From this we learn that Ted has a particular view of how priests are supposed to behave and he considers it important that he and the other priests behave accordingly. This confirms that Ted cares about their profession and perception in Craggy Island and confirms Ted's role as 'mentor' for Dougal. However, we also learn that Ted is deceptive; in criticising Dougal's interest in the fair, he hopes to get Dougal and Jack to leave with the covert intention that they won't ruin his television interview. His desire to be on television at all also indicates his ambitious nature and is somewhat hypocritical given that being famous is not a priestly ambition and his desire for fame and wealth also indicates a lack of decorum.

In another example, from episode 1.6, Ted and Dougal are sleeping in the crypt with Father Jack, who is mistakenly thought to be dead.

Episode	Turn	Speaker	Utterance	Primary Leech Coding
FT 1.6	251	Dougal	[…] Ted, I just wanted to ask you, do you believe in an afterlife?	
FT 1.6	252	Ted	Do I what?	
FT 1.6	253	Dougal	Do you believe in an afterlife?	
FT 1.6	254	Ted	Well Dougal, generally speaking, priests tend to have a very strong belief in the afterlife.	
FT 1.6	255	Dougal	Oh, I wish I had your faith, Ted.	M7 Violation of Agreement
FT 1.6	256	Ted	Dougal, how did you get into the church? Was it like *'collect twelve crisp packets and become a priest'*?	M3 Violation of Approbation

In turns 251, 253 and 255, Dougal implies that he does not believe in an afterlife. This is incongruous given that he is a Catholic priest and a core part of the church's teachings concern the afterlife. Ted's response in turn 256 calls into question Dougal's suitability for the church as well as calling into question exactly how it is that someone who does not have Christian beliefs was able to become a priest. In asking whether Dougal made his way into Catholicism through a crisp packet promotion, Ted implies that Dougal's suitability for the role is such that it appears he is good at being a priest as if he were selected for the role completely at random from the general public. This also references Walkers crisp packet promotions that were popular at the time. This qualifies as a violation of Approbation because it functions as an insult to Dougal and his selection for his profession. The humour in this scene comes not only from the impolite implication and the novel way in which Ted's criticism of Dougal is expressed but also in the absurd notion of a crisp manufacturer offering such a promotion giving entry into the Catholic priesthood.

As with the fairground example above, we learn from this exchange that Ted finds Dougal's unsuitability for the priesthood frustrating and he deems Dougal's ineptitude as worthy of criticism and correction. Thus, Ted must care, at least a small amount, about the Catholic faith or at least about keeping up appearances that he is a 'good' priest.

7.3.2 Ted's Violations of Tact

Violations of Tact were Ted's second most used primary strategy, accounting for 25% of his impolite utterances. Violations of Tact are easily equated with the Brown and Levinson concept of negative face threats in that they consist of orders or demands which impinge on the hearer's free will (Leech 2014:221). Violations of Tact can be seen as indicators of character's interpretations of their own power as they seek to order others about.

French and Raven's (1959) classic five bases of social power, which were elaborated by Raven in 1992, are a useful way into thinking about a character's power; they consist of:

1. **Reward power** - a powerful person has the ability to give positive outcomes as rewards
2. **Coercive power** - a powerful person has the ability to give out negative outcomes as punishments
3. **Expert power** – a powerful person has expert knowledge
4. **Legitimate power** - a powerful person has a legitimate claim to power based on role or circumstance
5. **Referent power** - a powerful person is aspired to and liked.
   (French and Raven 1959:155-165)

Using these bases of power in conceptualising Ted's relationship to the other characters, Ted emerges as perhaps the most powerful member of the parochial house. He has **reward** power over Jack, Dougal and Mrs Doyle as he can reward them with alcohol/toys/pay and requests for tea/a salary, respectively. He has **coercive** power over Dougal because he can make him do certain things (such as having a bath) and over Mrs Doyle as he can ask her to complete household tasks and Jack in that he can give him orders pertaining to his health (e.g. order him not to drink floor polish, order him to take his walk). Ted has **expert** power over Dougal, Jack and Mrs Doyle in that he has better understanding of the Catholic faith and what's going on in the Parish as well as a better grasp on the social world than they do. Ted has legitimate power over Dougal as a more experienced priest and mentor, he has legitimate power over Mrs Doyle as an ordained clergy member. He has no legitimate power over Jack as Jack has many more years in the priesthood than Ted. Ted has **referent** power over Dougal and Mrs Doyle as both seem positively disposed to him. Ted has no referent power over Jack as Jack clearly hates him.

Ted's power can be presented as such:

Ted's Power Bases over the Other Characters

Table 7-4 - Ted's Power Bases Over the Other Characters

	Dougal	Jack	Mrs Doyle
Reward Power	✓	✓	✓
Coercive Power	✓	✓	✓
Expert Power	✓	?	✓
Legitimate Power	✓	✓	✓
Referent Power	✓	✗	✓

Power, in general, legitimates the use of Tact violations. Thus, the fact that Ted makes a lot of use of Tact violations is in-keeping with his role as the most powerful person in the parochial house. This suggests Ted is a rational character as his impoliteness strategy use is in-keeping with the amount of power he has. Perhaps because Ted's level of power legitimates and his use of Tact violations, his Tact violations are not incongruous and thus not funny, perhaps explaining Ted's low success rate. Thus, it may be that Tact violations are funnier when they are not legitimated by the speaker or situation.

Whether legitimated or not, the way a character uses Tact violations can tell the audience more about the character by showing them the power they perceive themselves to have, the way in which they try to control others and the behaviours they deem to be worthy of correction or in need of manipulation.

As Ted has power over Dougal in all five of the power base forms (Reward, coercive, legitimate, expert and referent), it is perhaps unsurprising that he often uses this power to tell Dougal what to do. Many of Ted's Tact violations are directed a Dougal and constitute his attempts to get Dougal to behave appropriately for the role of parish priest, thus confirming Ted's role as 'mentor' and also a 'defender of the faith'.

In the extract below, television presenter Henry Sellers is staying as a guest at the parochial house. Ted has a vested interest in impressing Henry as he will be judging the priest talent show in which Ted, Dougal and Jack are performing.

FT 1.4	111	Henry	Hello there! Henry Sellers!
FT 1.4	112	Ted	Father Ted Crilly, it's a great honour to have you here, Mr. Sellers

FT 1.4	113	Henry	Oh, and it's lovely to be here too.
			Hello. Father... um?
FT 1.4	114	Ted	Oh sorry, this is father Dougal McGuire
FT 1.4	115	Ted	Dougal, say something to Mr. Sellers,
FT 1.4	116	Dougal	How old are you?
FT 1.4	117	Ted	Dougal! Don't be asking Mr. Sellers how old he is!
FT 1.4	118	Henry	Oh, that's quite alright, I'm 37, father.

Ted's turn in 117 constitutes a Tact violation as he explicitly orders Dougal not to ask Henry's age. This is a direct response to Dougal's turn in 116 in which he asks Henry his age. Though not a highly offensive transgression, it is considered taboo in Western culture to ask someone their age, particularly if they are female or a member of the theatrical community. In telling Dougal not to ask such a question, Ted is trying to prevent Henry from being offended and thus protect his opinion of them, which Ted hopes will help them to win the talent competition. In ordering Dougal not to ask such questions, Ted is acting somewhat like an embarrassed parent.

Another example of Ted using Tact violations to keep Dougal under control comes from episode 2.4. In this episode, Dougal has made friends with a young priest (Father 'Damo' Damien) who has been corrupting Dougal with teenage acts of rebellion such as staying out late, being disrespectful and smoking. In this scene, Dougal has returned home with his ear pierced.

FT 2.4	114	Ted	Dougal what's that?	
FT 2.4	115	Dougal	What? This? Oh, nothing.	
FT 2.4	116	Ted	Dougal, it's an earring!	
FT 2.4	117	Dougal	Oh right, it is all right, yeah.	
FT 2.4	118	Ted	Dougal, what's got into you? You can't go around wearing an earring!	M2 Violation of Tact

Ted's turn in 118 constitutes a Tact violation because he orders Dougal not to wear an earring. Again, Ted is acting as Dougal's mentor and again, he is doing so in order to protect the reputation and decorum that priests are expected to have. Thus, Ted's Tact

243

violation tells us about his relationship with Dougal as well as the fact that he cares about the priests' reputations.

Instructive Tact violations, such as those outlined above, represent the 'norm' of Ted's Tact violations. Exceptions to Ted's instructive Tact violations are deviant and thus foregrounded in the mind of the viewer. Though, as mentioned, Ted usually tries to keep control over others, there are some occasions when he spectacularly loses his temper and we see some of the pent-up aggression from living with such frustrating people being released.

In episode 2.5, 'A Song for Europe', Ted and Dougal decide to compete against the Rugged Island priests in writing a song for the Irish entry of the Eurovision Song Contest. Ted has declared that he and Dougal will not leave their bedroom until they have completed the song. There is then a 'smash cut' to Ted and Dougal in their bedroom several hours later – they look exhausted and dirty; the room is filled with smoke. Where a taboo term is 'bleeped', that is, the broadcaster has inserted a single tone to obscure the audio of a taboo word, the position of the 'bleep' is recorded in square brackets across the part of the word that is obscured.

Ep	Turn	Speaker	Line	Primary Leech	Laughter?
FT 2.5	100	Ted	Just play the f[beep]ing note	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes
FT 2.5	101	Dougal	The first one?		
FT 2.5	102	Ted	No, not the F[beep]ing first one! The F[beep]ing first one's already f[beep]ing **down!** Just play the F[beep]ing note you were f[beep]ing playing earlier. I'm playing the f[beep]ing first **one!** We have the f[beep]ing first **one!**	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes
FT 2.5	103	Dougal	So I...		
FT 2.5	104	Ted	Just play the f[beep]ing note you were f[beep]ing **playing,** the f[beep]ing thing you were just f[beep]ing **doing.** Play the f[beep]ing **note!**	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes

It is clear in turns 100, 102 and 104, that Ted has completely lost his temper. His utterances are coded as violations of Tact because they order Dougal to play a note on his keyboard. The utterances also have a secondary code of 'rudeness' because each utterance is boosted with the taboo term 'fuck' and its variants. It is Dougal's inability to play the correct note on the keyboard which has apparently infuriated Ted so. While Ted's Tact violations towards Dougal are often instructive and reminiscent of parent-child talk, in this example Ted is being maximally offensive by ordering Dougal with what to do and boosting those Tact violations with taboo words.

The contrast between Ted and Dougal's enthusiasm and calm at the start of the scene and Ted's obvious frustration after the 'smash cut' also provide humour as we can see just how far Ted has been pushed. The audience laughter response is also significant. In turn 100, the audience laugh for a significantly long time; 4.17 seconds. Though the taboo word in turn 100 is bleeped, it is done in such a way that the initial fricative [f] and word-final [ing] can be heard. This enables the audience to decode that Ted is likely saying 'fucking'. It is likely that the audience find Ted's fury amusing because it is so out of character and so extreme – being maximally boosted for offence. Ted losing his cool is humorous for the audience not only because it contrasts with expectations of priests, but because it contrasts with the usually fairly measured Ted's previous language and use of Tact violations. Dougal's repeated failure to play the note increases the humour.

Ted's use of boosted Tact violations continues in turn 102 where he uses 7 bleeped taboo words, generating audience laughter immediately after three of the bleeped words, totalling 3.97 seconds. Likewise, in turn 104, he uses 5 bleeped taboo words which also generated three bursts of audience laughter, with the final one lasting for 5.17 seconds. Clearly this deviation from Ted's usual instructive Tact violations and his use of bleeped expletives generates humour for the audience.

7.3.3 Ted's Violations of Agreement

Ted's third most used primary strategy was that of violations of Agreement. This strategy accounted for 13% of his impoliteness strategies with 44 instances in the data set. violations of Agreement are those in which the speaker "gives an unfavourable/low value to O's opinions" (Leech 2014:221) and they typically take the form of "disagreeing" and "contradicting" (Leech 2014:221).

While many of Ted's Agreement violations are directed at correcting Dougal, Ted also uses violations of Agreement to contradict other characters. In the following example from episode 2.1, Mrs Doyle enters with tea she intends to offer to the priests.

FT 2.1	22	Mrs Doyle	It doesn't matter what day it is, Father, there's always time for a nice cup of **tea.** Sure, didn't our Lord himself on the cross pause for a nice cup of tea before giving himself up for the world?		Yes	0.01.37
FT 2.1	23	Ted	No, he didn't, Mrs Doyle!	M7 Violation of Agreement	Yes	0.01.10
FT 2.1	24	Mrs Doyle	Well, whatever equivalent they had for tea in those days - cake or **whatever.** And speaking of cake, I have **cake.**		Yes	0.01.59

Mrs Doyle's claim in turn 22 that Jesus stopped mid-crucifixion to have a cup of tea is patently erroneous to anyone with a knowledge of basic Christian lore surrounding the events of Jesus' crucifixion, an awareness of the development of tea and its adoption into western culture, or an understanding of the torture of crucifixion. In turn 23, Ted contradicts her by positing that Jesus in fact did not stop for a cup of tea while dying on the cross and thus this constitutes a violation of Agreement.

Mrs Doyle, however, is unfazed by this disagreement from Ted and appears to presume that his contradiction is with the notion that cups of tea would be found in Jerusalem around 30-40AD. As such, Mrs Doyle's correction regards what was served, rather than the concept that any refreshments would be served to a torture victim midway through their execution. As such Mrs Doyle reveals she has no problems embellishing on the accounts of Jesus' death found in scripture.

From this small interchange we learn the following:

1) Mrs Doyle's tea obsession leaks into her understanding of Christianity
2) Ted is willing to defend this crucial part of his faith and sees it as important to correct these patently erroneous claims about Jesus
3) Ted must, therefore, be at least in some ways a believing Christian or at least care about his parishioners having an accurate understanding of biblical stories
4) Mrs Doyle doesn't learn anything from Ted's reprimand except to alter her unlikely story of Jesus enjoying a snack during his crucifixion to a different type of refreshment
5) As such, Ted fails in trying to amend her false beliefs about Jesus, which suggests he is not very successful at being a priest.

Thus, not only are the Agreement violations amusing, they also teach us about the characters in the exchange. The audience find this exchange amusing, with each turn triggering audience laughter.

7.4 DOUGAL

Dougal is a priest in his mid-twenties and Ted's protégée. Though Dougal is often confused by simple concepts, such as the relationship between size and distance and whether mythological creatures exist, he often accidentally makes rather scathing criticisms of his religion. Thus, Dougal's character can be paradoxically separated into two different personas: Dougal the idiot and Dougal the atheist philosopher.

The paradox that the unintelligent Dougal comes out with highly critical observations of Catholicism could be argued to represent a satirical message on the part of the series' authors: that even an idiot like Dougal can see the flaws in religion. This duality in Dougal's character is noted by many reviewers and fans of the show:

> *Father Ted* came at a time when [it was] becoming very apparent this veil [of Catholic influence] was lifting, and people were starting to question the church, and 'seeing through it'. And the vehicle for that? Dougal. The irony of Dougal is that although he was the stupid one… he was actually the wisest of them all.

> (Nugent cited in Ryan 2015, n.p).

It is likely that the incongruity between these two character traits (stupidity and insightful atheist critique) residing in one individual is a source of humour. Likewise, Will Gore, a writer for the *Catholic Herald* argues that the way in which the priests of Craggy Island were spectacularly wrong for the job (each in different ways) reflected church practices at the time, "The fact that Ted, Dougal and Jack are so unsuitable for the priesthood might be viewed as a prescient comment on how so many young Irish men entered the seminary whether or not they were cut out for it or had a genuine vocation" (Gore 2015:np). There is certainly a comment on the Church in that Dougal has managed to be ordained a priest without ever really believing in its teachings and what's more, he's continued in his career and never been found out.

Table 7-9 and figure 7-8 below show the distribution of Dougal's impoliteness.

Table 7-5 - Dougal's Strategy Use

Dougal	Percentage of All Strategies (119)
M3 Violation of Approbation	39%
M7 Violation of Agreement	21%
M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	15%
M2 Violation of Tact	10%
M1 Violation of Generosity	4%
Sarcasm	3%
M9 Violation of Sympathy	2%
Rudeness	2%
M4 Violation of Modesty	0.8%
M5 Violation of Obligation to O	0
M6 Violation of Obligation to S	0
M10 Violation of Feeling reticence	0
Banter	0

Figure 7-8 - Dougal's Strategy Use
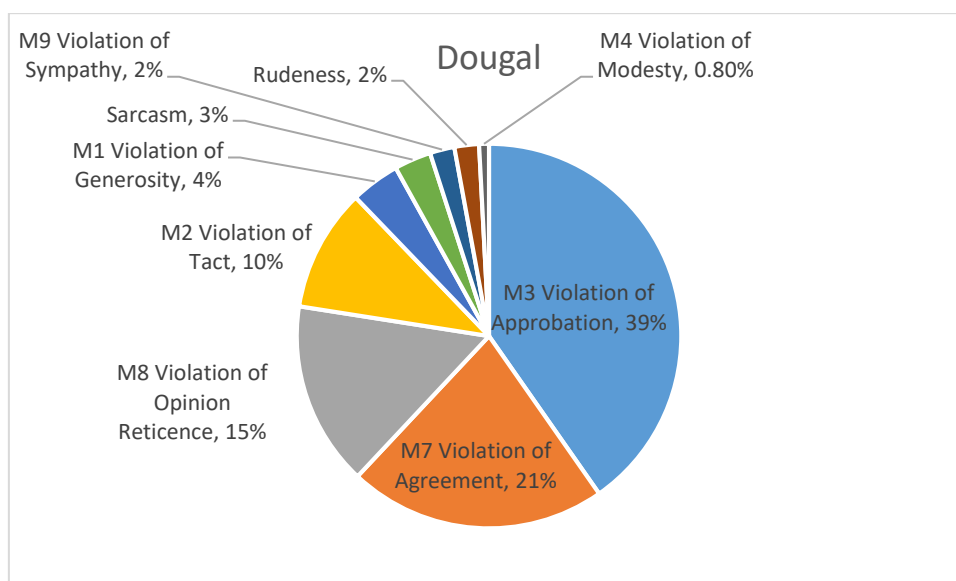
Dougal's three most used strategies account for 75% of all of his impolite utterances and are the violations of Approbation, Agreement and Opinion reticence. Each of these three strategies can tell us about Dougal's character and in following three next sections, I'll explore Dougal's most used impoliteness strategies in greater detail.

7.4.1   Dougal's Violations of Approbation

Dougal's most used primary strategy was the violation of Approbation, which accounted for 39% of his impolite utterances. Violations of Approbation are utterances that "give an unfavourable value to O's qualities" (Leech 2014:221). They often consist of the speech acts of "insulting, complaining or telling off".

The majority of Dougal's Approbation violations are insults, often those which appear to be communicated without malice, but in ignorance of the addressee's positive face wants. An example of this comes from episode 1.1. In this episode, Ted and Dougal are discussing fame. Unbeknownst to Dougal, Ted has arranged a television interview for himself on TV show Faith of Our Fathers and is very excited about it.

FT 1.1	104	Dougal	Did you ever want to get into television yourself, Ted?		No	
FT 1.1	105	Ted	Ah no I wouldn't be interested in that kind of thing really		Yes	0.01.29
FT 1.1	106	Dougal	I don't think you'd be much good at it actually	M3 Violation of Approbation	Yes	0.01.41
FT 1.1	107	Ted	What? Why not?		No	
FT 1.1	108	Dougal	Well you're a bit serious aren't you, and your eyes are a bit **crossed.**...yeah, they're a bit wonky, Ted. The cameras can pick that up you **know.**	M3 Violation of Approbation	Yes	0.01.81
FT 1.1	109	Ted	I am not cross-eyed Dougal	Violation of Agreement	No	
FT 1.1	110	Dougal	You are a bit, now, **Ted,** sure half the time I don't know if you're talking to me or father **Jack.**	M3 Violation of Approbation	Yes	0.00.97

Ted is, of course, lying when he says that he doesn't think he'd be good on television, as he has been very excited about his interview and often has fantasies about what life will be like when he is rich and famous. His utterance in turn 105 is an example of false modesty, where he is hoping that Dougal will contradict him and praise his positive aspects. Dougal, not understanding that it is false Modesty actually works to agree and support Ted's proposition and comes up with evidence to support the idea. In Dougal's own way, he is trying to be supportive, but in fact his utterances in turns 106, 108 and 110 constitute violations of Approbation because they insult Ted's aptitude for work on television as well as his personality (that he is too serious for television) and his physical appearance (in that his eyes are wonky). Dougal doesn't appear to read the cues from Ted in turn 109 that Ted disagrees with his assessment of Ted's cross eyes and continues in turn 110 to provide further evidence as to Ted's apparent cross-eyed-ness.

It's ironic that in uttering these insults, Dougal is trying to support Ted (albeit Ted's false modesty). This gives Dougal's utterances a) a less 'harsh' sting to them as they appear to be misguided supportive statements and b) further incongruity because in trying to help Ted, Dougal is unknowingly upsetting him. Thus, from this, we learn that Dougal is unable to identify false Modesty which suggests a lack of social awareness and that he has good intentions, even though he is offending Ted.

7.4.2 Dougal's Violations of Agreement

Violations of Agreement were Dougal's second most used primary strategy and made up 21% of Dougal's impoliteness usage. As discussed above, the things a character disagrees with another about can give us insight into their opinions and beliefs. Dougal's violations of Agreement are often in relation to ecumenical matters and are used to show the incongruity of this particular priest's atheist beliefs.

In the extract below, taken from episode 1.1, Ted and Dougal are at Funland, the Craggy Island fair.

FT 1.1	227	Dougal	Ted look! There's a fortune teller, come on we'll have one go in there	
FT 1.1	228	Ted	Don't waste your money on that stuff, Dougal	M1 Violation of Generosity
FT 1.1	229	Dougal	Come on, Ted, you never know there might be something in it	
FT 1.1	230	Ted	It's rubbish, how can anybody believe any of that sort of nonsense?	M3 Violation of Approbation
FT 1.1	231	Dougal	Come on Ted, it's no more peculiar than that stuff we learned in the seminary, heaven and hell and everlasting life and all that type of **thing.** You're not meant to take it seriously, Ted	M7 Violation of Agreement
FT 1.1	232	Ted	Dougal, you are so too meant to take it seriously!	M3 Violation of Approbation
FT 1.1	233	Dougal	Are ya?	
FT 1.1	234	Ted	Yes!	
FT 1.1	235	Dougal	What heaven and hell and everlasting life?	M7 Violation of Agreement
FT 1.1	236	Ted	Yes! Of course!	

Image 7-1 - Dougal's facial reaction to Ted's turn 236

In the exchange above, Ted posits that fortune telling is nonsense. Dougal disagrees with him and proposes that the claims made by fortune tellers are no less outlandish than the things they were taught in the seminary. This disagreement highlights that during his time in the seminary, Dougal did not take the things he was learning seriously and as such does not now have a strong belief in heaven, hell or everlasting life, which are so important to the Catholic faith. When Ted reprimands him with his own violation of Agreement and clarifies that Dougal was meant to take the seminary teachings seriously, Dougal is surprised and when he specifically questions whether heaven and hell are meant to be taken seriously and Ted confirms that they are, Dougal responds with a smile that appears as though he is stifling a giggle. Through this interchange, we learn a lot about Dougal – that he places the teachings of his own faith on the same credibility as circus-style fortune telling.

Dougal's amazement at Ted's claim that Catholicism is meant to be taken seriously further compounds Dougal's atheism. What we have here, then, is strong evidence that Dougal has become a priest despite not believing in heaven, hell or everlasting life, the central tenets of the faith and that he has been labouring under the misapprehension that the teachings of the church are meant to be taken with a pinch of salt. Here, Dougal's duality is evidenced. He doubts the central Christian teachings (which contributes to his atheist persona) and yet he has chosen a profession entirely reliant on his commitment to these teachings (which contributes to his idiot persona). And it is his impoliteness here, where he contradicts and laughs at Ted, that helps to reveal these two contrasting personality points.

We also learn about Ted here in that he steadfastly defends the seriousness with which church is meant to be taken. From this, we can see that Ted really does believe in God and experienced the seminary taking the teachings seriously and sees it as important to defend. This creates an interesting dichotomy where the until-this-point deceptive and manipulative Ted, who has lied to try to meet his own desire for fame, reveals himself to be committed to the concepts of the resurrection and heaven. Also, the until-this-point idiot Dougal is fundamentally questioning the millennia-old teachings to which he himself is supposed to be dedicated. As characters, then, they become more complex.

7.4.3 Dougal's Violations of Opinion reticence

Violations of Opinion reticence occur when speakers give a "favourable/high value to S's [their] opinions" and take the form of "Being opinionated" (Leech 2014:221). Opinion reticence violations accounted for 15% of Dougal's primary impoliteness strategies and were his third most used strategy. In fact, Dougal had the highest use of Opinion reticence out of the main *Father Ted* cast. A character's violation of Opinion reticence can tell the audience about the deep-seated opinions a character has, which in turn can indicate the type of person they are. Of course, given that Dougal's violations of Opinion reticence indicate the type of person he is, they are used to show both his idiot and his atheist sides to his character.

In the example below, Dougal's idiotic personality is highlighted through his violation of Opinion reticence. The extract is taken from episode 3.2, in which Ted has been asked by a local farmer to help an unhappy sheep who is due to appear in a sheep competition. At the same time, there have been rumours of a beast living on the moors of Craggy Island. There have been reported sightings of it and there have been howls heard outside the parochial house at night.

FT 3.2	71	Ted	God, Dougal, you should have seen him, he's just a shadow of a sheep		Yes	0.01.78
FT 3.2	72	Dougal	I'm not surprised Ted, if I was a sheep, I'd be watching my back right now.		Yes	0.02.17
FT 3.2	73	Ted	Why?			

FT 3.2	74	Dougal	Because of the beast. They say it's as big as four cats and it's got a retractable leg so's it can leap up at you **better,** and do you know what Ted? It lights up at **night,** and it's got four ears, two of them are for listening and the other two are kind of, back up **ears** and its claws are as big as cups, and for some reason it's got a tremendous fear of **stamps.** Mrs Doyle was telling me that it's got magnets on its **tail** so if you're made of metal it can attach itself to you and instead of a mouth, it's got four **arses.**	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	Yes	0.02.50
FT 3.2	75	Ted	Dougal! It's a legend, it doesn't exist!	M7 Violation of Agreement		
FT 3.2	76	Dougal	Right Ted, the way the Phantom of the Opera doesn't exist?	Sarcasm	Yes	0.00.93

The beast described by Dougal in turn 74 is patently ridiculous. The outrageous and incongruous descriptions of the beast (for example that its claw size is measured in cups) contribute to the humour, but also show that Dougal is naïve enough to believe that such a creature exists in the first place. Furthermore, in turn 76, Dougal uses sarcasm to scoff at Ted for not believing in the beast and likening it to Ted's lack of belief in the existence of the Phantom of the Opera (a fictional character from an Andrew Lloyd-Weber musical). That Dougal believes both this absurd (and physically unlikely) beast *and* the Phantom of the Opera to be real highlights his stupidity.

I'll now look at an example of Dougal's violation of Opinion reticence that shows him to be an atheist. The extract below comes from episode 2.3 in which three Bishops, O'Neill, Facks and Jordan are staying at the parochial house in order to upgrade the nearby Holy Stone of Clonrichert to a 'Class 2 Relic'. Father O'Neill has been struggling with his faith and as they are walking home after the upgrading ceremony, he takes Dougal to one side to ask in turn 230 whether Dougal has any doubts about his faith.

FT 2.3	230	O'Neill	So, Father, do you ever have any doubts about the religious life? Is your faith ever tested? Anything you've been worried about? Any doubts you've been having about any aspects of belief? Anything like that?			
FT 2.3	231	Dougal	Well you know the way God made us all right? And er, he's looking down at us from heaven and everything? And then his son came down and saved everyone and all that?			
FT 2.3	232	O'Neill	Yes			
FT 2.3	233	Dougal	And when we die, we're all going to go to heaven…			
FT 2.3	234	O'Neill	Yes, what about it?			
FT 2.3	235	Dougal	Well, that's the bit I have trouble with.	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	Yes	0.04.75

Dougal's reply could be considered a 'garden path' joke in which the hearer (and audience) is led through a notably large set-up before the punch line is revealed. We might at first think that Dougal's leading turns in 231 and 233 which describe the central tenets of the Christian doctrine will take us to some very specific element of religion that he has a problem with, but in fact the punch line reveals that every element of religion he has listed, he has a problem with. His turn 235 thus constitutes a violation of Opinion reticence because he has communicated his troubles with believing the central parts of the Catholic faith, in particular, to a man who is struggling with his own. Dougal is not only brutally honest despite Ted trying to keep the Bishops' visit trouble-free, but he displays overt doubt of the existence of God, the narrative of Jesus' life and the concept of life after death. This supports Dougal's atheist identity in that he unashamedly discusses his doubts about the church, which implies he has considered this from a critical perspective and has the ability to question information and judge its veracity. On the other hand, we must consider that to so brazenly doubt the faith to a high-ranking Bishop, Dougal must at least be a little bit stupid as he appears to fear no consequences about 'outing' himself as a non-believer.

In an earlier episode, Dougal also doubts the core beliefs of his own faith. At the end of episode 1.1, Dougal is mistaken for Ted by the TV production company and is interviewed for the programme *Faith of Our Fathers*. In the extract below, Ted, Dougal, Jack and Mrs Doyle are watching Dougal's interview on the television – beneath Dougal, text appears identifying him as Ted Crilly.

FT 1.1	281	Dougal	There I am, look it's me, I'm on the telly!
FT 1.1	282	Dougal (on TV)	So, God, does he really exist? Who knows! I don't **know,** I mean personally I don't even believe in organised **religion**

Dougal's turn in 282, furthers his atheist characterisation by explicitly questioning the existence of God and positing the surprising claim that Dougal doesn't believe in organised religion, despite working within one of the largest organised religions in the world. Importantly, Dougal is being identified as Ted and so this brazen violation of Opinion reticence has the power to damage Ted's reputation within and without the religious community.

From Dougal's violations of Opinion reticence, we learn a lot about his beliefs which shape the type of person he is. We are confronted with a complex character who seems to simultaneously hold the personality traits of an idiot and those of a critical thinker. It is possible that through Dougal's claim that he doesn't believe in organised religion (which implies that he has thought critically about an established organisation – which requires critical thinking skills and at least a certain amount of intelligence) we reveal another level of Dougal's idiocy – for Dougal to be an atheist and yet apparently want to work within a highly-organised religion he must be an idiot.
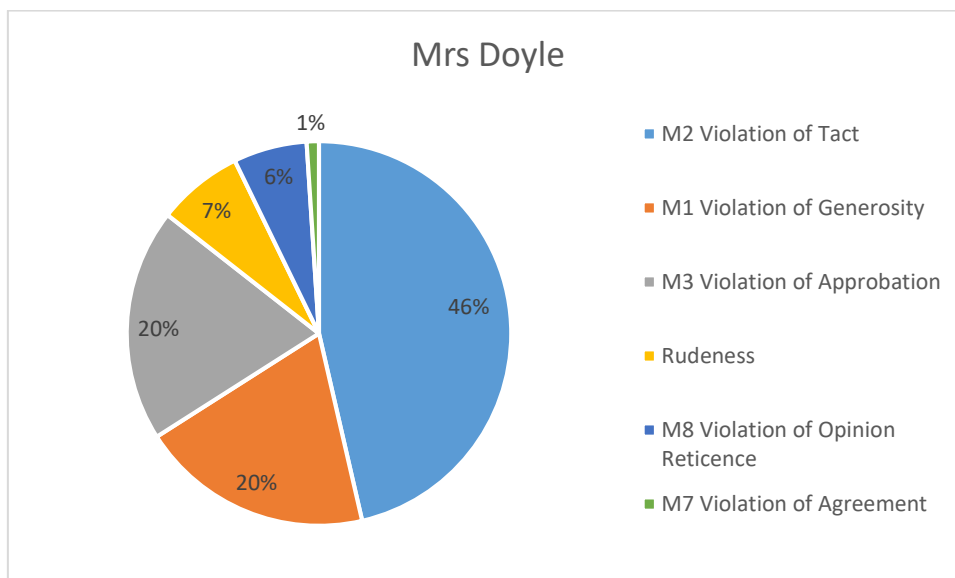
7.5 MRS DOYLE

Mrs Doyle is a tea lady and housekeeper who cleans and cooks for the priests. She's completely obsessed with tea "I love the whole tea making thing, you know, the playful splash of the tea as it hits the bottom of the cup, the thrill of adding the milk […]" (*Father Ted* 2.11). Mrs Doyle's apparent obsession with ensuring that the priests and their visitors are catered for means she often forces food and drink on unwilling recipients. Though present in every episode, Mrs Doyle speaks quite rarely, having 252 utterances

in the data set and an average of 14 utterances per episode. 26% of her utterances constituted impoliteness. Table 7-10 and figure 7-9 below show the distribution of Mrs Doyle's strategy use:

Table 7-6 - Mrs Doyle's Strategy Use

#	Mrs Doyle	Percentage of All Strategies	Number of Instances
1	M2 Violation of Tact	45%	30
2	M1 Violation of Generosity	19%	13
=2	M3 Violation of Approbation	19%	13
4	Rudeness	7%	5
5	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	6%	4
6	M7 Violation of Agreement	1%	1
7	M4 Violation of Modesty	0	0
8	M5 Violation of Obligation to O	0	0
9	M6 Violation of Obligation to S	0	0
10	M9 Violation of Sympathy	0	0
11	M10 Violation of Feeling reticence	0	0
12	Sarcasm	0	0
13	Banter	0	0

Figure 7-9 - Mrs Doyle's Strategy Use

Of the four protagonists, Mrs Doyle makes use of the fewest number of strategies – using only 6 of the 13 Leech strategies. Additionally, she has a high concentration of usage of her most used strategy – that of violations of Tact, which accounted for 45% of her impoliteness usage. Indeed, her top three strategies (Tact and Generosity were tied for second place) account for 83% of her impoliteness use. Of all the protagonists, Mrs Doyle's most used strategy accounts for the highest percentage of her overall impolite utterances. That is, no other character shows such a strong preference for one strategy. Thus, Mrs Doyle's clear preference for Tact violations give her a recognisable 'impoliteness style' that is likely to be picked up by the audience.

Indeed, when Mrs Doyle is described in the press, it is often her Tact violations that are referenced; she is described as "the sandwich-making, tea-foisting, busybody" whose character is remembered for her "aggressive hospitality" (Gibley 2015:np). She is described as "eccentric, pushy and loveable" (Lindsay 2015 n.p), as "a Miss Havisham study in domestic mania" (Woods 2015:np) and a "woman whose life revolves around feeding others and fussing over them" (McLynn quoted in Woods 2015:n.p). Thus, Mrs Doyle's Tact violations, constitute important contributions to Mrs Doyle's character that are indeed picked up on by audiences and used in interpreting her character. Given the importance of Tact violations to Mrs Doyle's character, I now explore these in greater detail.

7.5.1 Mrs Doyle's Violations of Tact

In the exploration of Ted's character, I noted that Tact violations have inherent in them the assumption that the speaker must have the relevant power over their hearer to order them to do/not do something. I noted that Ted had power over the other three protagonists (according to French and Raven's [1959] bases of power), meaning his Tact violations were rational as his use of Tact violations matched his social power status. Mrs Doyle, however, as the housekeeper has a lot less social power than Ted. Table 7-11 below shows Mrs Doyle's power over the other characters.

Table 7-7 - Mrs Doyle's Power Bases Over the Other Characters

Mrs Doyle's Power over Other Characters			
	Dougal	Jack	Ted
Reward Power	✓	✓	✓
Coercive Power	✓	✓	✓
Expert Power	✗	✗	✗
Legitimate Power	✗	✗	✗
Referent Power	✗	✗	✗

As the table above indicates, Mrs Doyle has reward and coercive power over the priests in that she can reward them with refreshments, but also can punish them by the removal of refreshments. However, Mrs Doyle doesn't have the other forms of power; she has no expert knowledge not available to the priests, she doesn't have power bestowed upon her by her role, and she is not particularly aspired to or liked (Jack clearly despises her, Dougal believes her not to 'count' as a woman, Ted clearly finds her irritating). For the most part, then, her excessive use of Tact violations when she does not have the power to support them signal to the audience that she is an irrational individual and may be one of the incongruous sources of humour for the audience.

7.5.1.1   A Cup of Tea

In the example below, Mrs Doyle's first appearance in the series sees her entering with a tea tray:

FT 1.1	68	Mrs Doyle	[…] Now then, who's for tea?		No	
FT 1.1	69	Dougal	Me please, Mrs Doyle		No	
FT 1.1	70	Jack	Tea? Feck!	Rudeness	Yes	0.02.66
FT 1.1	71	Ted	I'm fine, Mrs Doyle		No	
FT 1.1	72	Mrs Doyle	You won't have a cup?		No	

FT 1.1	73	Ted	Ah no thanks Mrs. Doyle I won't have a cup		No	
FT 1.1	74	Mrs Doyle	Are you sure now? It's hot!		Yes	0.00.79
FT 1.1	75	Ted	No, I'm not in the mood, thanks		No	
FT 1.1	76	Mrs Doyle	Alright so...ah go on, would you not have a drop?	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.00.97
FT 1.1	77	Ted	No thanks		No	
FT 1.1	78	Mrs Doyle	Just a little cup	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.00.47
FT 1.1	79	Ted	No, really		No	
FT 1.1	80	Mrs Doyle	I tell you what, father, I'll pour a cup for you anyway	M2 Violation of Tact	No	

All of the examples of Mrs Doyle's Tact violations that I will discuss occur in the context of her acting as host/caterer for her interlocutors in which she offers a food or beverage to her hearer. By offering something, a benefactor such as Mrs Doyle puts their "positive face at risk. Therefore, offer acceptance is preferred, while refusals are dispreferred" (Schneider 1999:294). Hosts normally seek to maximise the benefit to their guests (Schneider 1999:295) and guests to minimise the cost to their host. Offer sequences in discourse involve a minimum of two moves – an offer and an acceptance between a benefactor and beneficiary, respectively (Schneider 1999:294). However, those who are offered something may avoid accepting immediately as they "may appear greedy if they accept at once" (Schneider 1999:294). As such, "many cultures have developed polite norms according to which an offer must never be accepted in the first reaction to it" (Schneider 1999:294), and then in subsequent offers, the beneficiary may accept. These first-response refusals are known as "ritual refusals" (ibid.295). Schneider claims that the Irish culture is one in which initial offers ought to be refused. He states "in Ireland, offer sequences minimally consist of four moves, not just two" (1999:294). This position was supported in Barron's (2003) study of offer-refusal exchanges, which found that ritual re-offers occurred in Irish English, but not German. In later work, however, Barron (2005:150) found that ritual re-offers occurred as much in English culture as in Irish culture. Interestingly, though, she found that Irish informants saw reoffering as a face-threatening act in situations where the social distance was high and the onus to reoffer was low (ibid. 150). Perhaps Linehan and Mathew's use of Mrs Doyle's endless reoffers

is a reflection of an Irish perception of reoffers as face-threatening, particularly in scenes where Mrs Doyle is repeatedly offering refreshments to outsiders. Similarly, Mrs Doyle's offer renewals might also be an authorial exaggeration against an (unsubstantiated in empirical research) perceived overuse of offer renewals in Irish English, as espoused by Schneider (1999) and, for example, Hayes' Irish conversation guide ([1997]2012).

In this extract, I am most interested in Mrs Doyle's interaction with Ted. Following Mrs Doyle's offer, Ted politely refuses the offer of a cup of tea. Over the five subsequent turns, Mrs Doyle tries to convince him to have a cup of tea. The offer sequence is presented below:

Table 7-8 - Mrs Doyle's Cup of Tea Offers

Move 1	Offer	Mrs Doyle	Now then, who's for tea?
Move 2	Refusal	Ted	I'm fine, Mrs Doyle
Move 3	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	You won't have a cup?
Move 4	Refusal	Ted	Ah no thanks Mrs. Doyle I won't have a cup
Move 5	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Are you sure now? It's hot!
Move 6	Refusal	Ted	No, I'm not in the mood, thanks
Move 7	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Alright so...ah go on, would you not have a drop?
Move 8	Refusal	Ted	No thanks
Move 9	Offer Renewal (+Diminutive)	Mrs Doyle	Just a little cup
Move 10	Refusal	Ted	No, really
Move 11	Offer Enforcement	Mrs Doyle	I tell you what, father, I'll pour a cup for you anyway

The offer sequence between Ted and Mrs Doyle (excluding Jack and Dougal's responses) consists of a total of 11 moves. From Mrs Doyle, there is 1 initial offer, 4 offer renewals and then 1 offer enforcement in which she goes against Ted's wishes and pours the tea anyway. From Ted, there are 5 refusals. If we were taking his first refusal to be a 'ritual refusal' based on Schneider's claim that Irish culture tends to have a ritual refusal, then that means that 4 refusals remain. The standard processing for offer refusals is that offer refusals following an initial 'ritual refusal' at turn 2 "can be considered

genuine refusals" (Schneider 1999:196). Thus, from Ted there are at least 4 genuine refusals.

Schneider states that offer renewals that continue in move 5 onwards "can be considered pressing", which "is frowned on or regarded as impolite" in certain cultures (1999:295). Thus, over these 11 moves, Mrs Doyle is consistently pressing, until such time as she decides to 'override' Ted's repeated refusals and pour him some tea anyway – a remarkable act considering that Ted is her employer and has given four refusals. It is possible that this offer sequence could have gone on indefinitely had Mrs Doyle not decided to just go ahead and do what she wants anyway. Schneider notes that "hosts normally follow the maxim 'maximise benefit to other' (Leech's Tact maxim). What is happening here is the opposite of that – As Ted has refused the tea, it is not to his benefit to give him some. Mrs Doyle does so anyway, thus she contravenes what we expect to happen and this generates incongruity.

When Ted makes his fourth offer rejection in turn 77, Mrs Doyle uses a diminutive in order to help her persuade Ted. Diminutives "denote smallness" (Schneider 1999:293) and are found in both acceptances and offers. In move 9, Mrs Doyle suggests that Ted have "just a little cup". Here she is minimising the size of the tea with 'just' and 'little'. A diminutive can be used in an offer in order to make it easier for the beneficiary to accept. By diminishing the cost to herself, Mrs Doyle, as the benefactor "reduces the social risk for the beneficiary" who presumably will want to minimise the cost to their host. Thus, a diminutive like this makes "it easier" for Ted to accept (Schneider 1999:296). However, Schneider's concept of diminutives rests on the assumption that the beneficiary *wants* the thing they are being offered. In this case, Ted does not want what he's being offered and so this diminutive actually reduces the *imposition* that Mrs Doyle is burdening him with, we might conjecture that Mrs Doyle reasons the smaller the cup, the less unwanted tea he has to drink.

The Tact violations Mrs Doyle uses in her repeated offer renewals can be described as constituting coercive impoliteness, which is "a means of enforcing particular actions" (Culpeper 2011:233) involving "coercive action that is not in the interest of the target" (Culpeper 2011:226). Culpeper notes that "coercive impoliteness is more likely to occur in situations where there is an imbalance of social structural power" (Culpeper 2011:227) in which the coercer has more power than the coercee. Though Mrs Doyle's relationships with the priests *are* asymmetrical, they are asymmetrical in the wrong way, with Mrs Doyle as the least powerful participant who is (despite her lack of power) trying to coerce

people more powerful than she. It seems Mrs Doyle does not realise, or does not care, that there is a power imbalance in the majority of her offer-sequence interactions and this suggests she is irrational, or at least unconventional.

Tedeschi and Felson state that in coercive action, "actors […] might value the target's compliance because they believe it will lead to tangible benefits." (1994:168). Mrs Doyle clearly believes the cup of tea is a benefit all her guests should partake of. Indeed, she cares more about gaining compliance than meeting the desires of her hearer. Harrison proposes that "of all the characters in *Ted*, Mrs Doyle is perhaps the most universal – most of us have an auntie who would greet the risen Christ himself with a cup of tea and a pyramid of sandwiches, the ghost of rationing whispering in her ear" (Harrison 2015:n.p). Co-writers Linehan and Mathews, note that Mrs Doyle developed "into a psychotically hospitable character." (1999:36). Thus, it is through these Tact violations that Mrs Doyle's character is communicated.

There is a paradox to Mrs Doyle in that the more she tries to cater for people, the more she alienates and inconveniences them. Jack's reaction to Mrs Doyle in the pilot episode (discussed above and below) of screaming 'feck off' gains some context in these scenes as we might come to understand that his extreme reactions to her are based on historical interactions in which she has forced him to accept tea he does not want.

7.5.1.2 A Drop of Sherry

Another example of Mrs Doyle's use of Tact violations comes from episode 1.4. Mrs Doyle is tending to Henry Sellers, an ex-BBC television presenter staying at the house who is (unknown to the characters and audience/viewers) a teetotal alcoholic.

FT 1.4	171	Mrs Doyle	Time for a little nightcap! Oh, you're running out of sandwiches! I'll bring you some more.		Yes	0.01.75
FT 1.4	172	Henry	I won't have a sherry thank you			
FT 1.4	173	Mrs Doyle	Ah, don't be silly now, of course you will	M2 Violation of Tact		
FT 1.4	174	Henry	No no. No really, I shouldn't			
FT 1.4	175	Mrs Doyle	Go on, it'll help you sleep	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.00.62

FT 1.4	176	Henry	No, it's not a good idea.			
FT 1.4	177	Mrs Doyle	Just a little drop, just a teeny tiny bit	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.01.32
FT 1.4	178	Ted	The day a little bit of sherry hurts anyone is the day Ireland doesn't win the Eurovision song contest!		Yes	0.02.87
FT 1.4	179	Mrs Doyle	Go on	M2 Violation of Tact		
FT 1.4	180	Henry	No no no, really, I shouldn't			
FT 1.4	181	Mrs Doyle	Ah go on go on go on	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.00.94
FT 1.4	182	Ted	Go on... go on	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.01.00
FT 1.4	183	Mrs Doyle	Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on	M2 Violation of Tact		
FT 1.4	184	Henry	No seriously, I can't			
FT 1.4	185	Mrs Doyle	Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on **Go on** Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on **GO ON!**	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.01.09
Smash cut to later, Henry is very drunk and everyone is hiding behind the sofa as he smashes glasses and damages furniture.						
FT 1.4	186	Henry	Oh, what a shower of bastards!	M3 Violation of Approbation	Yes	0.02.28
FT 1.4	187	Dunne	Oh lord Ted, why did you give him a drink?			
FT 1.4	188	Ted	I didn't know this would happen			

In this example, Mrs Doyle offers Henry sherry and he politely declines. That Henry doesn't simply tell her his reason for abstaining suggests that he wishes to keep his addiction a secret. Over the next seven turns, Mrs Doyle engages in Tact violations using various different strategies to try to get Henry to have some sherry and Ted also joins in. The offer sequence is displayed below:

Table 7-9 - Mrs Doyle's Offer of Sherry

Move 1	Offer	Mrs Doyle	Time for a little nightcap! Oh, you're running out of sandwiches! I'll bring you some more.
Move 2	Refusal	Henry	I won't have a sherry thank you
Move 3	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Ah, don't be silly now, of course you will
Move 4	Refusal	Henry	No no. No really, I shouldn't
Move 5	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Go on, it'll help you sleep
Move 6	Refusal	Henry	No, it's not a good idea.
Move 7	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Just a little drop, just a teeny tiny bit
Move 8	Offer Renewal	Ted	The day a little bit of sherry hurts anyone is the day Ireland doesn't win the Eurovision song contest!
Move 9	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Go on
Move 10	Refusal	Henry	No no no, really, I shouldn't
Move 11	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Ah go on go on go on
Move 12	Offer Renewal	Ted	Go on... go on
Move 13	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on
Move 14	Refusal	Henry	No seriously, I can't
Move 15	Offer Renewal	Mrs Doyle	Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on **Go on** Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on **GO ON!**
The scene ends here, but the next scene begins with Henry drunk – so we can assume that he did accept – though we can't know how many more offer renewals it took to get Henry to accept.			

In this exchange, Mrs Doyle makes 1 initial offer and a subsequent 7 offer renewals. Bearing in mind that Schneider proposes that an offer renewal following the first two offers can be considered pressing, this exchange features some extreme pressing from Mrs Doyle. In addition to Mrs Doyle's 7 offer renewals, Ted also joins in the offering, making 2 offer renewals in support of Mrs Doyle's original offer. Ted is trying maximise the benefit to Henry in having him enjoy some sherry as he wants to impress Henry in order to help Ted's odds in the upcoming priest talent show, of which Henry is the judge. When Ted joins in, suggesting that sherry is as likely to harm Henry as Ireland is to not win the Eurovision Song contest (Ireland had won the contest in 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1996), this is ironic because for a recovering alcoholic, alcohol can be very harmful. Ted

then also joins in the repeating of 'go on' so that Henry faces a wall of encouragement and orders to drink alcohol; a trying experience for a recovering addict.

Henry gives 1 initial refusal which, though it is a genuine refusal, could be interpreted by Mrs Doyle as a ritual refusal, and a subsequent 4 additional refusals in which he is quite clear about his desire not to consume alcohol. It is important for the humour of the subsequent scene in which Henry is very drunk, that the audience do not know that he is an alcoholic. However, on re-viewing with this information in mind, Henry alludes to there being consequences to his drinking. He says that he 'shouldn't' twice, (turns 174 and 180), states it is 'not a good idea' (turn 176) and also states that he 'can't' (turn 184).

Schneider notes that "expressions typical of 'pressing' include 'go on' and 'come on'" (1999:297). Mrs Doyle's Tact violations involve the repetition of the order 'go on', first repeated 3 times (turn 181), then 7 times (turn 183) and finally 14 times (turn 185). This increase in the use of the order 'go on' shows the increase in Mrs Doyle's strength of her desire for Henry have some sherry; she is using everything in her arsenal (including diminutives 'just a little' and 'teeny tiny') to try to get him to accept. When Ted joins in, he also makes use of the order 'go on', repeating it 4 times. The use of this pressing device might be what finally wears Henry down, though his acceptance occurs off-screen. Mrs Doyle's use of 'go on' repeatedly is another enduring catchphrase from the series (Harrison 2015).

When Henry relents and accepts some Sherry, he goes into an alcoholic rage, destroying the living room and having an emotional breakdown. We thus see that Mrs Doyle's deranged hospitality has had very negative effects on this poor man and negative consequences for them all in that the living room is destroyed. In this extract, we learn that for Mrs Doyle a guest's compliance and subsequent acceptance of an offer is more important to her than their pleasure at doing so. In discussing her character, Pauline McLynn notes that Mrs Doyle is "every older Irish woman […], auntie and grandmother in the world. They're feeders. They're endlessly helpful in a completely useless way. They're the sort of women who'd insist you had a brandy at 11 in the morning" (McLynn quoted in Harrison 2015:n.p) and it is Mrs Doyle's Tact-violating insistence that people accept her offers of refreshment that endures as her most identifiable character trait.

7.6 Jack

Father Jack Hackett is a retired priest and an aggressive alcoholic. Described in episode 1.1 by Dougal as having admitted to not believing in God, Jack is living in squalor in the corner of the parochial house living room, drinking and smoking himself into a stupor. Co-writer Graham Linehan has stated that Jack "is a caricature of [Irish people's] supposed capacity for drink" (Linehan and Mathews 1999:8).

Jack is the character with the highest impoliteness usage, with 47.7% of his utterances being coded as impolite in the Leech analysis. The fact that just under half of all of his utterances contain impoliteness suggests that Jack is somewhat of a linguistic renegade. Just as Mrs Doyle's enduring legacy is one inextricably linked to her Tact, Jack's legacy as a character in the media and popular culture is one linked to his high use of impoliteness, "drunk, abusive, offensive, filthy and slightly perverted Father Jack was everything that a priest shouldn't be" (Lindsay 2016:np). In editorials from the British press, Jack is described as a "misanthropic tour-de-force" who "was almost always incomprehensibly drunk" (Broomfield 2016:np), "irreverent and foul-mouthed" (Watson 2016:np) and "the swearing alcoholic priest" (Ellis-Petersen 2016:np). Jack is celebrated as "the drink-loving, magic road-riding, foul-mouthed inebriate" who "stole many a scene across *Father Ted*'s […] run, with his array of grouchy, monosyllabic catchphrases continuing to live on in popular culture" (Moore 2016:np). Lindsay observes that while Jack "may not always have been at the forefront of *Father Ted* episodes, but during those glorious (and explosive) moments" in which Jack was featured, "the audience knew they were in for another side-splitting classic moment" (Lindsay 2016:np). Jack's use of impoliteness is thus essential to the character's enduring legacy.

Table 7-14 and figure 7-10 below show the distribution of impoliteness used by Jack.

Table 7-10 - Jack's Strategy Use

#	Jack	Percentage of All Strategies	Number of Instances
1	M2 Violation of Tact	37%	28
2	Rudeness	33%	25
3	M1 Violation of Generosity	14%	11
4	M3 Violation of Approbation	8%	6
5	M7 Violation of Agreement	2%	2
6	M8 Violation of Opinion reticence	1%	1
7	Sarcasm	1%	1
8	M4 Violation of Modesty	0	0
9	M5 Violation of Obligation to O	0	0
10	M6 Violation of Obligation to S	0	0
11	M9 Violation of Sympathy	0	0
12	M10 Violation of Feeling reticence	0	0
13	Banter	0	0

Figure 7-10 - Jack's Strategy Use
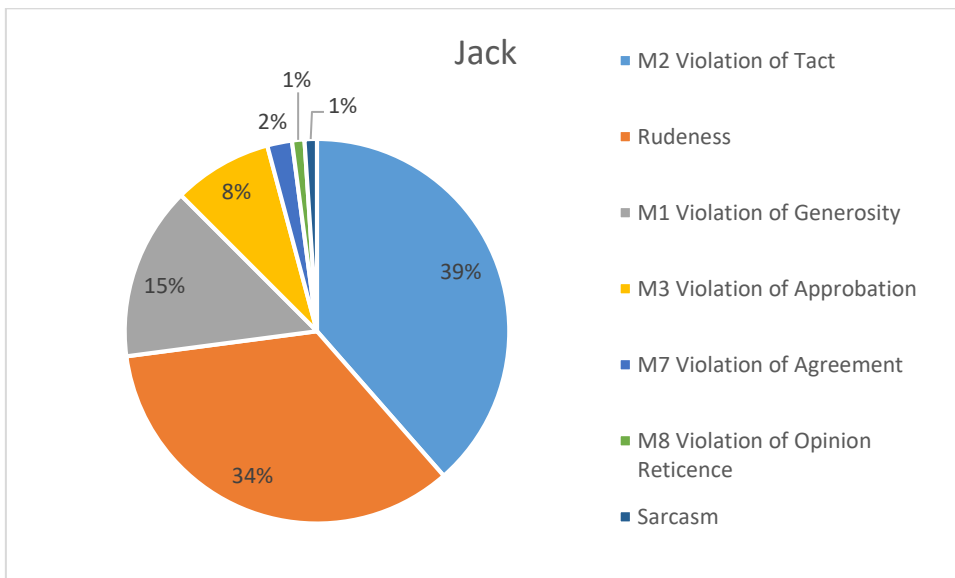
Jack makes use of 7 of the 13 strategies in Leech's framework but has a high concentration of usage of his two most favoured strategies; the violations of Tact and rudeness account for 73% of his impoliteness. The fact that two strategies constitute such a large proportion of Jack's impoliteness give Jack a certain 'style' of impoliteness, as picked up by the editorials above, many of which refer to Jack's use of taboo words e.g. 'feck' ('rudeness') and his orders such as 'drink!' ('Tact violations').

7.6.1 Jack's Violations of Tact

Tact violations were Jack's most used impoliteness strategy, making up 37% of his impoliteness use. Violations of Tact typically consist of ordering or demanding. I have noted above that Tact violations can give insight into character by highlighting the actions and behaviours that a character believes to be important. In Jack's case, the majority of his Tact violations consist of silencers or demands for alcohol.

7.6.1.1 Silencers

Jack does not hide his disdain for Ted, Dougal and Mrs Doyle and as a corollary of his hatred for them, he often tries to silence them. In the extract below, taken from episode 1.6, Jack has been mistakenly pronounced dead after drinking floor polish. As part of the conditions of his will, Jack stipulated that Ted and Dougal must spend the night with him in the crypt before his burial. Ted and Dougal are in the crypt bedding down for the night with Jack's 'corpse' in the coffin behind them.

FT 1.6	262	Dougal	It's hard to believe he's gone though, isn't it, Ted?			No	
FT 1.6	263	Ted	Ah you're right there.			No	
FT 1.6	264	Ted	It's beginning to snow again. The flakes of silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. It's probably snowing all over the island, on the central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the graveyards, upon the crosses and the headstones, upon			No	

			all the living and the dead				
FT 1.6	265	Jack	Shut the feck up!	M2 Violation of Tact	Rudeness	Yes	0.03.97

In turn 264, in a reference to the final part of Joyce's *The Dead* (1914), and with a number of direct lifts from the text, Ted reflects on death as he stares from the window. This is the first time in the episode that Ted has seemed saddened by Jack's death. Behind Ted, Jack wakes up from his coma and climbs out of his coffin. Then in turn 265, he utters the imperative 'Shut the feck up!'. Upon seeing Jack apparently risen from the dead, Ted faints.

Jack's utterance in 265 is coded as a violation of Tact because it functions as an order for Ted to be silent. Of course, the utterance also contains the taboo term 'feck' and thus also constitutes an utterance of 'rudeness'. I noted in the methodology, that in the case of utterances that fit two codes, the structure of the utterance would be used to determine which code was given the 'primary' code and which the 'secondary'. In this utterance, the imperative verb 'shut' comes before the taboo term 'feck' and so the utterance is coded as a Tact violation first and a use of rudeness second. The reference to literature in Ted's monologue and his apparent sadness is incongruously contrasted with Jack's taboo-boosted order for Ted to be silent. The incongruity between these two utterances generates humour in addition to the Tact violation and use of rudeness and the audience laughs for 3.97 seconds.

From this Tact violation, we learn that despite the miracle of finding himself alive, Jack is not a changed man for the experience of being mispronounced dead and of nearly dying from substance abuse, but is still the same hateful, cantankerous old man as he ever was. And he still hates Ted.

7.6.1.2 Demands for Alcohol

Many of Jack's Tact violations consist of demands for alcohol, as seen in the example below taken from episode 1.4. In this episode, Ted and Dougal are trying to brainstorm their entry for the priest talent competition after it turned out they all wanted to go as Elvis (including Jack).

FT 1.4	256	Ted	[…] Jack'll be in any moment looking for his afternoon drink.			
FT 1.4	257	Jack	Drink!	M2 Violation of Tact	Yes	0.01.03
FT 1.4	258	Ted	There he goes, bang on time			

In this example, Ted anticipates that Jack will soon enter, demanding alcohol and, on schedule, Jack appears with the single-word order 'drink', which contains the implied [bring me a/my] drink! We know this because Ted explicitly identifies that Jack wants his alcohol and that the utterance 'drink' is Jack's way of demanding being brought alcohol. This violation of Tact generates 1.03 seconds of audience laughter.

7.6.2 Jack's Rudeness

Rudeness (or the use of taboo terms) was Jack's second most used primary impoliteness strategy, accounting for 33% of his impoliteness use. Jack was the only character to have rudeness feature in their top three used strategies which likely means that his use of taboo terms is foregrounded against the rest of the main cast, something evidenced in the editorial descriptions of Jack above.

In the entire data set, Jack speaks a total of 346 words – a remarkably low number, though reflective of the fact that Jack's contributions to conversation are usually monosyllabic (Moore 2016:np). Of these, the terms 'feck' and 'arse' appear with great frequency, as do 'girls' and 'drink', which, though not taboo, make up the terms known to be Jack's catchphrases and represent non-priestly indulgences. Table 7-15 below shows the prevalence of these terms in Jack's speech:

Table 7-11 - Jack's Use of Taboo Words

Word	Number of Instances^	Percentage of his speech that consists of these words
Feck* [any word beginning with feck*, including fecker, feckin' etc]	34	9.8
Arse	13	3.7
Drink	57	16.4
Girls	3	0.8
The	7	2.0

^NB these results are for the entire data set. The rudeness data comes from the primary coding only. Thus, discrepancies between the number of times a taboo word appears and the number of times rudeness is coded occur because in some of these cases, rudeness was given a secondary coding if the taboo word appeared after a primary code of a different strategy.

Looking at Jack's use of the taboo term 'feck', with which he is strongly associated (Harrison 2015), the 34 instances of this word constitute 9.8% of his entire dialogue. 'Arse' is used less, with 13 instances constituting 3.7% of his dialogue and 'girls' occurs just 3 times and amounts to 0.8%. 'Drink', which is associated with the Tact violations discussed above, occurred 57 times and accounted for 16.4% of his dialogue. McEnery (2006) found that taboo words comprised between 0.3% and 0.5% of spoken British data, thus the fact that taboo words account for more than 29.9% of Jack's spoken data shows how crucial rudeness is to Jack's speech. This is foregrounded against the other characters but also our experience of spoken language more generally this deviation contributes to incongruity and thus humour.

I included the determiner 'the' as a point of comparison to test how prevalent taboo terms are in Jack's dialogue. 'The' occurs only 7 times in all of Jack's spoken data and accounts for 2% of his spoken dialogue. As a point of comparison, we can see that Jack's use of 'feck' outranks his use of what is otherwise a highly frequent determiner in British English.

Jack's usage of rudeness contrasts with the language we might expect from an elderly retired priest. Jay reports that "swearing is positively correlated with extraversion and Type A hostility but negatively correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, religiosity and sexual anxiety." (Jay 2009:153). Likewise, in a study exploring personality traits and taboo word usage Janschewitz found "a negative relationship between personal use of taboo words and religiosity" and that those who considered themselves religious were more offended by taboo words" (2008:1070). Thus, a person who is religious, agreeable and conscientious would be less likely to swear and more likely to be offended by those who do, whereas a person who *does* swear is likely to be hostile, Type A and not religious. Our expectations for the language of a priest, would likely be that he would not swear in accordance with his religious identity. Thus, the fact that Jack swears so much indicates that he is an atypical priest and is perhaps not religious. For a priest, Jack is not particularly priest-like. This incongruity within Jack's character is a source of humour.

That we can live vicariously through the behaviour of dramatic characters has been suggested by Storm (2016:95) who notes, "the characters that we come to know in books, in a theatre, or on film accomplish a great deal on our behalf. […] Characters can, in short, be our experimental surrogates". As such, one of the pleasures in viewing impoliteness on the screen may come from the fact that we ourselves cannot communicate such deliberate rudeness over an extended period of time without expecting some form of social consequence. Jack, however, lives in a world where he can do just that, as except for Bishop Brennan's visits, there are rarely any consequences for Jack's impoliteness. There is perhaps something cathartic in being able to live vicariously through Jack's anti-social behaviour. I believe the lack of consequences for Jack's impoliteness to be crucial to the preservation of the plot.

In the extract below, Mrs Doyle has entered the living room to offer the priests some tea.

FT 1.1	68	Mrs Doyle	Hello to you all. Ah is the television broken again, Father? Never you mind, there's nothing wrong with it that can't be fixed with a bit of you-know-what in the head department. Now then, who's for tea?	No	
FT 1.1	69	Dougal	Me please, Mrs Doyle	No	
FT 1.1	70	Jack	Tea? Feck!	Yes	0.02.66
FT 1.1	71	Ted	I'm fine, Mrs Doyle	No	
FT 1.1	72	Mrs Doyle	You won't have a cup?	No	
FT 1.1	73	Ted	Ah no thanks Mrs. Doyle I won't have a cup	No	
FT 1.1	74	Mrs Doyle	Are you sure now? It's hot!	Yes	0.00.79
FT 1.1	75	Ted	No, I'm not in the mood, thanks	No	
FT 1.1	76	Mrs Doyle	Alright so...ah go on, would you not have a drop?	Yes	0.00.97
FT 1.1	77	Ted	No thanks	No	
FT 1.1	78	Mrs Doyle	Just a little cup	Yes	0.00.47
FT 1.1	79	Ted	No, really	No	
FT 1.1	80	Mrs Doyle	I tell you what, father, I'll pour a cup for you anyway	No	
FT 1.1	81	Ted	Aaaaaahh!	No	
FT 1.1	82	Mrs Doyle	And you can have it if you want	No	
FT 1.1	83	Mrs Doyle	Now, and what do you say to a cup?	No	
FT 1.1	84	Jack	Feck off, cup!	Yes	0.04.69
FT 1.1	85	Mrs Doyle	He loves his cup of tea	No	
FT 1.1	86	Jack	Feck off!	Yes	0.01.53
FT 1.1	87	Mrs Doyle	There you go	No	
FT 1.1	88	Jack	Feck off!	Yes	0.02.37

FT 1.1	89	Mrs Doyle	Father Crilly, I nearly forgot. There was a phone call earlier from a Terry Macnamee,	No	
FT 1.1	90	Ted	Ah, right	No	
FT 1.1	91	Dougal	Who's that, Ted?	No	
FT 1.1	92	Ted	I've never heard of him	Yes	0.01.38
FT 1.1	93	Mrs Doyle	He's something to do with...wasn't it the television?	No	
FT 1.1	94	Ted	Yes, he's coming to fix the television	Yes	0.01.28

In the extract above, I am most interested in the interaction between Mrs Doyle and Jack. When Mrs Doyle enters the room and asks Dougal, Ted and Jack who would like tea, Jack's immediate response is one which contains rudeness. In turn 70, Jack's utterance 'Tea? Feck!' is coded as rudeness because it involves the taboo term 'feck'. Given that this extract comes from the first episode, this utterance is a vital clue to Jack's character. The incongruity of this priest using a taboo term in the face of a routine and polite offer generates audience laughter of 2.66 seconds. In Jack's case, the use of rudeness indicates that he is an atypical priest – in line with Jay's (2009:153) findings that taboo word usage is negatively correlated with religiosity, Jack's rudeness indicates that he is not a religious person. Furthermore, Jack's anger towards non-alcoholic liquids also indicates his alcoholism, his disregard for the context highlights that Jack simply doesn't care about social protocol and finally, his antagonism towards Mrs Doyle indicates a dislike of his co-habitants in the parochial house.

In section 7.5, I discussed that as the series progresses, the audience are given more examples of Mrs Doyle's aggressive hospitality and the audience begin to understand that Mrs Doyle simply won't take 'no' for an answer when she is trying to offer tea. Thus, once we have a better understanding of Mrs Doyle, we might be more sympathetic towards Jack's furious response to being offered a cup of tea because he, through previous experience, knows that he will not be permitted to refuse. However, given that this is the first episode, the audience are without the knowledge of Mrs Doyle's tendencies will see Jack's response as entirely disproportionate to the situation.

When Jack's initial rudeness strategies combined with Tact violations do not work and Mrs Doyle places the tea beside him, as she retreats, he repeats the rudeness Tact violation "feck off" and throws the cup at her head. We hear it smash against the wall. This violent act signifies the extent to which Jack is infuriated by Mrs Doyle and is contrasted with her pleasant demeanour and lack of ostensible reaction to Jack's impoliteness and physical aggression.

In order to fully understand the way in which the characters ignore Jack's outburst, it is useful to see the physical performances alongside the words uttered. As such, the table below shows screenshots taken during the utterance of the dialogue in question.

68	Mrs Doyle	Hello to you all. Ah is the television broken again, Father? Never you mind, there's nothing wrong with it that can't be fixed with a bit of you-know-what in the head department. Now then, who's for tea?	
69	Dougal	Me please, Mrs Doyle	
70	Jack	Tea? Feck!	
71	Ted	I'm fine, Mrs Doyle	
72	Mrs Doyle	You won't have a cup?	

73	Ted	Ah no thanks Mrs. Doyle I won't have a cup	
74	Mrs Doyle	Are you sure now? It's hot!	
75	Ted	No, I'm not in the mood, thanks	
76	Mrs Doyle	Alright so...ah go on, would you not have a drop?	
77	Ted	No thanks	

78	Mrs Doyle	Just a little cup	
79	Ted	No, really	
80	Mrs Doyle	I tell you what, father, I'll pour a cup for you anyway	
81	Ted	Aaaaaahh!	
82	Mrs Doyle	And you can have it if you want	

83	Mrs Doyle	Now, and what do you say to a cup?	
84	Jack	Feck off, cup!	
85	Mrs Doyle	He loves his cup of tea	
86	Jack	Feck off!	
87	Mrs Doyle	There you go	

88	Jack	Feck off!	
89	Mrs Doyle	Father Crilly, I nearly forgot. There was a phone call earlier from a Terry Macnamee,	
90	Ted	Ah, right	
91	Dougal	Who's that, Ted?	
92	Ted	I've never heard of him	

93	Mrs Doyle	He's something to do with...wasn't it the television?	
94	Ted	Yes, he's coming to fix the television	
95	Mrs Doyle	Yeah, well he'll be here tomorrow at twelve	
96	Ted	Grand	
97	Dougal	It's good you called someone, **Ted.** It's still not **working.**	

Throughout the series, Jack's impoliteness is routinely ignored by the other characters. In the scene above, Mrs Doyle consistently ignores Jack's rudeness, Tact violations and attempts at physical violence. In turn 70, Jack utters 'tea? Feck!' following Mrs Doyle's offer. Nobody in the scene reacts to this and Ted and Mrs Doyle then enter into their offer-refusal sequence. In turn 83, when Mrs Doyle asks what Jack would say to a cup, Jack responds with creative impoliteness, where rather than identifying the idiomatic turn of phrase that Mrs Doyle has used – wherein 'what do you say' means 'would you like' he interprets her interrogative literally and addresses this cup. His turn 'feck off, cup' thus addresses the cup, which is creative impoliteness and reaffirms the fact that Jack does not want the cup of tea. Mrs Doyle, smiling, places the tea beside him anyway and refers to him in the third person, saying 'he loves his cup of tea'. This line is delivered with affection by Pauline McLynn and as she walks away, smiling, Jack tells her to 'feck off!'. Mrs Doyle seems almost as though she is unable to hear him as she continues smiling in turn 87 and says 'there you go'. Though Jack is trying to be maximally offensive, Mrs Doyle is unaffected to the point that it seems as though she cannot hear him. He then throws the cup and we hear it shatter, presumably on the wall behind her. At this, in turn 89, Mrs Doyle stops and turns. It briefly appears that she is going to respond to Jack, but instead she calmly informs Ted of a missed telephone call. Ted and Dougal then engage Mrs Doyle in the conversation about the telephone message. What is crucial about the exchange between Mrs Doyle Dougal and Ted is that they are all conversing calmly as though Jack's outburst of Tact violations, rudeness and physical aggression have not occurred. We might have expected Ted or Dougal to try to step in to defend the housekeeper from Jack's tirade or at least reprimand him for it, but this does not occur. This gives the audience an incongruence between Jack's outrageous behaviour and the non-response from his housemates which could be taken as an indication that Jack's behaviour is not out of the ordinary and the reason they are not responding is because this happens all the time. That is, that Jack's impoliteness is habitual enough to be routine for Mrs Doyle Dougal and Ted. Thus, the audience are given a sense that this particular parochial house is very abnormal.

Fraser and Nolen propose the Conversational Contract in the understanding of impoliteness suggesting that every person develops a contract with their interlocutors that governs the expectations of language (1981). The historical dimension of this contract negotiation concerns "the contractual terms negotiated during previous interactions [that] determine the starting position of each new interaction" (Eelen 2001:14). The intention of fiction on television is to "make the viewer believe that he [sic]

is watching something that he is not meant to watch, that he is, in fact, dropping in on something that was going on before he switched on his set and which will continue after he has left" (Hayman 1969:155, cited in Bednarek 2010:15). Entering the world of the Craggy Island parochial house as 'flies on the wall' to find the above exchange going on, we as an audience might construe that the conversational contract between Mrs Doyle and Jack has been historically negotiated to be one in which the use of impoliteness strategies is the norm. As such, the characters do not react to Jack's impoliteness because it is routine. Fraser and Nolen argue that "whether or not an utterance is heard as being polite is totally in the hands (or ears) of the hearer" (1981:96). Though this contradicts more recent definitions of impoliteness (Culpeper 2011), it is useful here because in this scene, Mrs Doyle acts as if she cannot *hear* Jack at all, as though there is no impoliteness taking place. Dynel's (2013) concept of disaffiliative humour is relevant here; "the hearer's reaction [to impoliteness] may not be shown in fictional talk for the sake of humorous effects" (Dynel 2013:120) and indeed, the absence of a reaction from Ted, Dougal and Mrs Doyle generates incongruity and this contributes to the humour of the scene – Mrs Doyle's cheery, polite resilience to Jack's behaviour helps to incongruously contract Jack's attempts at causing maximal offense.

Mrs Doyle, Ted and Dougal's non-response to Jack's impolite (physical and verbal) behaviour gives the audience insight into the silliness of the world of Craggy Island. Indeed, this ability of a character's response to reveal absurdity is noted by Simpson, "the responses of interlocutors in a play to something that is unanticipated in context […] often has a crucial bearing on the way a discourse of oddity is established and developed" (Simpson 1998:42). It is certainly the case that a priest throwing a scalding hot cup of tea at a female housekeeper is unexpected in the context. As such, the "discourse of oddity" of the parochial house is developed. Jack's outbursts are very quickly characterising and when contrasted with the nonplussed reaction of his housemates we gain an insight into how their world works, which is particularly useful given that this episode is the pilot episode and thus has much characterising and world-building work to be done.

Research has shown that exposure to impoliteness on television can increase aggression in viewers; Glascock notes, "there is some support in the research, both experimental and survey, for a link between media consumption and verbal aggression." (Glascock 2013:260). An example of this is Chory-Assad's (2004) study which found that participants who were exposed to an episode of a TV sitcom produced more "aggressive-

282

related responses" (Glascock 2013:261) than those who were not. These studies rely on the General Aggression Model (GAM) which is a "multistage process whereby personality (trait hostility) and situation (exposure to violent media) variables combine to increase aggressive behaviour" (Glascock 2013:261). The GAM is based on the theoretical model of Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory – a central tenet of which is that "viewers exposed to aggressive behaviours on television will be more likely to imitate those behaviours in real life than nonviewers" (Glascock 2013:261). Research has also shown that behaviours are even more likely to be imitated, if the characters depicted appeared to be rewarded for their aggression (Bandura, Ross and Ross 1963b). For Jack, the absence of a punishment or of victim reaction can be seen as a neutral outcome, but the audience laughter which is heard simultaneously or just following these impoliteness events, can act as a positive outcome, or reward (Glascock 2013:265). Therefore, the fact that Jack is rewarded with audience laughter in the macrocosm and that his impoliteness frequently goes unpunished in the microcosm increases the likelihood of viewer imitation of his behaviour. Indeed, many of the impolite utterances used in *Father Ted* became catchphrases that were repeated by viewers, "Jack, Dougal and Mrs Doyle quickly became cult favourites across Britain and Ireland. Playgrounds and offices rang out with catchphrases" (Wickham 2014:857). The longstanding association of 'feck' with *Father Ted* and, its entry into the British lexicon (Harrison 2015) and its subsequent amelioration due to over-exposure (Walshe 2011) were likely influenced by positive reward of audience laughter and the lack of consequences in the microcosm which the at-home the viewer experiences simultaneously.

8 CONCLUSION

> "I came here to drink milk and kick ass.
> And I've just finished my milk."
>
> -   MAURICE MOSS, EPISODE 4.2

In this final chapter, I summarise the key findings of this research and reflect upon the theoretical and methodological implications that this research may have for future pragmatic-stylistic research into humour and impoliteness.

8.1 ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Each of the four research questions is addressed in a corresponding results chapter. I now return to the research questions to summarise the findings of each chapter and the implications these outcomes might have for future research.

8.1.1 RQ1

Research Question 1 asked:

> How prevalent is impoliteness in the sitcom data, both in terms of pragmatic analysis of impoliteness strategy and corpus analysis of Ofcom-sanctioned taboo words?

This research question was addressed in *Chapter 4: Prevalence of Impoliteness* and was proposed in order to establish the frequency with which impoliteness was used in the sitcom data. If, as I proposed, impoliteness is a tool used for the generation of humour in the sitcom, one might reasonably expect to find that it is used with frequency in my sitcom data set. In the absence of comparable linguistic research, studies from media and psychology were the best available point of comparison for my findings, particularly Glascock (2008).

Any utterance that was coded by one or more of the impoliteness frameworks as constituting impoliteness was counted as 'impoliteness' and I found that there were, on

average, 151.7 impolite utterances per hour of my data set, nearly thrice the number found by Glascock. On average in my data set there were 2.5 impolite utterances per minute. This finding is strong evidence that impoliteness is prevalent in the sitcom and this finding lays the groundwork for my subsequent proposal that impoliteness is common in the sitcom because it is used as a mechanism for generating humour. While not part of the remit of the present research, my findings also suggest that there are cultural differences between American and British sitcom impoliteness use, which could be explored in further research.

The second part of this research question addresses the use of taboo words in the sitcom. Using Ofcom's (2016) list of general taboo words, I conducted a corpus analysis exploring the prevalence of taboo words, their keyness against the British National Corpus and their stratification according to Ofcom's severity ratings. I found that of the 47 taboo general words listed by Ofcom, 22 of those words appeared in the data set at least once. 746 of the 141,114 words in my corpus were tokens of taboo words, which meant that 0.5% of my corpus constituted taboo words with an average of 13 taboo words per episode. This placed my corpus at the higher end of the 0.3 – 0.5% estimation of incidence of taboo word usage by real speakers as reported by McEnery (2006). Thus, taboo word usage did not exceed the reported rates of incidence found for real speakers, though it was at the top end of the estimation. However, I found that the incidence of taboo words in the speech of female protagonists was above the estimation for real speakers, with 0.7% of female speech containing taboo words.

In terms of stratification, I found that there appeared to be an inverse correlation between the strength of a taboo word and its prevalence in the data set – meaning that the more offensive a word was generally judged to be, the less it often it occurred in the data set. Thus, the societal understanding of the strength of a taboo word appeared to influence how much the word could appear in the data set. Furthermore, given that Ofcom has the power to sanction broadcasters who over-use taboo words or use taboo words of too high a strength for the broadcast time or audience, it is also likely that this censorship influences the writers' ability to include the strong and strongest taboo words in their scripts. In other words, the Ofcom classification of taboo words is somewhat self-fulfilling in inducing writers and broadcasters to use weaker words more frequently and stronger words less frequently.

I explored the use of taboo words by the gender of the protagonist characters and found that female protagonists had a higher incidence of taboo word usage, with 5.74% of

female utterances containing a taboo word, compared with 3.80% of male protagonist utterances containing taboo words. This contrasts with the folk belief that women swear less than men (McEnery 2006). Perhaps it is this expectation that makes female protagonist taboo word use important – the audience may not be expecting female characters to swear and this may bring about some of the incongruity in the humour. Furthermore, male protagonists outnumbered female protagonists 7:3 and it may be that the narrative-carrying role the male protagonists have means that they use fewer taboo words so as not to interrupt the plot. Whatever the reasons behind it, it is useful to find that the taboo word usage patterns in my British sitcom data do not conform to gender stereotypes, though women are marginalised in the data on the whole.

In order to explore whether the three series under analysis had generated any complaints by viewers or action by Ofcom, I placed a Freedom of Information (FOI) request with Ofcom and requested any information they held about complaints made against *Father Ted*, *Black Books* and *The IT Crowd* and their outcomes. The response I received from Ofcom detailed that on account of the recency of the organisation, they only held records from September 2006 onwards. Searches in the predecessors' online archives resulted in no further information on complaints made against either *Father Ted* or *Black Books'* original broadcasts. However, Ofcom were able to provide me with details of complaints made against *The IT Crowd* and against repeated episodes of *Father Ted*. This data showed that for the re-runs of *Father Ted*, there were a total of 6 complaints in the 10 years between Ofcom records beginning and my FOI request. 83% of complaints related to offensive language, most of these were with regards to the scheduling of the repeats before the 9pm watershed, and 17% of the complaints related directly to scheduling. I noted that the overlap in the definition of these two categories by Ofcom was problematic, in that a complaint against *Father Ted* using the word 'feck' before 9pm could be coded as relating to offensive language or scheduling and this led to some opaqueness as to the similarity between these complaints, none of which, however, were upheld.

Of the six complaints made about *The IT Crowd*, none related to offensive language, with 17% relating to disability discrimination, 16% to product placement and 67% to generally accepted standards. None of these were upheld. There were few complaints about taboo language in any of the three series, suggesting that these high quantities of impoliteness are not only tolerated by the majority of audiences, but as noted by Ofcom, perhaps subconsciously associated with comedies. This, then, suggests an inherent link between humour and impoliteness. Given that the information held by Ofcom on

complaints against the three series was incomplete, using data from sitcoms broadcast after 2006 would have enabled me to get a better picture of the complaints made against series and in future research I hope to explore Ofcom complaints made against a wider range of comedy series.

8.1.2 RQ2

Research Question 2 asked:

> What are the frequencies of impoliteness found by the three impoliteness frameworks and how are those strategies distributed?

Research Question 2 is addressed in *Chapter 5: Distribution of Impoliteness Strategies in the Sitcom* and explored the most and least popular impoliteness strategies in the data set and compared the coding results of the Leech, Spencer-Oatey and Culpeper analyses.

I found that though there were some variations in the *quantity* of impoliteness coded by the three frameworks, there was general agreement between the frameworks with regards to the fluctuation of impoliteness across episodes and series, though there was a low percentage of utterances for which all three frameworks coded impoliteness. Out of the three frameworks, Leech's coded the highest number of impolite utterances, with an average of 55.2 impolite utterances per episode. This was unsurprising since his framework is the most complex, with 15 criteria. The other two results do not indicate a direct link between framework complexity and quantity of impoliteness coded; Spencer-Oatey's framework has only 4 criteria but identified 44.5 impolite utterances per episode (the second highest average), while Culpeper's 13-strategy framework identified an average of 43.8 impolite utterances per episode.

I then explored the distribution of impoliteness strategies in the sitcom using the three frameworks.

The Spencer-Oatey analysis yielded a total of 2,407 utterances in the data set being coded as impolite, meaning that 17.03% of all utterances per episode contained impoliteness. The distribution of strategy use showed equity rights and quality face challenge both making up 38% of the impoliteness, association rights constituting 17% and identity face challenge accounting for 7%. As I noted above, quality face and equity

rights are very similar in definition to B&L's positive and negative face, respectively, which is unsurprising given that Spencer-Oatey's framework is an adaptation of their own. It would seem that these two types of impoliteness are very important to the humour-generating impoliteness of the sitcom. Despite its simplicity, the framework led to some potential overlap between association rights and quality face.

The results for the Culpeper analysis showed that implicational impoliteness (63%) was more common than conventionalised impoliteness (37%) and this tallies with Culpeper's own findings, though with a greater majority for implicational impoliteness. It is likely that the creativity and scope offered by implicational impoliteness, when compared with the restricting pattern grammar of conventionalised impoliteness, gave the writers broader options when constructing the dialogue. In terms of strategy distribution, the three most used strategies according to the Culpeper analysis were form-driven implications, context-driven implication and pointed criticisms/complaints. A criticism of Culpeper's framework could be that it does not sufficiently address impoliteness arising from impositions on free will (e.g. orders, etc, which are covered by equity rights and Tact violations in Spencer-Oatey and Leech). The framework's inability to appropriately code such impositions and an absence of a specific code for taboo word usage may be why it generated the lowest number of impolite codings.

Leech's framework of analysis generated the highest number of utterances coded as constituting impoliteness, with an average of 55 impolite utterances per episode with a total of 2,981 utterances in the data set. With regards distribution, violations of Approbation constituted the most popular Leech strategy, accounting for 29% of all impoliteness use. Violations of Tact were the second most popular strategy with 25%. As was the case with Spencer-Oatey, the two Leech strategies that most closely resemble B&L's positive and negative face are the most frequently used strategies. This suggests that B&L's framework captured two integral parts of impoliteness in British English.

Based upon the breadth of Leech's framework and the quantitative results that showed Leech's framework had the capacity to identify more impolite utterances and to make more nuanced distinctions between strategies than Culpeper or Spencer-Oatey's frameworks, Leech's framework was applied in the remaining two chapters of the thesis.

8.1.3 RQ3

Research Question 3, which was addressed in *Chapter 6: Relationship between Impoliteness and Audience Laughter* asked:

> What is the audience response to impoliteness? Is there a statistically significant relationship between linguistic impoliteness and audience laughter?

In many ways, this research question addresses the crux of the overarching research aim of establishing impoliteness as a mechanism for humour in the sitcom. This chapter used the quantitative data generated from the impoliteness coding and the presence/absence of audience laughter to test the statistical significance of the relationship between the two phenomena. I believe this study is the first attempt to explore the relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter using quantitative data.

Of course, correlation does not necessarily imply causation, but this study has attempted to explore whether there might be a relationship between these two phenomena using correlative data which might then be the start of further causational research.

Using a 2x2 design in which the variables were a binary yes/no for audience laughter and yes/no for the presence of impoliteness in an utterance, I used a Pearson Chi-square test of independence to explore whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables. I hypothesised that I would find a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. The results showed that when impoliteness was present (4097 utterances), there were more laughter responses from the audience (2380) than no laughter responses (1717). Furthermore, when utterances did not contain impoliteness (10,035 utterances), they were far more often met with no laughter (7474) than with audience laughter (2561). The Chi square results had a p-value of p<.001. This suggests that there is a statistically significant relationship between audience laughter and impoliteness which, in turn, supports my central argument that impoliteness is functioning as one of the humour triggers in the sitcom. Of course, impoliteness is not the only trigger for audience laughter in the sitcom and this study did not seek to position impoliteness as the only source of humour, as sitcoms make use of multiple other devices, such as dramatic irony, slapstick, farce etc. However, crucially, this study has provided some of the first quantitative statistical evidence in support of the emerging argument in pragmatic stylistics that impoliteness can be humorous when used in fiction.

I also tested the relationship using the phi value which is a "measure of association between two categorical variables" (Field 2009:791). The results showed there is a relationship between the two variables with a significance of p<.001. However, the strength of the correlation was shown to be a mid/low association with a value of .310.

In the second part of the chapter, I explored the percentage of impolite utterances that generated audience laughter, finding that 58% of utterances coded as containing impoliteness generated audience laughter, thus more than half of the instances of impoliteness functioned as successful humour triggers. The results also showed that 48% of audience laughter bursts followed an impolite utterance. This result suggests that impoliteness accounts for nearly half of all audience laughter bursts. This result was higher than I might have expected, given that I am only suggesting impoliteness is *one* of the strategies used to elicit humour. This result suggests that impoliteness may be one of the most important humour triggers and it would be interesting to conduct further research on the same data set in order to explore the percentage of audience laughs that follow other strategies (such as slapstick, wordplay etc) in order to ascertain just how proportionally dominant impoliteness is with regards its ability to elicit humour.

I then explored the most successful Leech impoliteness strategies at generating audience laughter. I found that banter was the most successful strategy, though it only had 5 appearances in the data set. Rudeness (or, taboo words) was the second most successful strategy, occasioning audience laughter on 75% of its 168 appearances in the data set. Sarcasm was the third most successful strategy, triggering audience laughter on 74% of its 127 appearances. The least successful strategies were those that required very specific felicity conditions (such as violations of Obligation to Speaker and Other) or those that were frequently mild (violations of Agreement).

Finally, given the high success of rudeness at generating audience laughter, I explored audience response to specific taboo terms. Looking only at terms that appeared 10 or more times in the data set or were the only representative word in a category (i.e. 'fuck'), I explored the success of a taboo term at generating audience laughter in relation to its Ofcom rating of severity, its frequency in the data set and its keyness. I found that 'fuck' and 'shit' were joint first for laughter success, each generating audience laughter on 100% of their appearances in the data set. 'Bitch', 'feckin'' and 'feck' came second, third and fourth, respectively. The least laughter-triggering taboo words were 'God', 'bloody' and 'damn'. With regards severity, although there was not a perfect correlation between taboo word severity and audience laughter response, there appeared to be a general

stratification with the strong and medium words being more successful than the mild ones. The most successful words, 'fuck' and 'shit' were from the strongest and medium category, respectively and the three least successful taboo words 'damn', 'bloody' and 'God' were 'mild'. There seems to be a general relationship between severity and humour response which likely draws on the incongruity of hearing a rare, strong word and the audience knowledge of the social sanctions against such words. Further research could usefully explore the relationship between severity and humour on a larger scale. With regards frequency of appearance and success, I found no clear pattern, though the most successful word 'fuck' appeared only three times and the least successful word 'God' appeared 421 times. A larger data set could usefully be used to explore this potential relationship further. With regards keyness and success, I again found no clear relationship, though the most strongly key words 'feck' and 'feckin' which had a keyness of 28810 and 10905, respectively did appear in the top half of the results for success.

Finally, in order to remove the possibility that the laughter following a taboo word may be affected by its context, I explored taboo words that occurred alone. Though there were few instances in which a taboo word appeared as the entirety of a character's utterance, there were generally high success rates for taboo words that occurred with no additional dialogue. Again, further work in this area would likely be illuminating.

This chapter, as well as pointing to the potential relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter (and, by extension, humour), highlighted the usefulness of including quantitative research methods in pragmatic stylistic analysis.

8.1.4 RQ4

Research Question 4 asked:

> Is impoliteness used differently by different characters?

This research question was addressed in *Chapter 7: Characterisation and Impoliteness.* This chapter was designed to apply the findings from the impoliteness and laughter analyses to a more qualitative exploration of characterisation. I proposed that through exploring impoliteness strategy use, I could explore how these strategies contribute to, or confirm character interpretations. Working in support of Culpeper's claim that "impoliteness is not thrown in haphazardly for audience entertainment" (1998:86), I expected to find differences in impoliteness strategy use between protagonists. Given the wealth of data available, I chose to focus only on *Father Ted* and I reported the

quantitative results of the four protagonists' use of impoliteness and then proceeded to give closer qualitative analysis of examples of their impoliteness use, using the quantitative results to inform the selection of representative examples of a character's impoliteness.

In the quantitative comparison, I found that there was a general inverse relationship between the average number of utterances per episode that a character spoke and the percentage of their utterances that were impolite. I suggested that it may be that the less prominent characters Jack and Mrs Doyle are able to 'get away with' more impoliteness because they are seen less and they do not have the narrative-carrying responsibilities that are bestowed on Ted and Dougal. Exploring percentage success at generating audience laughter, I found that Mrs Doyle was the most 'funny' character with 81% of her impolite utterances generating audience laughter. She was followed by Dougal with 79%, Jack with 78% and Ted was significantly less 'funny' with 53% of his impolite utterances generating audience laughter. I noted that at first glance it might seem odd that the protagonist of a sitcom is the least funny but considered that Ted carries the narrative and his 'straight man' character serves to contrast the oddities of the other characters.

With regards strategy use, I noted that all four protagonists had violations of Approbation and violations of Tact appear in their top 4 Leechian strategies. This continues the prevalence of these strategies which can be equated with B&L's positive and negative face. Again, it seems that imposing on free will and negative evaluation of another are central concepts in impoliteness in this particular context. I noted that Dougal and Jack had very similar top 4 strategies, as did Jack and Mrs Doyle and I noted that this could be a response to the fact that Ted is the protagonist and Dougal his protegee, both of whom are often central to the plot, whereas Jack and Mrs Doyle are lesser-seen more unusual characters who often function as antagonistic to Ted's wants. Their pairing of impoliteness patterning then may reflect this divide.

I then looked at the distribution of strategies and noted that, as Culpeper claimed, impoliteness was not thrown in 'ad-hoc' as each character had a unique impoliteness 'blueprint'. I investigated these blueprints for each character and noted that we not only learn about the characters through their strategy use (e.g. a frequent Tact-violator reveals themselves to be 'pushy' or 'imposing') but that the content of those strategies can also be revealing of character. For example, the fact that Mrs Doyle is consistently violating Tact in forcing people to have tea indicates to us that she is obsessive about catering and takes her role of host to an extreme level.

I have shown through this analysis that impoliteness can be a useful way into exploring character and unpacking how character is communicated in drama. Further work in this vein would surely be useful in gaining further insight into mixed methods characterisation analysis.

8.2 METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of methodological implications arising from this study. Perhaps the most important (and unique) methodological choice of this research was the decision to use audience laughter as confirmation of successful humour uptake. Moving away from studies that rely on researcher intuition to identify humorous passages of text, utilising the response of the audience meant that I had verification beyond my own intuition that interactions in the data set were humorous. As a result of this methodological choice, I was able to explore the impoliteness-humour relationship using a binary of laughter presence or absence and to further explore the intensity of the humour response using laughter length in seconds and milliseconds and to identify triggering words that precede the audience laughter. The use of audience laughter in the data analysis provides the researcher with the crucial cue that there has been successful humour uptake (in the case of sitcoms that are recorded live) or, (in the case of older sitcoms from the 1950s and 60s that used synthetic laughter) signs that the producers intend the preceding material to be found humorous. Rather than relying on researcher intuition or preference, this has allowed me to determine that impoliteness is found humorous by the audience and to explore further the types of impoliteness and the characters that are the most successful at generating audience laughter. As mentioned, the decision to use audience laughter presence or absence and laughter length in seconds and milliseconds instead of traditional CA methods has allowed me to more objectively compare the intensity of two or more audience laughter bursts and has rendered my findings more accessible to researchers who do not have access to the recordings of laughter. Furthermore, this has prevented the obscuring of the true sound of hundreds of laughers laughing that was occurring in earlier research using CA transcription techniques designed for the transcription of solo speakers' utterances.

A second key element of the research design was the decision to use quantitative data analysis in order to test the proposed relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter statistically. This is, as far as can be ascertained, the first time there has been a statistical test of the potential relationship between impoliteness and audience laughter

in sitcom data and provides the first set of quantitative results for researchers wishing to explore the relationship between these two phenomena.

Expanding on the work of Kantara (2010), the use of quantitative analysis also allowed me to explore the use of impoliteness by character – generating an 'impoliteness blueprint' for the protagonists in *Father Ted* that uncovered each character's impoliteness style.

The triangulation of three different impoliteness frameworks in the quantitative component of the research has produced the first quantitative comparison of Spencer-Oatey, Leech and Culpeper's impoliteness frameworks as applied to an extended data set. This method of analysis, though time-consuming, gave insight into the differences between the three frameworks and enabled me to see more sharply the similarities in their results. A consistent finding which has theoretical implications was that the most popular strategies of impoliteness often included strategies which impeded freedom of action and strategies that provided negative assessment of another person. These popular strategies are consistent with Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative Face threats and thus I have suggested that the classic B&L framework appears to have identified two elements of impoliteness that are core to the communication of impoliteness in a British-Irish cultural setting. Future research using multiple researchers and a larger data set could continue this application of multiple impoliteness frameworks to an impoliteness analysis to draw out further findings and address the limitations of the present research resulting from the use of a single coder and a small corpus of approx. 140,00 words.

The success of the methodological decisions to 1) use sitcom data, 2) use quantitative data analysis and statistical testing, 3) use quantitative data as a basis for character discussion and 4) conduct a triangulation of multiple impoliteness frameworks, points to the potential for the wider adoption of these methodological approaches in the field of pragmatic stylistics. The usefulness of quantitative analysis for going beyond researcher intuition and enabling comparison of character suggests that such methods could be more widely adopted in other studies.

8.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Perhaps the most important theoretical implication arising from this research is the theoretical linking of impoliteness and humour. While the academic interest in the link

between impoliteness and humour is at an early stage, this research has demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between them. This opens up the possibility for further quantitative research as well as a move towards establishing a theory of humorous use of impoliteness – the parameters of which will require further study. As mentioned in the introduction, this research has not sought to explore why impoliteness and humour are linked, though connections between incongruity and expectation vs. experience have been hinted at, with particular use being made of the Benign Violation Theory (McGraw and Warren 2010) which usefully accommodates the psychological conditions generated through the genre of sitcom.

Further theoretical implications come from the triangulation of three impoliteness frameworks in this study. The fluctuations of impoliteness within the episodes suggested that although they code different quantities of impoliteness, the frameworks tend to agree on the increase/decrease of impoliteness between episodes. It is possible that this may be evidence that three different impoliteness theories are coding the same 'thing', even though the difference in complexity and approach of the frameworks affects the quantities of impoliteness they code. Within this part of the study, I also showed that what Brown and Levinson term 'positive' and 'negative' face threats can be found in equivalent strategies among the most popular strategies in Leech and Spencer-Oatey's frameworks, suggesting, as discussed above, that the classic politeness framework identified some fundamental essential elements of politeness, at least in the British-Irish data studied here.

The use of impoliteness in the understanding of fictional characters is also an outcome of this research and choosing to view a character's speech as the motivated choice of that character allows for such pragmatic analysis of their speech. Using quantitative data to map and compare individual characters' impoliteness use allowed for a stylistic analysis of character and this could be used with further pragmatic elements of character analysis in future research.

8.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ancient Greek philosophers approached humour from the 'superiority' perspective, where humour and its expression through laughter, was believed to arise from feelings of superiority over another. This, then, made laughter dangerous as it could be used by citizens against those in political power as a mechanism for challenging their authority.

Indeed, Plato believed a single laugh could "blow things apart" (Sanders 1995:89). As a result of this mistrust of humour, Aristotle theorised that the best way to contain derisive laughter was within drama. In essence, he wanted people to delight in "faithful dramatic representations of follies" (Sanders 1995:104) of authority figures rather than mocking the powerful and wealthy in real life. Sanders summarises Aristotle's proposal as one whereby "the stage [would] be transformed into a gymnasium, a place of education" (Sanders 1995:104) in which derisive laughter was expelled safely and without risk to the powerful. If we subscribe to the argument that the sitcom can serve to pacify the public, it is possible that The TV sitcom performs the same function as the drama proposed by Aristotle. That is to say, sitcom provides a safe space in which the audience and viewers witness and laugh at socially prohibited impolite behaviour and in so doing release the tensions they feel in their everyday lives. However, throughout the thesis I have referred to the ongoing debate over the function of sitcom in society and the opposing view suggests that the sitcom has the potential to act as a mechanism for revolution by representing anti-establishment characters who frequently break social taboos and often experience few negative consequences. By portraying powerful characters (e.g. priests) as being flawed and laughable, the sitcom might be empowering us to explore the ideas of social transgression and question the legitimacy of those in power. This point is supported by the introduction of particular taboo terms (e.g. *feck* and its variants) into the British lexicon that occurred during Father Ted's original broadcast (Wickham 2014:857).

While the debate over the role of the sitcom in society continues, this research has provided substantial evidence that impoliteness is not only rife within the sitcom, but that this impoliteness functions as a trigger for audience laughter – which is taken here to be a sign of the successful communication of humour. As noted throughout the thesis, this research has sought to establish that humour can be triggered through impoliteness by going beyond researcher intuition and using genuine audience response to identify humorous uses of impoliteness. In doing so, I open the door to further research that may now endeavour to explore *why* it is that impoliteness is so funny to the British-Irish audiences. The present research has followed Dynel (2013) in her argument that the incongruity-resolution model of humour is the best placed to explain impoliteness in comedies. I have further outlined how the sitcom viewer meets all of the criteria for psychological distance (spatial, social, temporal and hypothetical) that the proponents of the Benign-Violation Theory of humour (McGraw and Warren 2010) suggest are needed in order to make violations (i.e. incongruities) benign (i.e. resolved). Further study in the

humour potential of different *types* of impoliteness may also be supported by this research as I found that some types of impoliteness are much more consistent at generating audience laughter than others. The cultural relativity of these findings could be a fruitful area for future research.

Indeed, humour is often seen as reflective of cultural identity and this is particularly pertinent when using British-Irish data as it sits within the context of the proposed 'British sense of humour'. The idea that humour is significant to the British cultural identity was evidenced through the addition of questions about comedy troupe *Monty Python* to the UK citizenship test in 2013 (Booth 2014). In finding the prevalence of impoliteness to be significantly higher in my British-Irish data than in sitcoms from the USA (Glascock 2008), I have also opened the door to future cross-cultural research examining the 'British sense of humour' in relation to impoliteness.

Impoliteness theories and frameworks have been used since the 1980s to explore data sets. None have explored so large a data set as this study and no study has been found that contrasts the findings of two or more impoliteness frameworks when applied to the same data set. I have not sought in this research to develop or propose a new definition or framework for impoliteness, though the findings of this thesis may be used in such an endeavour. The findings here may point to the potential of an amalgamated impoliteness framework from the three examined here, but also to the enduring significance of Brown and Levinson's conceptualisations of positive and negative face, at least within a British-Irish impoliteness context.

The practice of abusing people in public, whether in action or language, is legislated against in Britain in line with anti-discrimination acts. Shouting 'feck off' at an employee and throwing a cup at their head would likely have serious legal ramifications for any staff member in any organisation. Indeed, in 1983, Geoffrey Leech stated that "conflictive illocutions" are "marginal" in ordinary conversation. Likewise, in his monograph on impoliteness, Culpeper notes that "naturally occurring impoliteness is relatively rare in everyday contexts" (2011:9). While this may be true for the language used in everyday interaction, this is certainly not the case for the language and behaviour of characters within many sitcoms. Indeed, in watching a sitcom, we are invited into a world where the rules of society are transgressed and in which the response to witnessing a drunk priest shouting '*Feck off!*' at an enthusiastic tea lady is, in fact, laughter.

APPENDIX – FOI CORRESPONDENCE WITH OFCOM
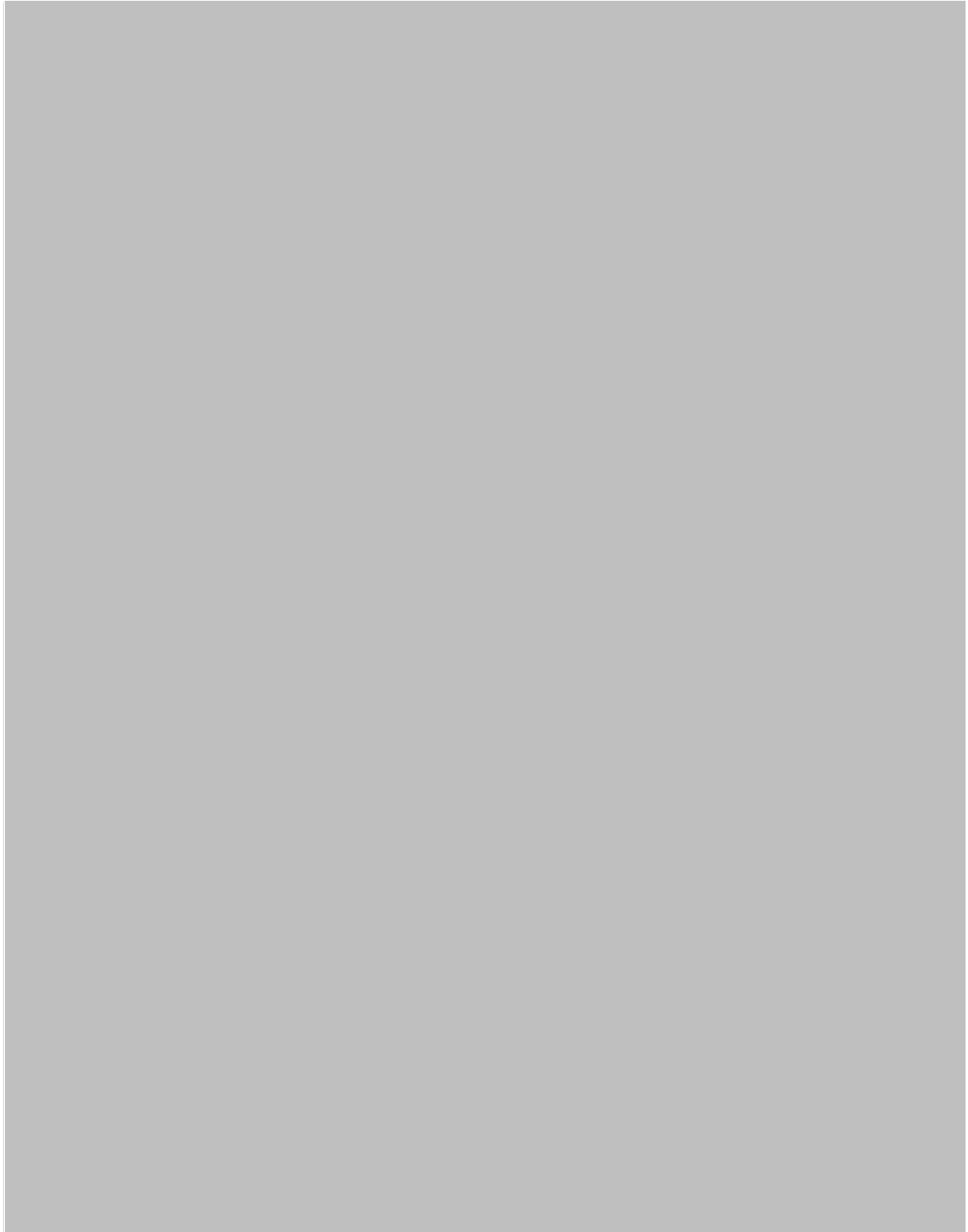
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> BERNARD: Ah, Christ, customers! Why didn't you lock the door?
> MANNY: We could make some money.
> BERNARD: But they're students.
> MANNY: Yeah, but *students read books*, or they pretend to anyway.
>
> - BLACK BOOKS, EPISODE 1.2

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NOTES

¹Throughout the thesis, references to *Mills* refer to the work of Brett Mills. References to Sara Mills' work will be distinguished by the use of her first name in in-text citations.

²Leech (2014) capitalises the names of his maxims and I follow suit here. Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008) and Culpeper (2011) do not capitalise the names for their categories and again, I follow suit.

³There are a number of instances in the data set where characters accuse one another of being LGBTQ+, female and/or not being cisgender. In these instances, it is often clear that the intent of the accuser is to offend; for example, Culpeper's (2011) framework includes 'gay' as a conventionalised insult. Thus, accusations such as this were coded as constituting impoliteness. The fact that being labelled LGBTQ+, non-cisgender or female functions as an insult reflects the heteronormative and misogynistic bias of mainstream British-Irish comedy at the time my data set was originally broadcast (and which continues in some programming today). The coding of such instances as constituting impoliteness does not reflect an authorial pejorative view of any aspect of sexuality, gender or any other aspect of identity.

Given the logistical and copyright issues of including my 140,000 word data set in the appendices, the full data set is available on request.