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„Insults, gender: fictional representation in *Breaking Bad*
& self-reported perception“

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1. Introduction

During one of the sessions of the linguistic seminar *Cognitive Corpus Linguistics* conducted in summer term 2014 the question arose whether the insult *bitch* is nowadays used as another way of saying *dude* or *pal* and thus fulfills a bonding function or not. As an example professor Fabiszak used the character of *Breaking Bad* Jesse Pinkman who uses *bitch* multiple times to either insult somebody, name things or welcome callers on his answering machine. Although, I was aware of this seemingly unlimited use of this swearword her remark caught my attention and I wanted to make further investigations on this subject.

Step-by-step the idea developed to analyze whether scripted language on TV resembles how actual speakers would use swearwords in everyday conversation. For example if script writers use *bitch* to address a female or a male and if so, do they use it in a friendly way or merely to insult. The main source for this qualitative and quantitative analysis is therefore the previously mentioned US-American TV show *Breaking Bad*.

Additionally to the difference between fictional presentation on television and real-life adaptation, my attention was drawn towards the different perceptions of native speakers (henceforth NS, both singular and plural) and nonnative speakers (henceforth NNS, both singular and plural) of English. As during the course of my study at the English department I came across the following quote:

“[...] nonnative speakers tend to have limited knowledge of curse words and use them infrequently, and in general, languages learned later in life have a weaker ‘emotional resonance’ than those learned earlier (Dewaele, 2004: 205 quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer, Kayle 2010: 55).

In order to evaluate possible different perceptions I am going to conduct a questionnaire asking NS and NNS about their self-reported perception of insults to see if they show any preferences concerning the gender of the addressed and if insults can be used to fulfill a bonding function, too.

The first chapter of this diploma thesis presents a brief historical overview of cursing in English and censorship in mass media in the United States with special focus put on television restrictions passed by the Federal Communications Commission (henceforth FCC). The chapter on pragmatics of usage will not only give information on the psychological reasons for swearing but moreover provides a classification according to the function of insults. And additionally to that, the

synopsis of the American TV show *Breaking Bad* and a characterization of their main characters will be presented as their relations as well as the plot development are strongly intertwined with their usage of insults.

This part will be followed by an empirical study divided into three sections. The first section will present both the most frequently used insults in general as well as a ranking of the top ten most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad*. These ten insults will further be analyzed according to gender-specificity of the addressee and addresser and the occurrences of bonding. Besides that these ten insults form the data for the conducted questionnaire which will be discussed in the second chapter of the empirical study. Here, the main research questions will evaluate possible differences in offensiveness and frequency of self-reported usage of these ten insults according to gender and nativeness of the speakers. This will be concluded with a comparison of the results of fictional scripted language of *Breaking Bad* and self-reported perception of NS and NNS.

The final chapter will then summarize the main findings of this diploma thesis.

As American sociolinguist Timothy Jay has already emphasized in his 1992 publication *Cursing in America* he uses the term *cursing* as an umbrella term for categories such as “*swearing, obscenity, profanity, blasphemy, name calling, insulting, verbal aggression, taboo speech, ethnic-racial slurs, vulgarity, slang and scatology*” (Jay 1992: 9) as they all refer to the sense of offensive speech. In order to avoid repetition throughout this paper Jay’s approach will be pursued and additionally to that, terms as *swearwords, cursing, cussing, bad language, dirty words* and *color words* are used interchangeably. If different definitions of these terms are highlighted, they will be explicitly referred to as such.¹

¹ See section 4.1. for a detailed description of the different meanings of swearing and cursing.

I. Theoretical part: cursing & censorship

This part focuses on three major areas – history, pragmatics and sociocultural features of cursing.

The introductory chapter will present a brief overview on the surviving sources in Old English scripts starting from the rise of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom (~ 1000 AD), the growing presence of insults deriving from different sources (scatology, sexuality, blasphemy) in written texts during the period of the Reformation and the implementation of political censorship in Renaissance plays. This will be followed by a historical summary of the rise and spread of censorship in the United States. The main emphasis is put on the enforcement, lifting and tightening of the censorship in film and television in the United States starting from the beginning of the 20th century up to now.

We will then go on to show how *cursing* can be grouped into two major areas according to function and source. This chapter will demonstrate that context is crucial for the interpretation of swearwords and the intended meaning.

The remainder of the first chapter is divided into three sections. First, gender-specific insults will be discussed. Second, the bonding function of insults, that is to use them to express sympathy, will be explained. And third, the nativeness of a speaker and its influence on the perception of the offensiveness of insults will be shown.

2. Historical development

The first part of this chapter informs the reader on the historical development of cursing in form of example extracts of written scripts such as letters, plays or poems from Old English to Modern English with the main focus put on Britain. This will be followed with a turn of perspective to the United States and a historical overview of the enforcement of censorship laws as the appearance of cursing in films and on television increased. Hereby, special attention will be paid to broadcasting channels.

2.1. Evolution of cursing and censorship in the UK from the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom to Modern Times

This introductory section informs the reader about the origin of *cursing* in old Anglo-Saxon scripts² and thus, sheds more light on swearing throughout the Middle Ages. Our chronological journey will then continue with literary masterpieces of Early Middle English and the tremendous explosion of religious and sexual insults in letters by clericals during the period of the Reformation. The continuing rise of the middle class throughout the Augustan and Victorian Era enforced prudery on everyday life and simultaneously led to a shift from political to strict linguistic censorship which was shipped with the settlers to the New World.

Historical sources show that the majority of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts deal with spells and charms (Hughes 1991: 37-39). However, back in Anglo-Saxon times the semantic meaning of *spell* did not refer to today's meaning of *spell* as a form of enchantment but also meant "speech, narrative and discourse" (Hughes 1991: 39). On the contrary, the term *charm* already included magic in its original Old English meaning as can be found in its earliest evidence – *Cursor Mundi* (1300) (Hughes 1991: 39).³ Hughes lists *charms* as one variation of the higher/sacred form of word magic which includes prayers, attestations and oaths. Yet, *spells* belong to the low varieties (taboo and profane) of swearing as they did not call for the help of divine power (Hughes 2006: xvi).⁴

In heroic Germanic literature as, for example, in *Njal's Saga* or *Beowulf* both heroes do not swear directly at each other, but express their insults in euphemisms. Therewith, the author managed to present the heroes as modest and ferocious at the same time.⁵ As Hughes stresses this limited occurrence of insults does not mean that authors of that time were not familiar with stronger forms of swearing but rather that

² Unfortunately, it has to be said that the extant sources merely represent a glimpse of Old English (5th century ~ mid-12th century) and only allow us to make hypotheses on a limited range of knowledge. It can be assumed that Old English texts might have contained a broader range of swearwords and insults. Yet, the answer is either still locked up in some private library or was forever destroyed.

³ A charm was not bound to written transformation but could also be represented in the form of runes. The signs themselves already expressed a magical incantation as for example N-runes are known to be used for "delayed child-birth". Runes were not exclusively used in Old English but also in Old Norse, Norwegian and Icelandic (Hughes 1991: 40).

⁴ See section 4.4.

⁵ For example as Beowulf attends a banquet and Unferth insults and tries to provoke him he remains kindly, answers with humor and refers to the amount of beer Unferth had already consumed (Hughes 1991: 49-50). Although Unferth tries to provoke Beowulf, the hero does not lower himself to the level of the offender.

their writing style was reserved and did not express deep and strong emotions in the form of epithets (Hughes 1991: 42). Further support for Hughes' hypothesis that swearing had already been practiced can be found in Germanic and Old Norse literature. *Flyting*⁶, for example, is practiced in the Old Norse poem *Lokasenna* in which Loki insults the other Nordic gods accusing them "[...] of being lazy, cowardly, a weakling, effeminate, homosexual, and one as being an incestuous pervert who likes 'golden showers'" (Allan & Burridge 2006: 86). Besides that Old Norse already let women malign their future ex-husbands (Hughes 1991: 49). A more modest Anglo-Saxon form of *flyting* can be found in the prelude of the *Battle of Maldon* and, as has been mentioned above, in *Beowulf*.

Christianity did not only spread the word of Jesus Christ but was at the same time the driving force of medieval swearing, too. Hughes points out that religious swearing e.g. "by my faith! [or] by God that sits above!" (Hughes 1991: 56) is more present and prominent in manuscripts of that time than for example sexual swearing or scatology. Additionally to religious swearing throughout the period of Middle English (1154-1485) a new category of swearing was added namely derogatory terms referring to the social status of the addressee e.g. *wretch*, *knave* and later *beggar* and *rascal* (Hughes 1991: 57). Another important source of that time is Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (end of 14th century) in which the various characters apply a variety of curses, swearing and blasphemous phrases.⁷ On the contrary to that the poem *The Owl and the Nightingale* (1250) already illustrates a high frequency of euphemistic scatology in the middle of the 13th century as the poet discusses the delicate subjects of defecation.⁸

As readership was limited and the number of illiterates in society was rather high censorship of written texts was not needed. However, already in Medieval Times authorities tried to control the foul language of their subjects with "judicial punishment and ecclesiastical denunciation" (Hughes 1991: 59). Back then, the level of penalty was strongly interrelated with the social status of the swearer as lords merely had to pay fines whereas pages were chastised with a whipping (Montagu 1973: 108 quoted in Hughes 1991: 60). Martin Luther's Reformation questioned the religious practices

⁶ The term *flyting* finds its roots in Old English as well as in Old Norse, however with two different meanings. Whereas in Old English the term *flitan* refers "to contend or strive" (Hughes 1991: 47) and thus relates it to competition and contest, Old Norse *flyta* was mainly used to provoke the addressee into action.

⁷ For a closer analysis on swearing in *The Canterbury Tales* see Hughes 1991: 62-88.

⁸ As the owl is making fun of the nightingale's residence next to the privy the poem uses the first recorded euphemism *behind* referring to bottom (Hughes 1991: 58).

of the ecclesiastical authorities and led to a rethinking about the legitimacy of the Roman Church and the definition of Christianity. As their discourse was about religion the swearwords they needed, naturally, were of religious content and derived from various sources with the main focus of insulting the ecclesiastical counterpart. To illustrate the full spectrum with a brief excerpt of a letter written by John Bale, Bishop of Ossory, who calls his Catholic adversaries “fylthie whoremongers, murtherers, thieves, raveners, idolatours, lyars, dogges, swyne ... and very devyls incarnate” (Bennett 1952: 73 quoted in Hughes 1991: 92). Although at the beginning of Middle English sexual terms were largely avoided the Reformation apparently called for stronger derogatory terms and introduced a new category of insults – sexual terms. Authors compared the Pope to the *Whore of Babylon* and as new religious sects were founded their rivals tried to destroy their reputation by accusing them of “polymorphously perverse religious practices [...] as *profanations*, *enormities* and *abominations*” (Hughes 1991: 96).

During the English Renaissance the rapid spread of cursing in written texts shows a biased effect. On the one hand, this period brought Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and other play writers to the foreground who enriched the audience’s life with drama, wit and foul language. And on the other hand, it was the birth of censorship as the content of several plays found a new target for caustic remarks – the political leadership. During the Middle Ages religion was the holiest for society and thus, presented at the same time the main target for vilifications. Additionally to that, secular swearing became more prominent and, therewith, plays which might have disapproved of secular rulers had to be handed in to the Master of Revels.⁹ As Queen Elisabeth I (1558-1603) was not adverse to strong language, linguistic censorship in plays was only introduced three years after her death in 1606. Her main interest was of political nature namely to prevent political and religious propaganda (e.g. the Elizabethan religious settlement). According to McEnery linguistic censorship of that time was most reasonably done so by Puritan printers who pursued their own objectives and not upon instructions from the Queen (McEnery 2006: 63-65). On the contrary to his predecessor, James I (1567-1625) was personally more engaged in censorship as he came from a social background in

⁹ The Master of Revels’ main mission was to pre-read stage plays, declare whether the content was appropriate for the audience and if necessary censor plays. His office was created in 1574 and carried out by Sir Henry Herbert from 1621-1641 and 1660-1673 (Hughes 1991: 102; 2006: 62; McEnery 2006: 70-71).

which he had already been the leading censor in Scotland. Additionally, between 1580s and 1620s the number of publications of books increased steadily and thus, as the English Parliament passed the *Act to Restraine Abuses of Players* in 1606 the restriction of blasphemous language became of major interest to the crown (Hughes 1991: 103; McEnery 2006: 61-67). The almost natural consequence of censorship was the implementation of euphemisms and a turn to pagan divinities that resembled secular rulers (Hughes 1991: 104).¹⁰

Charles I (1625-1649) gave the Church, in particular the Bishop of London and later Archbishop of Canterbury, a greater role in the censorship and therewith, censored both religious and secular spheres to the beginning of the English Civil War in 1640 (McEnery 2006: 70).¹¹ During the time of the English Civil War and Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth censorship took a break both in its linguistic and political form which subsequently led to the *Blasphemy Act* of 1650 with the main objective to eliminate anti-governmental opinions and the Ranters, a protestant sect (McEnery 2006: 75-76).¹² As Charles II came to the throne in 1661 he called Sir Henry Herbert back to his office as Master of Revels who took up his previous job, and in 1662 the *Licensing Act* was introduced. Yet, during Charles' reign the main focus was not to eliminate bad language but mainly non-governmental thoughts, similar to his predecessors (McEnery 2006: 79-80). Thus, the main focus of censorship still was on political restriction and not linguistic purity. Subsequently, with the rise of the English middle class the former main focus of political censorship shifted to linguistic censorship in order to protect ears and thoughts of conservative bourgeoisie families and distance middle and upper from lower classes (McEnery 2006: 83-84). Throughout the Augustan Era foul language was strongly disapproved. Poets such as Alexander Pope did not even use any common terms which might have offended the audience in any possible way (Hughes 1991: 142). Yet, in order to keep communication alive, Latinization of taboo words was introduced by the upper class

¹⁰ For a closer analysis on Shakespeare's plays and their usage of swearing see Hughes (1991: 108-119).

¹¹ The English Civil War reached its peak with the beheading of the monarch in 1649. For more information about religious societies as the Society for the Reformation of Manners (SRM), their foundation and rise in English society from 1690-1730s see McEnery (2006: 83-115).

¹² The Ranters can be considered as a sect which was far ahead of its time and can be compared with the hippie movement of the 1960s. Also, during this time already origins of nationalism can be spotted as certain diseases were attributed to nationalities. The French were always closely related to sexual activity calling syphilis a French pox and not to forget the French kiss (Hughes 1991: 131-132). Although the Jews were banned from England from 1290 until 1655 their stereotypes survived centuries and depicted them as greedy, rapacious behavior as for example in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90) or Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (1596-98).

as a new form of avoiding censorship and social outrage (Hughes 1991: 145-146). As almost every cultural movement has its flagship it has its black sheep, too, and so does the Augustan Era namely – Jonathan Swift. He is a known violator of these social standards, “[...] a rebellious and eccentric counter-example [...]” (Hughes 2006: 454). In *The Lady’s Dressing Room* (1730) he does not even shy back to depict women during such private intimacies as follows:

O, Celia Celia, Celia shits! (l. 118 quoted in Hughes 2006: 456)¹³

The Victorian Era (1837-1901) was characterized as a parallel society. Or to say this in other words two completely different world views and parlances lived side by side – richness vs. poverty; hedonism and decadence vs repression (Hughes 2006: 479). On the one hand the middle and upper classes disguised texts with metaphors, euphemisms and Latinisms transforming written pieces to an obscure secret language. They even avoided homophonous words e.g. *stink* and *sick* as they found it obscene to address legs of furniture with the same word of a person and even covered them with blankets (Ellis 1996: 6; Hughes 2006: 481). And on the other hand, a new genre of Victorian pornography opened an unknown world full of all kinds of perversion which were disguised with foreign euphemisms, too, e.g. calling a ‘whore’ an *academician* and ‘strip tease’ *pose plastique* (Hughes 1991: 151-162; 2006: 479-483; McEnery 2006: 114). In order to decode these messages and understand the jargon of the people of the street, slang dictionaries were published as early as in 1552. Yet, they were not designed as present day dictionaries but rather as guides leading through different linguistic milieus (Hughes 1991: 156). Books on etiquette published during the Victorian Period supported the stereotype of women as angles of the house that had to be modest and passive (McEnery 2006: 114-115).¹⁴

Apart from these ongoing social changes within British society colonization enabled people to search their luck in the New World. Americans were mainly influenced by the ‘plain speech’ of the Puritans and Quaker’s of Pennsylvania. The main reason given by Hughes why American English differs, for example, from Australian English is that after the American War of Independence (1775-1783)

¹³ As *The Lady’s Dressing Room* and *The Owl and the Nightingale* show the subject of defecation has been arousing emotions for centuries.

¹⁴ On the contrary to this idealized depiction of women the fisher’s market at Billingsgate (London) became known from the middle of the 17th century for the coarse language of the fishwives (Hughes 2006: 22-23).

convicts were no longer transported to the New World and therewith the linguistic influence of the underworld jargon stopped by the end of the 18th century. Hughes (1991: 166) drawing on Mencken (1936: 313) states that “[...] the mainstream of American swearing is more concerned with obscenity than with profanity” as there was a greater opposition towards obscene language than blasphemous or profane.¹⁵ However, as Jay defines more precisely, they are more concerned about sexual obscenity aiming at religion (Jay 1992: 197).¹⁶ Yet, the American definition of obscenity was largely influenced by the Hicklin test¹⁷ of 1868 which laid the basis for the federal enactment of 1873 (Jay 1992: 198). Fine and Johnson name two social movements which were crucial for the distribution and spread of obscene language in everyday usage in the United States – namely “the anti-war movement of the 1960s and the women’s movement of the 1970s” (Fine & Johnson 1984: 60). More precisely, the first movement used obscenity to confront the public with discontent and demonstrate rebellion in form of obscene language. The latter protested by adapting obscene language from men and this act of power against the morals and norms of their parental generation is also known as “language of power” (Fine & Johnson 1984: 60).

As the historical development of swearwords show there has been a change from religious swearing to sexual and racial swearing throughout the centuries primarily insulting what was most important and tabooed in society. During the Middle Ages until Reformation religious swearing was considered to be the most offensive as religion was at the same time the most sacred aspect of everyday life. (Hughes

¹⁵ On the contrary to the United States which fought its way into dependence, Australia remained under the reign of the British Commonwealth and was the prison for convicts. As the majority of people came from the underworld of British society they used a certain dialect known as *flash*. Apparently this dialect asked for interpreters who had to translate between prosecutor and defendants (Hughes 1991: 170). Further typical features of American English are *hell* and *goddam*. For the latter Mencken (1936: 315) attributes its integration in a word as an American invention e.g. *abso-goddam-lutely!* (Hughes 1991: 169). The Australian counterpart is *bloody* which is nowadays no longer considered as an insult as it occurred in such high frequency as to become a normal term. To read more about slang and expletives especially used in Down Under see Ellis (1996: 61-62), also see section 5.1.

¹⁶ The first recorded case of censorship was in 1821 after the publication of John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill/Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* in Massachusetts which already had been censored after its first publication in 1749 (Jay 1992: 197). To read more about cases of obscenity and fighting words in the US see Jay 1992: 197-206.

¹⁷ The Hicklin test also known as the British Hicklin doctrine was a standard test for obscenity which was first established in the case *Regina v. Hicklin* in the UK in 1868. Hicklin cancelled the previously ordered destruction of anti-Catholic pamphlets as he did not consider them as obscene. Yet, the case went to the Court of Queen’s Bench and there the Chief Justice did not agree with Hicklin’s decision as he considered the material to have “a tendency to suggest impure and libidinous thoughts in the minds of those open to the influence of such thoughts” (Bremmer 1971: 231). Later, this test allowed publications to be banned (Bartee & Bartee Fleetwood 1992: 65).

1991: 249; 2006: 331).¹⁸ Obscene references were considered to be most offensive to English Middle Class during the Victorian Era, yet, the sexual revolution of the 1960s broke the power of obscene language by means of repetitive exposure. Therewith, swearwords and insults changed either according to the function they had to fulfill and the source they came from, once they were outdated they were no longer used. Nowadays physical appearance, intellect, sexual active-/passiveness prove to be the main source of insults.

Within this section we found that the original meaning of *spell* was not related to any magical power but *charm* was and that Old Saxon writers presented their heroes as modest characters who did not lower themselves to the level of cursing. Yet, the spread of Christianity in Europe also brought blasphemous swearwords which were later elaborated with sexual insults during the period of the Reformation in order to express the disgust of other confraternities. Although the Church intended to save their subjects from foul language the initial purpose of censorship was to erase any form of secular criticism with the help of the Master of Revels and not to practice linguistic censoring. The rise of the middle class urged authors and poets to disguise offensive words in poems and texts with foreign terms, euphemisms, Latinisms. Although the prudery of Augustan and Victorian Era seemed to cover any form of desire it was at the same time the renaissance of pornographic texts. As many Puritans migrated to the United States they had a crucial impact on the development of social standards within society and were mostly concerned about sexual obscenity which, however, was overcome by the anti-war and the women's movement in the second half of the last century.

¹⁸ In Middle English *blaspheme* meant "[...] to utter impious or profane words' and was usually followed by *against*, [...]" (Hughes 2006: 31). It was an intended utterance or act (black magic) against God and could be punished with the death penalty. Likewise, *profane* in its Middle English sense derived from the Latin word *fanum* (temple) and was borrowed to describe the act of "[...] desecrate[ing] or violat[ing] a temple" (Hughes 2006: 362), before its meaning was extended to more secular objects (Hughes 1991: 246-247).

2.2. Cursing & censorship in film and television in the United States

This section aims to present the historical spread of cursing in US-American films and television as well as in plays. Moreover, it will focus on the simultaneous expansion of censoring according to the law (FCC) and self-protective measures in form of TV parental guidelines.

2.2.1. Films and television

In the 19th century the British Hicklin doctrine (1868) basically forbade any obscene material in order to protect “[...] the innocent, the inexperienced, the ignorant, the morally weak” (Allan & Burrige 2006: 20) or as Battistella simply defined this group – women and children (Battistella 2005: 72).¹⁹ The *Hicklin test* was later superseded in the United States by the three-part test of obscenity introduced in the *Roth* case in 1957 which later became better known by the name *Memoirs* with the aim of censoring obscenity from screens (Jay 1992: 198-199).²⁰ Nevertheless, films could not be restrained from swearwords for good and regardless of obscenity tests bad language found its way on movie screens as the following examples show.

One of the first official swearwords ever aired in a cinema caused a nationwide outcry in 1914. As it is noted the line *Not bloody likely!* crossed the lips of an actress playing Eliza Doolittle in George Bernhard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*. The name of the play was even used as a euphemism for the taboo word e.g. “Not Pygmalion likely” (Hughes 1991: 195; McEnery 2006: 117-118). In 1927 Mae West’s play *The Drag* was supposed to be put on Broadway. As the plot was about a married homosexual and contained a lot of gay slang a theatre censorship was passed and due to the pressure of the religious right *The Drag* was never played (Allan & Burrige 2006: 155). The same year together with the appearance of sound in movies the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association (henceforth MPPDA) published

¹⁹ Already back in the 17th century critics asked for censorship in order to protect the ladies from smutty speech (McEnery 2006: 85). In 1933 the publication of *Ulysses* became a case at court as prosecutors claimed the written piece asked for protection of the average person due to content and language (Ellis 1996: 40). Yet, as the judge concluded, the average person was already familiar with the terms, the case was dropped.

²⁰ The definition of obscenity in the three-part test was defined as follows: “1. the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to a prurient interest in sex, 2. the material is patently offensive as it affronts contemporary standards relating to descriptions of sexual matters, and 3. the material is utterly without redeeming social importance” (Jay 1992: 198).

guidelines and therewith banned words like “*god, lord, jesus, Christ, hell, damn, gawd*, and ‘every other profane and vulgar expression however it may be spelled’” (Steinberg 1982: 391 quoted in Jay 1992: 217) from films. Thus, more than ten years later, producer Selznick had to fight for Clark Gable’s legendary “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn” in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) (Jay 1992: 219) and pay a fine of \$5,000 as he had violated the Production Code of 1930 which reinforced the guidelines from the MPPDA (Jay 1992: 218-219).

In his 1992 publication Timothy Jay presents the outcomes of this study *Cursing in American Films 1939-1989* which listed popular American movies and the number of occurrences of swearwords. The rapid growth of obscene language used in films is crucial to point out. Especially during the time interval of 1950 to 1970 the influence of Hollywood had its main impact on initially restraining bad language but subsequently licensing it (Hughes 1991: 197-198). Whereas the movie *Gone with the Wind* (1939) shows a total number of 5 derogatory terms, *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) features more than twenty times as many bad words (107 in totals) thirty years later. Ten years later this number was doubled in *North Dallas Forty* by 234 color words and reached its high peak with *Scarface* and 299 occurrences throughout 170 minutes of Al Pacino killing and taking revenge on his rivals (Jay 1992: 231-233). Although Jay’s study focused on films it shows the rapid spread of swearwords in American filmography which, however, is surprising given the fact that certain themes depicting immoral acts were prohibited e.g. sex, drug usage and miscegenation with regards to the family audience (Hughes 1991: 198-199).

Yet, the reason for the considerable abandonment of censorship can be explained with profit-related aspects. In the year of 1939 television started its successful course and became a major competitor to the film industry. The two domains split according to their audience and television devoted its content to families whereas film makers defined their new target group as viewers interested in “alternative’, ‘adult’ entertainment” (Hughes 1991: 199). As producers did not rely on advertisers as much as television broadcasts the sphere of influence was restricted and they could no longer dictate the content as they did for the networks (Hughes 1991: 199). Still, television networks could not be prevented from airing swearwords (Allan & Burridge 2006: 106-107). Yet, the receptive television audience had to wait until the early 1960s to hear the first *shit* ever aired on American television in the movie *The Connection* (1961) (Battistella 2005: 69).

2.2.2. Broadcasts, cable and premium channels

A more recent study by Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye 2010 focuses on television programs and finds that there is a difference between viewers of broadcast TV, cable and premium channels and their perception of vulgar speech. As the three authors illustrate swearwords uttered on premium channels caused the least disturbance among their viewers. However, if the same dirty words were uttered on broadcast television the audience felt most offended. Cable channel viewers were placed in the middle (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 63). This result shows that the perception of offensive content is strongly intertwined with the audience as well as the format and has already been shown by Battistella in a similar study in 2005 (Battistella 2005: 71-72). Moreover, as Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye point out it is of major importance to find out whether these expectations are unconsciously produced or consciously perceived by choosing a certain format (Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye 2010: 52, 63).

An important restriction which was introduced in 1984 in order to regulate obscenity was the *Cable Communications Policy Act* which tried to “prohibit the transmission of ‘any matter which is obscene or otherwise unprotected by the Constitution’” (no reference given in Jay 1992: 211). As we found several steps were taken in order to regulate broadcasting more and more by governmental institutions as for example the *Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act* (henceforth BDEA) in 2006. Apparently, after Bono, singer of the Irish rock band U2 had expressed his enthusiasm on the 2003 Golden Globes with “This is really, really fucking brilliant” (Kaye & Sapolsky 2009: 22), and several other violations, the FCC had to react due to a number of complaints.²¹ Thus, the BDEA allowed the FCC to increase fines for violating their language prescriptions from \$32,500 to \$325,000. As the definition of the BDEA leaves room for interpretation broadcasters complained that the BDEA is too unclear (Kaye & Sapolsky 2009: 26).

²¹ Almost ten years earlier, in 1986, former President of the United States Ronald Reagan thought the microphone to be turned off and called the reporters “sons of bitches” (Ellis 1996: 91). In 1998 CNN reporter Bernhard Shaw’s *fuck* on air called for a nationwide excuse as well as Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake’s *Nipplegate* in 2004 (Battistella 2005: 71).

2.2.3. The TV rating-system

In the late 1960s the rating categories were introduced by the Motion Picture Association of America (henceforth MPAA) and underwent several adaptations with the 1986 categorization of the following letter codes:

G rate movies may go beyond polite conversation
PG can have some profanity
The film's use of stronger sexuality derived words used only as expletives, require the PG-13 rating
A sexually derived word in a sexually explicit context gets an R and more than one expletive results in an R rating
X rated films contain brutal or sexually related language (Jay 1992: 220-221).²²

Additionally to the MPAA the Film Advisory Board (henceforth FAB) was founded in 1975 in order to make the content description more precise. Despite the fact that "neither system makes the language description very clear" (Jay 1992: 222) content and age-based ratings were introduced in television in 1997 after the Congress had previously passed the *Telecommunications Act* in 1996 which called for "rating of video programming that contains sexual, violent or other indecent material [...] to transmit such rating to permit parents to block the display of video programming that they have determined is inappropriate for their children (Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 307; Sapolsky & Kaye 2010: 293). Eventually the television industry had to give in and adopt the rating system.

Visiting the parental guidelines of the more recent homepage *The TV Parental Guidelines* one can find a more detailed description of the abbreviations of the ratings such as violence (V), fantasy violence (FV), sexual situations (S), coarse or crude language (L) and suggestive dialogue (D) which is closely linked to conversations about sexual intercourse.²³ As the guidelines show parents are mainly concerned to protect their children from any form of sexual and violent content and speech (The TV Parental Guidelines). As watchdog groups went into battle with TV channels, broadcasting and the movie industry the ever growing rating system has not yet found a suitable solution indicating clearly enough which content and language are presented.

²² Video movies have a different rating system (Jay 1992: 221).

²³ In 1997 the new ratings V, S, L and D were introduced (Albiniak 1997: page number not given, quoted in Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 307).

What we found in this chapter is that the 20th century was the time for swearwords to come on stage, again, causing trouble and disturbance and making directors pay fines. With the spread of television in American households, the content of films became more violent and obscene and offered an opportunity for characters to express emotions with the 'needed' vocabulary. As Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye show is the perception of offensiveness strongly related to the audience, content and the even broadcasting channel. For the time being parents help themselves with guidelines (*The TV Parental Guidelines*) while the call for legal censorship in television is increasing.

3. Censorship in US television

This chapter will show how freedom of speech and censorship in the United States are biased with the restrictions of the FCC and the ban of the seven dirty words on broadcasting channels. Yet, as society changes so does the perception of offensiveness of cursing and according to script writers this reality has to be represented authentically with the help of cursing.

3.1. The Freedom of speech and censorship

The United States are depicted as the place of limitless opportunities. Freedom, as believed, should not only be limited to personal freedom but above all guarantee religious freedom and freedom of speech. The latter is manifested in the 1791 First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States with the following words:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances (Allan & Burrige 2006: 12).

Yet, self-regulations²⁴ and laws passed by controlling institutions restricted the freedom of speech step by step (Jay 1992: 195). Jay groups the First Amendment into three categories of speech which should not be violated – “[...] sexually explicit

²⁴ e.g. the Production Code of 1930 by Will H. Hays restraining themes in films (Hughes 1991: 198). In 1973 the Supreme Court stated that freedom of speech does not include obscene remarks in literature (Hughes 2006: 333).

or obscene speech, defaming or libelous speech, fighting words” (Jay 1992: 196). As he further explains freedom of speech is guaranteed to its users as long as they do not violate it, for example, use it in any obscene form or encourage somebody to do something violent. Further, Americans should not damage one’s reputation and they are not allowed to spread thoughts which would “disturb the peace and security offered to them by the government” (Jay 1992: 200). As there is a widespread assumption in US-American society that “vulgar language, whether on television or in general conversation, abets emotional abuse, physical violence, and incivility” (Marks 1996: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48) the tool of censorship is installed in order to help society to remain unspoiled and protect oneself from coarse language and cruel intentions (Battistella 2005: 73; Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 306).²⁵

Yet, language is adapted to a changing environment by its users. As this ongoing transformation leads to a change in the perception of offensiveness, too, the necessity of censorship can be questioned. With regards to the interrelation of bad language and bad behavior Bandura (1991 page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48) and Jay (1992 page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48) stress that the offensiveness of a swearword gets lost by means of repetitive exposure.²⁶ This theory is further supported by Hughes (1991: 253)²⁷ as well as Griffiths and Shuckford who call this phenomena “psychological blunting” (Griffiths & Shuckford 1989: page number not given, quoted in Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 305; Martin et al. 1997: page number not given,; Paik & Comstock 1994: page number not given,; Tan 1985: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48). Additionally, as one argument of censorship is to protect minors and infants, Donnerstein, Wilson and Linz found that children under the age of 12 are not fully able to understand the offensiveness of swearwords (Donnerstein, Wilson & Linz 1992: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 49). Warren, Gerke and Kelly suggest that it would be better to raise the children’s awareness towards the effect of derogatory terms and show them how to critically watch television instead of installing censorship in great degree

²⁵ The profession of a *censor* goes far back to Ancient Rome and finds its roots in the magistrate of the *censor* who had the power of supervising public morality and penalizing offenders. The main difference to today’s censorship is that Rome’s censor practiced political and not linguistic censorship (Allan & Burrige 2006: 20). Similar to Queen Elisabeth and some of her successors see 2.1.

²⁶ This is also one explanation for the decrease in the intensity of religious profanity eventually becoming a mild swearword.

²⁷ Except *fuck*, *shit* and *cunt* (Hughes 1991: 253).

(Warren, Gerke & Kelly 2002: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 49). Allan and Burrridge illustrate that bad language and vile deeds do not necessarily have to influence each other as they discuss the controversial writings by Marquis de Sade in which he shares his most inner sexual and violent motives. As they further list several shocking murders throughout the history they highlight that probably none of them had ever read his books (Allan & Burrridge 2006: 20-23).²⁸ Eventually, McEnery raises the question whether TV shows and films really have such a bad impact on our children or if the depiction of reality and language has just become more accurate over the past years (McEnery 2006: 9).

3.2. The FCC and the seven dirty words

The case *Pacifica Foundation vs. FCC* in 1978 led to the prohibition of the seven dirty words due to the radio broadcasting show *Filthy Words*. The content of this show raised complaints due to the usage of swearwords during daytime (Jay 1992: 199). Although the radio announcer's initial purpose was to humorously discuss the words "shit, piss, fuck, cunt, cocksucker, mother-fucker, fart, turd, twat and (less obviously) tits" (Hughes 1991: 202) the audience was less amused and eventually the Supreme Court confirmed the offensiveness of this faux pas radio show. The verdict of *Pacifica Foundation vs. FCC* declared that *indecent* words were not to be aired on broadcast to the general public. As the word *indecent* left room for interpretation the Supreme Court further affirmed the closer definition by the FCC as follows:

Language that describes, in terms patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards for the broadcast medium, sexual or excretory activities or organs' and the 'seven dirty words' (*shit, piss, fuck, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker, and tits*) (FCC v. Pacifica Foundation 1978 no page given quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 51; emphasis added)

However, it has to be highlighted that the FCC has greater influence on public radio and television than on premium channels and cable as those do not belong to the area of FCC's jurisdiction (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 51). After 1978 the *Cable Communications Policy Act* of 1984 tried to regulate the airing of "any matter which is obscene or otherwise unprotected by the Constitution" (Jay 1992: 211). Another restriction tightened by the FCC was the definition of the *safe harbor of broadcasting*.

²⁸ Villain Gus Fring in *Breaking Bad*, for example, never swears and pretends to be friendly and courteous. Yet, he is a cold-blooded murderer.

Safe harbor defines a time period in which children were not considered to be among the audience and therefore indecent language and content could be aired. From 1978 to 1987 the time span was from 10 PM to 6 AM, however, after 1987 the safe harbor was limited to six hours from midnight to 6 AM. Yet, a year later the US Court of Appeals declared the definition of a safe harbor as invalid as there was no previous analysis which actually verified if children were watching or not. Consequently, the Congress tried to ban indecent content far beyond the safe harbor and pled for a 24-hour ban with the result that after 1991 the ban of indecent language was practiced without any legal backing (*Action for Children's Television v. FCC*, 1988, 1991 no page given quoted in Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 306-307). Therefore, the BDEA of 2006 raised the fines for indecency violations. Although, the FCC policy was strongly criticized by television stations and networks and as a result was taken to the US Supreme court, the latter decided for the FCC (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 52).

The seven dirty words probably find its origin in America's *Bigsix* as Hughes refers to – *shit*, *piss*, *fart*, *fuck*²⁹, *cock*³⁰ and *cunt* (Hughes 1991: 20). This means that there is no TV-show on national television in the United States which should use the above mentioned swearwords unless they are ready to pay a fine. Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye interestingly found in a survey carried out in 2010 that *shit* and *piss* are nowadays the two swearwords out of the mentioned seven which seem to be less disturbing (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 63). Besides, over the course of time the formerly restricted swearwords occasionally find their way into radio shows and even television shows which are approved for family entertainment which again supports the theory of psychological blunting.³¹ This change in offensiveness mirrors at the same time that there has been a shift within society concerning the offensiveness of swearwords or as Hughes puts it there is actually a "constant flux, as older terms of weight and force are trivialized [and] to be replaced by modish newcomers" (Hughes 1991: 236). The reason for this shift lays in the transformation of society as terms like *devil* or *witch* can nowadays be used regardless to social criticism and further "[...]

²⁹ *Fuck* c. 1503 – original meant "for unlawful carnal knowledge" or "fornicate under command of the King" during the time of the Plague in England people were advised to reproduce (Hughes 1991: 24).

³⁰ Interestingly as *cock* was more and more used to refer to male sex organ, the term *rooster* was introduced to take away the sexual undertone when calling male chicken (Hughes 1991: 19).

³¹ Some viewers discuss the rating for *Breaking Bad* as they do not agree with the rating TV 14 which basically tells parents children above the age of 14 can watch the TV show (<http://www.gamefaqs.com/boards/225-television-broadcast-tv/61674478>).

these trends reflect the increasing secularization of Western society.” (Hughes 1991: 237, 240-241; Allan & Burrige 2006: 106).³² Further evidence can be found in a study carried out by Jay who found that elders use profanities such as *hell* or *damn* more often whereas teenagers prefer obscenities as *fuck* and *shit* (Jay 2000: 96-97). Further, Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye illustrate that a couple of centuries back before the Renaissance people were most upset if somebody used religious profanity given the fact of its importance in society (Sheidlower 1999: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye 2010: 47; Hughes 1991: 102).³³ However, nowadays blasphemous swearing is considered the least offensive as in the 1970s various studies showed that the former offensively religious swearwords were replaced by sexual matter and scatology such as “*motherfucker, cocksucker, cunt, fuck and shit*” (Cameron 1969: page number not given; Foote & Woodward 1973: page number not given; Mabry E.A., 1974, 1975: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48) in offensiveness ratings. A decade later, the sexual tendency of the 1970s expanded further and made sexual words an even bigger taboo “[...] than excretory and blasphemous words” (Selnow, 1985: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48). Further support can be found in Hughes (1991: 11) who states that after the 1960s the reins of sexual related insults and swearing were slackened in the US. By the end of the last century new waves of expletives took over and back then in 1999 racist remarks were found the most offensive (Sheidlower 1999: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48; Macaulay 2006: 100).

3.3. The driving force(s) behind censorship

The main force behind the censorship enforcement is a symbiosis of “parents, conservatives³⁴, and watchdog groups” (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 46). According to Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye they all share the firm belief that “expletives on television lead to more cursing in everyday conversation and to a general breakdown in civility and personal values” (Marks 1996: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye 2010: 46) as has already been mentioned in

³² See section 2.1.

³³ See section 2.1.

³⁴ Sapolsky et al found in his study that liberals feel less offended by derogatory terms on television than conservatives (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 64).

the previous sections.³⁵ In his 1991 publication *A Matter of Manners* Hargrave divided the broadcast audience into five groups accordingly to the spheres they feel most offended by:

- a) the “anti-sexual,” who are mainly young men who were offended by sexual terms;
- b) the “offended,” who are frequent church-goers with strong and negative opinions about all types of offensive words on television;
- c) the “non-anatomical,” who are most offended by scatological references and those words that referred to the genitals;
- d) the “permissive respondents,” who are least likely to complain about sexual words; and
- e) the “religious protectors,” who are conservative churchgoers who reacted most strongly to words of religious origin. (Hargrave 1991: page number not given, quoted in Jay 2000: 109).

As can be seen from this categorization the most offensive areas either refer to sexuality, religion or scatology. Even if someone does not feel offended by swearwords (group d) it is still emphasized that these respondents are least likely to complain about sexual word and not blasphemous ones. So they are still set in relation to the sexual aspects. Jay identifies the Catholic Church as another main opponent of any form of obscenity broadcasted on television (Jay 1992: 216-217) and thus adds a fourth member to Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye’s group.

3.4. The legitimization of cursing by means of real-life depiction on television

According to writers, producers, and television industry executives using vulgar language is the only way to fully mirror the reality of life. Without cursing and swearing no dramatic scene would be really dramatic, no breakup would be heart-breaking and no mishap would be realistic without the needed curse to ease away pain or anger. Therefore, TV’s scripted language needs obscenity to give credits to its real-life depiction (Stanca, Gui & Gallucci 2013: 91-93). Yet, critics say that there is no one-to-one depiction of real-life because as soon as a situation is scripted it loses its claim for reality and becomes fictional anyway. Moreover, as Brownback (2000: page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 46) ascertains the further usage of swearwords to make a scene more realistic

³⁵ See previous section.

simultaneously prescribes a fictional world which is likely to be adapted by its real-life audience (Social Learning Theory).

However, what is crucial to highlight is that insults and swearing do not always focus on tragedy and negative emotions. Especially in TV shows swearwords are used as a comic relief for example in *Breaking Bad* as well as in other TV shows and even cartoons (Battistella 2005: 70).³⁶ The dilemma for national broadcasts is that TV shows with adult context (rated for example TV14) simply show a higher rating and therefore, to score high ratings they are forced to include strong language for both comedy and tragedy and more importantly to make profit. This financial emergency collides with the social standards of society as Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye state general public surveys show that “58% of viewers think there is too much cursing on television” (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2005 quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 50) and “[...] seven out of ten viewers believe that strong language should be banned from television” (Massachusetts Mutual Life & Michaels Opinion Research 1995 quoted in Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 50). This group finds its support with the FCC as well as the U.S. Supreme Court.

The historical overview of censorship in films and television in the United States shows that the First Amendment of freedom of speech cannot be understood literally as several restrictions have already been enforced and are yet to come. As can be seen the spread of cursing in movies, television and on-air swearing increased immensely in a very short period of time. Notwithstanding the fact that watchdog groups and concerned parents try to limit the frequency of occurrences as they are afraid that bad language causes bad behavior. This, however, does not have to be the case as studies by Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye (2010), Griffiths and Shuckford (1989) and Warren and Kelly (2002) show. Still, the FCC does not stop with the prohibition of the seven dirty words on national broadcasts but as recent developments show tries to enlarge its sphere of influence. The increasing power of the internet is yet a new opponent for censorship and the virtual battle has just begun.³⁷ I want to close this section with a quote by Tony McEnery:

In spite of all the attempts of moral entrepreneurs and government bills, bad language has survived censorship in all of its forms” (McEnery 2006: 62).

³⁶ See section 5.2.

³⁷ The US company Netflix allows users to watch TV-shows online and thus is a new opponent to TV ratings as more and more users prefer watching television online. (Kühl 15. Sept; Zeit Online 24.11.).

The next chapter will focus on the linguistic categorization of *cursing* and *swearing*, defines the pragmatics of cursing and provides a classification of functions and the source of swearwords.

4. Pragmatics of usage

This chapter aims to show the etymological change of the terms *cursing* and *swearing* and the meaning of *denotative* and *connotative* sense, too. This will be followed by psycholinguistic models giving reasons for cursing. This section will be closed by functions and sources of swearwords.

4.1. The etymological difference between *cursing* and *swearing*

Some readers might argue that *cursing* is already performed when a speaker utters a jinx to call misfortune upon a person whereas *swearing* is ambiguous and can be used to utter an insult or to swear an oath (McEnery 2006: 61). Although *swearing* is nowadays used in a much broader sense than in its original meaning, initially it was exclusively defined as follows:

‘to take an oath; make a solemn declaration, statement, affirmation, promise or undertaking; often in the eyes of God or in relation to some sacred object so that the swearer is, by implication, put in grave danger if found to be lying’, e.g. *I swear by Almighty God to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. So help me God.* (Allan & Burridge 2006: 76).

As the primary purpose of *cursing* was to call evil upon fellow men its original meaning underwent a change throughout the centuries, too. The *Collins Dictionary* offers the following definition of the noun *curse*:

1. a calling on God or the gods to send evil or injury down on some person or thing
2. a profane, obscene, or blasphemous oath, imprecation, etc. expressing hatred, anger, vexation, etc.
3. evil or injury that seems to come in answer to a curse
4. any cause of evil or injury (The Collins Dictionary)

Cursing as “imprecating malevolent fate” (Allan & Burridge 2006: 76) emerged from the euphemistic dysphemism *Curses!* being a more frequently form interconnected with *swearing*. As the first definition already indicates, *curses* primarily call for the

help of God or a supernatural power in order to harm a specific target.³⁸ Apart from their initial definition in English both *cursing* and *swearing* share the following characteristics as both terms

- (a) refer[s] to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture
- (b) should not be interpreted literally
- (c) can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes. (Andersson & Trudgill 2007: 195)

As Jay points out (1992: 2) nowadays an average American does no longer believe that religious curses e.g. *damn you* or *goddamn you* can actually bring physical harm upon the listener. Moreover, a shift from a strong religious relation between the uttered words and the invoked help is no longer a premise for cursing. As for example the cursing “I hope you break your neck” (Jay 1992: 2) does not refer to God, yet it transfers imprecation. Jay states that usually American cursing is “fairly short, simple and [uses] direct phrases that are conventionalized expressions of hostility or anger” (Jay 1992: 2-3; 2000: 9). Further, as Allan and Burridge point out is *cuss* as in the American English compound *cuss word*, the colloquial form of cursing, used synonymously for *swearword*.³⁹

However, on the contrary to Jay (1992: 2-3) and Allan and Burridge (2006: 76) who no longer see a clear distinction in the current usage of both terms Dagmar Schmauks and partly Geraldine Horan state the opposite. In her publication of 2014, Schmauks differentiates between several subareas of verbal aggression, in particular between *swearing* “using rude, vulgar, or taboo language in general” (Schmauks 2014: 96) and *cursing* “entreating supernatural powers to inflict misfortune, illness, or death on the adversary” (Schmauks 2014: 96).⁴⁰ Within the same year, Horan discusses in her article the importance of *cursing* and *swearing* in foreign language learning and asserts that in British English *cursing* refers to profanity, whereas *swearing* is used “in the sense of vulgarity or obscenity” (Horan 2013: 286). In American English, as Horan emphasizes, the term *cursing* includes both “religious curses and swear words” (Horan 2013: 286). This claim is supported by Jay stressing

³⁸ As a result, the church forbade its members the usage of these words as the name of God should not be violated and further the members’ minds should stay pure and unspoiled. If however, a speaker were found to utter a curse he/she would risk to be called a blasphemer as the second definition shows. The Seventh Commandment for example asks its members “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2020>).

³⁹ The term *cuss word* was introduced by Mark Twain in 1872 (Macaulay 2006: 99).

⁴⁰ Dagmar Schmauks is a linguist who works in Berlin and therefore her social background and education are influenced by a Eurocentric view.

that although he considers *swearing* to be a subcategory of *cursing*, he uses the terms interchangeably reasoning his decision with the statement that by 2000 little research has been conducted whether in linguistics or in psychology and thus it is problematic to find generally valid and appropriate terminology (Jay 2000: 10). Although the initial semantic distinction of *swearing* and *cursing* is acknowledged this paper uses both terms interchangeably, therewith rejecting Schmauks definition for the sake of simplicity.

4.2. Connotative and denotative meaning

There are two meanings conveyed by means of cursing – connotative and denotative. The first means that a listener should not understand an insult such as *Fuck you!* literally but decode the intended transferred meaning. To give another example *She is pissed* might not necessarily mean she urinated in her pants (denotative) but rather that she is angry or annoyed (connotative). The primary intention of an insult for a speaker is his/her urge to communicate emotions using mockery, humor or irony. Thus, denotation labels what is actually visible, analyses what is understandable, or to say this in other words, denotative meaning is what first comes into our minds when we hear or see a word and therefore pragmatics is pivotal (Jay 1992: 10; 2000: 136). Nilsen, for example, emphasizes in his publication (1996) *Of Ladybugs and Billy Goats. What Animal Species Names Tell About Human Perceptions of Gender* that animal-based insults are gender-related metaphors which are linked to the experience society has with an animal. Drawing on Nilsen's study it can be concluded that the same can be applied to insults in general. *Bitch* for example has two basic meanings, a female dog and a derogatory term for a despicable woman. In one context talking about a dog and its puppies the reference *bitch* would be totally appropriate. Yet, if someone calls his/her ex-girlfriend a *bitch* the speaker clearly does not refer to a dog but wants to insult the ex. Above all, it is the schema which is socially determined through bodily experience by members of a certain society which differentiates the decoding process of an insult (Kövesces 2006: 208-211).

Conclusively, *cursing* does not only happen by the mere utterance of a derogatory term and the semantic meaning but moreover the pragmatic meaning has to be known by both interlocutors.

4.3. Psycholinguistic models

The aim of this section is to present different approaches to the definition of motives for cursing. Reasons can be found in the neurological state of our brain, be influenced throughout social practices and become habitual or have other psychological reasons.

The *Neuro-Psycho-Social Theory* (henceforth NPS Theory) of cursing defines three systems which are premises for cursing and thus crucial to it, too. First, the speaker has to have the neurological premise (normally developed brain) to be able to actually utter a controlled cursing which has to be an automatic process. The brain should not suffer from any damage which would cause either the disability of control and cause uncontrolled outbursts of cursing (e.g. the Tourette syndrome) or influence and interrupt the speaking ability.

Second, the socio-cultural system that is the familial and social environment which influences and shapes the speaker's vocabulary, his/her speaking habit and makes him/her aware of the positive and negative effects of cursing (Jay 2000: 244). Therewith, Jay states for example that if cursing is a normal form of interaction in a family the child and other family members tend to adapt this form of interaction as they consider it as normal.

[...] each person's use of curse words is determined by his or her psychological development within a given linguistic, familial, and cultural environment. Psychological development includes variables that directly affect cursing, such as temperament, personality traits, religiosity, social rewards, and punishments (Jay 2000: 20).

And third, cultural factors such as "religion, taboos, gender, identification, censorship, and social power" which strongly interrelate with the sociocultural environment (Jay 2000: 21). As has been mentioned before, the perception of offensiveness strongly depends on the context and the three systems are alternatively predominant. As Jay further illustrates cursing reveals much more about the speaker's self-reception and his/her "psychological makeup" (Jay 2000: 107).

Asshole, bastard, bitch, cunt, prick, motherfucker, chicken-shit, nigger, dyke and honkey are not just words we say to each other. How we use these curse words portrays our deep emotional investment in a personal identity which we use to experience the world, to differentiate ourselves from others, and to express our feelings and attitudes about others. The use of these words tells us who we are and who we fit in the world. We do

not just utter curse words; curse words are part of our identities. (Jay 2000: 82).

Jay introduced a general model of *Five Stages of Anger-Verbal Aggression in Cursing in America* (1992: 96-107; 2000: 58-61) in which he illustrates each stage a speaker goes through during the process of verbal aggression: Provocation – Degree of Anger – Inhibition – Disinhibition and Retribution. The first stage represents the self of the speaker. Whether he/she feels provoked is revealed in stage 2 through physiological excitement or psychological attributions. If a response is uttered immediately the speaker is in stage 3 – inhibition. However, if the speaker weighs his decision how to respond to the assault a counter-curse is uttered in stage 4. Eventually, the speaker arrives in stage 5 once he/she reflects upon what has just happened (Jay 2000: 58). As can be seen from this five-stage model cursing takes place if a speaker feels insulted by someone else and tries to defend him-/herself. Thus, cursing is very likely to be used as a defense tool. Apart from that with the help of swearwords a speaker can put further emphasis on an utterance. Thus, swearwords are in a unique intensifying position because they can be used to emphasize the speaker's emotion in an extremely offensive way and thus, kills two birds with one stone (Jay 2000: 11, 137).

Fine and Johnson (1984: 66) define three different spheres of motives for cursing which to some extent mirror Jay's NPS Theory namely psychological, linguistic and sociological motives. Hence, the psychological motive to utter swearwords is

- to express anger,
- to emphasize feelings
- and/or to relieve tensions.

The linguistic motive strongly refers to the lack of finding another fitting word in a specific situation and thus, the speaker uses a swearword as an auxiliary to fill a missing spot. The sociological reason here is twofold: Firstly, the speaker uses a swearword due to peer pressure which is again interrelated with acting cool. And secondly, the speaker utters a taboo word in order to get attention (Fine & Johnson 1984: 66). Fine and Johnson further found that both female and male participants of their study use obscenity primarily to express anger and secondly to emphasize feelings. Their results support Jay's theory of emotional intensification. Both male and female participants named psychological motives as their main enforcement. As has been shown human beings need cursing and insulting to express their anger and

frustration in order to calm down. Yet, a way of avoiding the public and still being able to express one's discontent is to use euphemisms. As Hughes (1991: 12) emphasizes the more offensive an insult or swearword is, the higher the number of possible euphemisms to circumvent social regulations is.⁴¹ Furthermore Hughes distinguishes between automatic and controlled /propositional cursing. The former would be used in the case of a *response cry*.⁴² For example, a speaker utters a curse subconsciously e.g. hitting the thumb with a hammer and shouting out loud *Damn!* Controlled cursing takes place when the speaker is fully aware and in control of their speech e.g. thinking about how to insult someone or telling a joke (Shiffrin & Schneider 1977: page number not given, quoted in Jay 2000: 34, 48, 243).

Additionally to that, swearing can be considered as an important form of socialization. After children use scatology to express their discontent they change to more adult forms of swearing which are heavily influenced by their social surrounding e.g. friends in school, parents and television.⁴³ As television has become a greater part in private lives it is a medium which transfers especially in pre-scripted TV-shows or films e.g. *Gossip Girl* or *American Pie* a fictional reality which further influences and shapes the behavior of children and young adults. Characters set an example of how to react in certain situations, for example, to express anger, frustration or happiness. This depiction of 'reality' does not only enlarge their swearing vocabulary but transfers gender roles, too. Social learning theory found that we automatically imitate behavior we observe most frequently and apart from that swearing is easier to imitate than physical violence (Bandura 1977: page number not given; Potter 2003 : page number not given, quoted in Sapolsky & Kaye 2005: 295; Sapolsky & Kaye 2009: 24-25). We swear because this is what we observe, see and experience repetitively both in reality and in fiction.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Farmer and Henley (1966: page number not given, quoted in Hughes 1991: 12) cite around 700 synonyms for vagina.

⁴² *Response cries* are not restricted to epithets but can include outcries as *ouch!* The main purpose for response cries is to immediately communicate the emotional state to a listener. The identification of the speaker's own emotional state is a crucial development during language acquisition of cognitive growth of speakers (Jay 2000: 48, 50-51).

⁴³ A survey carried out in 1986 by the *TV Guide* showed that the majority of participants feel the greatest deal of pleasure and satisfaction when watching TV (68%), followed by friends (61%) and helping other (59%) (Kottak 2009: 7).

⁴⁴ Anthropologist Conrad Phillip Kottak emphasizes that the impact of television on society, in particular on his students during his lectures shows the impact of TV-watching-behavior in other areas of social life. He further states that this change has increased since the 1950s. Therefore, the content transferred on TV has its impact on society, too (Kottak 2009: 9). See chapter 3.

In conclusion, we can say that motives for cursing can be found in different spheres. Jay (1992: 96-107; 2000: 58-61) and Hughes (1991: 12) agree that without the premise of a functioning neurological system both controlled and uncontrolled cursing would not be able to be produced. Fine and Johnson's (1984: 66) psychological model defines cursing as a form of expressing anger, relieving tension and emphasizing one's feelings, and strongly interrelates with Jay's (2000: 11, 137) psychological system and emotional intensifying. Eventually, sociological motives and cultural factors overlap. Although, each researcher defines motives or systems differently they all agree that the speaker needs to be able to utter a sentence and that the psychological motives are shaped by sociocultural surroundings.

4.4. Classification according to function

Geoffrey Hughes distinguishes five major functions swearing can fulfill and stresses that "all these types [...] have not been constantly present in the past" (Hughes 1991: 4):

- swear by
- swear to (do something)
- swear at (somebody/something)
- swear that (something is so)
- simply swear out of outrage (Hughes 1991: 4; 2006: xvi-xvii).

According to Hughes in former days people mostly swore *by* and *to* and nowadays mainly swear *at* that is curse as has been defined above. Also, he separates swearing into high/sacred and low/profane modes. The former literally refers to the high in form of calls for religious and divine forces uttered with the help of spells, curses and charms. What distinguishes them from the latter is that spells/curses brought the possibility with them to actually become true. Low forms of swearing include scatology or sexual taboos, which, however, cannot be understood literally (Hughes 1991: 4-5).⁴⁵

Andersson and Trudgill (2007: 197) differentiate between primary and secondary usages of swearwords in which the former is divided into two major functions which can be further specified by their secondary usage. This separation is to some extent related to Hughes' categorization of *to swear at*. However, the main difference is that the two primary groups are divided according to the addressee of a

⁴⁵ See section 2.1.

swearword. Therefore, expletives such as *Shit!* or *Goddamn it!* are uttered to “express emotions [yet they are] not directed towards others” (Andersson & Trudgill 2007: 197). They lack a specific target and do not intend to hurt or insult somebody else. On the contrary to expletives, abusives are “[d]irected towards others [and] include[...] name-calling and different types of curses.” (Andersson & Trudgill 2007: 197). According to Andersson and Trudgill (1997: 197) the secondary usage can further be grouped into two major subareas namely humorous and auxiliary. A humorous swearword is “[d]irected towards others but not derogatory; often takes the form of abusive swearing but has the opposite function; is playful rather than offensive.” (Andersson & Trudgill 2007: 197).⁴⁶ Another secondary usage of a swearword would be the lack of the right word in order to express one’s thoughts and thus use a swearword as a filler, an auxiliary (Andersson & Trudgill 2007: 197).

Hughes (1991) as well as Andersson and Trudgill (2007) share the definition of *to swear at somebody* and Andersson and Trudgill (2007: 197) further differentiate whether a swearword is directed at somebody or not. Therefore, the functions of swearwords which swear at somebody can be further categorized in three groups:

- insults, slurs, epithets and abusives with the aim of insulting somebody/bonding function
- expletives which are not directed at a person
- intensifiers and auxiliary which help to emphasize or are used as fillers

All of these types will be briefly presented in the following subsections.

4.4.1. Insults & epithets

The major function of an insult is to refer to culturally determined negative characteristics or to be more precise:

Insults are normally intended to wound the addressee or bring a third party into disrepute, or both. [...] Insults typically pick on and debase a person’s physical appearance, mental ability, character, behavior, beliefs and/or familial and social relations (Allan & Burridge 2006: 79).

This definition further consolidates the semantic features of insults which usually refer to “sexual content [ancestral allusions, social deviation,] aggression, body functions,

⁴⁶ See also section 5.2.

body parts, race, and religion” (Jay 1992: 163, 169).⁴⁷ On the contrary to animal-based insults which are applied metaphorically, epithets should be perceived as a literal insult e.g. calling someone a *slut* (Allan & Burridge 2006: 79-81). According to Jay (1992: 7) epithets are words or word clusters which are uttered if for example someone hurts him-/herself and thus, the help to express emotions of anger, frustration or even astonishment.⁴⁸ Epithets find their origin in the language of the people in the street and therefore might seem crude. The most common epithets are: “*shit, damn, hell, son of a bitch, goddamn it, up yours, fuck you, fuck off, piss off, jesus christ*” (Jay 1992: 7). What can be seen here is that for example *damn* as well as *goddamn it* are curses, yet used as epithets, too.

4.4.2. Expletives

Expletives usually refer to tabooed body parts (e.g. *asshole, dick*) or excretions (*shit!*) and sexual behaviors (*fuck!*) and should not be interpreted literally (Hughes 2006: 154).⁴⁹ *Fleeting expletives* include slip outs during live broadcasting usually on television or radio shows (Butler & Fitzgerald 2011: 525). Butler and Fitzgerald emphasize that it is not the expletive itself which causes trouble but rather the context in which it is uttered. Naturally live-broadcasting is one of the most extreme examples (Butler & Fitzgerald 2011: 547).⁵⁰ In the 2007 study carried out by Beers-Fägersten and Dalarna the results also show that the context determines the offensiveness of swearwords with respect to race and gender (Beers-Fägersten & Dalarna 2007: 32).

4.4.3. The bonding function

Swearwords fulfill different functions. They are mainly uttered in order to swear at somebody or as an expletive to express anger, frustration or even surprise. Swearing at somebody can also be used in a humorous way in order to express closeness. For more information see 2.5.2. *The bonding function*.

⁴⁷ Animal-based insults with the main intention of ascribing culturally determined attributes of these animals to human beings such as *bitch, cow, chicken* can be listed as further subcategories of insults.

⁴⁸ See response cries section 4.3.

⁴⁹ See section 4.2.

⁵⁰ To read more about fleeting expletives in American and British live broadcasting see Butler and Fitzgerald’ study on swearing on television (Butler & Fitzgerald 2011, 525-551).

In general it can be said that swearwords can fulfill several functions determined by context e.g. *son of a bitch* can be meant as an insult if two people have a fight about something or as an epithet if someone hit his finger with a hammer (Jay 1992: 9-10). However, the source cannot be cross-categorized as will be shown in the next section.

The following section will discuss the sociocultural features of insults with regards to the empirical evaluation in the empirical chapter of this paper.

5. Sociocultural features of insults

As the empirical part of this paper focuses on the fictional representation of gender-specific insults and their bonding function in the US-American TV-show *Breaking Bad* as well as the self-reported perception of NS and NNS concerning such insults, this last subchapter will focus on insults and gender, insults and bonding, and insults as used by NS and NNS.

5.1. Gender-specific insults

The aim of this section is twofold: First, gender-specific insults in form of preferences towards the addressee will be discussed. And second, whether men and women show differences as addressers of insult.

As Jay points out do gender-related differences not only occur by the time children are in puberty but can already be identified as soon as they start to go to school. According to his observations, boys do not only swear more frequently in public but additionally to that use more offensive swearwords than girls (Jay 2000: 92-93; 1992: 207). This different approach which already can be identified after school enrollment reveals itself like a red thread which divides both genders and their gender-stereotypical offendedness and leads to the hypothesis that men in general are more used to bad language than women and apply it more frequently, too (Jay 1992: 207). However, this linguistic behavior does not occur naturally due to physical characteristics but is moreover the result of child raising and social conditioning. As Lakoff (1975) already emphasized girls are taught to be modest, act like a lady and use euphemisms whereas the opposite counts for boys. They are supposed to speak up and are even encouraged to do so. Lakoff even claims that women can therefore

be considered as bilinguals because they have to switch between male and female dialect (Lakoff 1975: 6-10, 55-64).⁵¹ Important to stress is that Lakoff's observations are not supported any empirical data but are mainly linked to personal experience and therefore as Bucholtz states is considered as "most sensationalized and misunderstood text" (Lakoff & Bucholtz 2004: 121).

Murray collected data in form of a questionnaire from 1983 to 1987 at different educational institutes in the Midwest of the United States and found that 90% of the male participants indicated they felt that males swear more often than females. However, only 12% of the female participants agreed with their male fellows as 88% found the distribution of swearing to be equal (Murray 2007: 204). This result shows that men consider themselves to be more active swearers, yet, the self-reported perception of women shows that they see themselves as equal. Macaulay see the reason for this one-sided gender-specific stereotype given in the fact that novelists try to create authentic fictional characters and, therewith, support traditional role distribution. Additionally, Macaulay states that differences in speaking are an obvious conclusion found in different interests, social classes, status and power position, yet these differences do not have to be genetically encoded (Macaulay 2006: 94).

Drawing on Macaulay's observations on the fictional representation of gender traditional roles in literature Jay (2000: 223-234) found that the representation of men and women on television shows the same traditional pattern. Since male characters are usually in power, curse more often and use more offensive swearwords than their female colleagues. As Glascock (2001: 658-659) further highlights are men aggressive characters with traditional jobs such as lawyers and managers whereas actresses are predominantly depicted in lower work status jobs such as teachers, nurses, secretaries or housewives and are married and if women swear they rather use euphemisms and mild insults.⁵² These findings are further supported by Sapolsky and Kaye (2005: 298-300) stressing that this widespread presentation causes a normalization of average cursing men and a rejection of cursing women as they must be bad characters according to their fictional depiction on television "e.g. whores, drunks, drug users" (Jay 2000: 171, 223, 226, 234) or are unmarried (Sapolsky & Kaye 2005: 301). Therewith, pre-marital cursing of low social status

⁵¹ To read more about language shaped female pragmatics of language in general and the gendering of terms of address as well as politeness see Lakoff (1975).

⁵² Walter White is a teacher, too.

female characters legitimizes their vulgarity.⁵³ However, Sapolsky and Kaye found that due to the Internet and male TV shows (sports & technics) broadcasting channels had to react and establish a female audience in order to keep their ratings up and alter female representation on screen (Sapolsky & Kaye 2005: 293). As two studies found increased female on-screen time up to 40% during the 1990s (Elasmar 2003: page number not given; Lauzen & Dozier 1999: page number not given, quoted in Glascock 2001: 657). The reason for this can be found in the production of TV shows as the majority of producers, writers, directors and creators are male and this majority is mirrored in the plot of the TV shows. More precisely as Glascock found

females were found to have fewer speaking roles, but equivalent speaking time, one could argue that even though females may be underrepresented in terms of numbers, their on-screen presence might be comparable to that of males (Glascock 2001: 658-659, 661, 665, 667).

This hypothesis is further supported by the results of Lauzen and Douglas stating that “[...] the employment of women behind the scenes is significantly related to female character’s use of breaking the fourth wall in prime-time programs” (Lauzen & Douglas 2009: 384).⁵⁴

As Jay emphasizes, it is important to be aware of the fact that gender identity strongly intertwines with the power of the speaker. The one being in power is able to curse and in Western society “[c]ursing and dominance are masculine traits” (Jay 2000: 165). Therefore, cursing depends on power as well as on gender identity. Three general trends which have been established by researchers identified differences in frequency, quantity and quality according to the offensiveness of the insult (Jay 2000: 166; 1992: 121-139, 169, 207; Allan & BurrIDGE 2006: 78). However, the hypothesis that in general males swear more often than females were falsified by several studies carried out in South Africa by De Klerk in 1992, the US by Risch in 1987 and in the UK by Hughes in 1992. The studies by Risch and Hughes found that the “profanity gap” (Sapolsky & Kaye 2005: 294; Risch 1987: 355-358) decreases (Allan & BurrIDGE 2006: 89). Most recently the study conducted by Tony McEnery’s in the *British National Corpus* (henceforth BNC) found further support for the above mentioned results as McEnery identifies 15 swearwords which show a different

⁵³ See section 4.3.

⁵⁴ Breaking the fourth wall in this context means to have a dialog with the audience and speak one’s mind directly into the camera. Although their study focused on this issue it still shows that females behind the scenes share their contribution to the context before the cameras.

frequency according to the gender of the speaker, yet all of these 15 words are used by both males and females (McEnery 2006: 34-35).

Gender-specific insults usually refer to socially determined behavior of men and women and their nonfulfillment of it. The main function of a gender-specific insult derives from the general intention of insults and hence is to “reduce victims to body parts (e.g. *cunt*, *prick*) [and] unattractive qualities (e.g. *witch*, *geek*) [...]” (Jay 2000: 154). Therefore, men feel most offended if their masculinity is questioned by calling them effeminate with insults as *fag(got)*, *queer*, *homo*, *pussy*, *wimp*, *cocksucker*, *douchebag* or *gay*.⁵⁵ Women most frequently insult men by referring to their genitals, buttocks and ancestry (*bastard*, *son of a bitch*) or social deviation (*bitch*) (Jay 2000: 169; Jay 1992: 178; James 1998: 406). Conversely, women feel most offended and are most frequently offended by other females and males by vilification of their promiscuity and sexual activeness/looseness. The most offensive insults therefore are *cunt*, *slut*, *whore* followed by *tease*, *prickteaser*, *dickteaser*, *cockteaser* and *bitch*.⁵⁶ Therewith it can be stated that sexuality is still the major semantic feature and most important criterion for gender-specific insults (Jay 2000: 170-171; 1992: 176-181; Sapolsky & Kaye 2005: 294-295).

As this section shows opinions differ. On the one hand Murray claims that there is no difference according to the gender of the speaker, yet differences arise according to the social surrounding and upbringing of a person. On the contrary to that Lakoff claims that women are forced to adapt a feminine dialect and thus can even be considered as bilinguals. Still, surveys show that male participants consider themselves to swear more often than females although females do not identify themselves as non-swearing angles. The question remains whether the passive and traditional depiction of females in literature/television has already shaped viewers minds and expects real-life women to behave like fictional characters which represent idealized characters mostly created by male writers and directors. However, on the contrary to the change of offensiveness in swearing, sexual references are still the main target of gender-specific insults. As insults always aim at the most potent,

⁵⁵ Further insults which refer to the social ineptness of men are *turkey*, *jerk* and *nerd* which additionally reveal unattractiveness of the target. Quite the opposite is uttered by calling a man a *macho*, *stud*, *playboy* or *wolf* and therewith highlighting his sexual activity and attractiveness, yet stressing his inability for commitment (Jay 1992: 179).

⁵⁶ Jay further lists insults *scag*, *witch* and *dog* which refer to the social ineptness of women and insults as *dyke*, *butch* and *lesbian* which aim at female homosexuality (Jay 1992: 180).

gender, sex parts and practices are thus the most potent and precious and thus present the perfect aim for insults.

However, as the next section will show insults do not always have to fulfill the function of wounding someone's feeling.

5.2. The bonding function

In this section we will talk about the different types of insults which do not merely fulfill the function of offending the listener but apart from that can also be used to express friendship and affection. As Allan and Burridge illustrate (2006: 30) whether an insult is perceived as such depends on various factors which include

[...] the relationship between the speakers, their audience, and anyone within earshot; the subject matter; the situation (setting); and whether a spoken or written medium is used. In other words: politeness is wedded to context, place and time (Allan & Burridge 2006: 30).

To start with the last aspect – time. As has been mentioned above swearwords and their targeted offensiveness change over the course of time and so does the perception of politeness/impoliteness. Place varies according to private or public spheres and context depends on the interlocutors e.g. a group of soldiers in a bar would not use the euphemism *number two* but rather use the dysphemism *to take a shit*. As Allan and Burridge further show the *face* of the speaker is the most crucial. In social interactions *face* does not only represent how the speaker sees him/herself but also accounts for the perception of the public. As *face* can either be threatened, saved or maintained both Allan and Burridge state that the speaker wants to express him/herself in order to threaten, save or maintain the face of the listener and at the same time he/she tries to maintain or save his/her own face. Therefore the speaker will choose those terms which best fulfill the perlocutionary intent of an utterance (Allan & Burridge 2006: 31-33; 76). Drawing on that Allan and Burridge define the term *middle-class politeness criterion* (MCPC) and therewith point out that in order to be perceived as a polite speaker by interlocutors of a middle-class environment euphemisms or orthophemisms⁵⁷ are expected to be used in order to conform to etiquette (Allan & Burridge 2006: 34-35, 54).

⁵⁷ An orthophemism defines a term which is on the one hand more direct or literal, yet on the other hand more formal e.g. *menstruate* whereas *to have a period* would be a euphemism (Allan & Burridge 2006: 29, 32).

Yet, what is interesting for this study is the function and effects of terms which basically insult but in certain context can be used to fulfill a bonding function between speaker and listener. Allan and Burridge define these terms with this specific intention as *dysphemistic euphemism*:

For example, apparent terms of opprobrium are used in good-humoured raillery to display friendship and affection to someone close to you. Calling a good mate an old bastard or silly little dag is to use *dysphemistic euphemism*. (Allan & Burridge 2006: 39; emphasis added).

Another parameter of displaying friendship is the right use of jargon as it does not only refer to specialist language but additionally to that “[...] promote[s] in-group solidarity” (Allan & Burridge 2006: 58).⁵⁸ As Jay emphasizes if a speaker, usually in male groups, adds irony to strong words such as *bastard* or *son of a bitch* it can be used as a “term of endearment” between the interlocutors to express emotional bond (Jay 1992: 177). However, bonding function of insults is not limited to male speakers as Deborah James found in a survey conducted in 1998. James found that 24 % of her female participants would use *bitch* in an affectionate way, too. Therewith James contributes further support, drawing on studies carried out by Eble in 1996 and Sutton in 1995, which both state that derogatory terms such as *bitch* and *ho* can be used in an affectionate way between members of the same sex (Sutton 1995: 288; Eble 1996: 103 quoted in James 1998: 410).

Lionel Tiger traced the roots of male bonding back to prehistory where men still had to hunt and women collected berries. As he argues, females worked alone whereas men hunted in groups. Thus, male bonding can nowadays still be observed when men gather together to do ‘men stuff’ and celebrate their camaraderie with linguistic features such as “backslapping, joke telling, nicknaming, slang, and so forth” (Lakoff 1975: 79) whereas females rather tend to share personal experiences and mental states. It is interesting to point out that Lakoff highlights that any form of camaraderie or bonding vanishes as soon as mixed groups of gender come together (Lakoff 1975: 82). In a study describing the linguistic behavior of woman 20 years later, Eble states that *Hello, bitches* is a common greeting among residents in female dormitories, and at the same time a derogatory term of mixed gender groups referring to sexual promiscuity, [...]” (Eble 1996: 103).

⁵⁸ Later in the empirical part of this study the term *bitch* is labeled as a dysphemistic euphemism and youth jargon by main character Jesse Pinkman. He and his friends repeatedly use insults which are a ritual labelled *friendly banter* in order to “indicate a bond of friendship” (Allan & Burridge 2006: 87; Crystal 2013: 63).

To sum up, we found that insults can also be used as a form of bonding referred to as a *dysphemistic euphemism* according to Allan and Burridge. Yet, it seems to be restricted to homogeneous groups and is not used in heterogeneous groups.

5.3. Nativeness as an influence on insult perception

A study conducted by Jay and Janschewitz (2008) at the University of California, Los Angeles, analyzed how NS and NNS of American English evaluated and rated the offensiveness of swearwords. They found that in general female NS as well as female NNS gave swearwords a higher offensiveness rating than their NS and NNS male counterparts. Additionally, they found that context, the linguistic and cultural background of a NNS as well as language proficiency are pivotal whereas the exposure to English does not have such strong effects upon their ratings (Dewaele 2010: 105-107). As Trudgill (1974) asserts “[f]or native speakers of English, some of the strongest taboos appl[ied] to words associated with sex” (Trudgill 1974: 29-31 quoted in Risch 1987: 353). However, the results of Janschewitz show that nativeness was apparently not the main influence for their rating. The results of Toya and Kodis’ study (1996) further show “that frequency of use of rude expressions was linked to the length of stay in English-speaking countries and the confidence of the LX⁵⁹ users” (Toya & Kodis 1996: 280 quoted in Dewaele 2010: 105).

As our brain systems mature and we develop control about what we say, we learn to censor taboo words via neurological processes of inhibition. Taboo words and phrases acquired by late bilinguals lack the cultural imprint of the forbidden and have different neurological representations. In fact, a number of subjects report feeling nothing when they hear and even utter taboo expressions in their second language. (Harris 2003: 12 quoted in Allan & Burridge 2006: 246). Contrary to that “[...] native speakers can reckon appropriateness of cursing on the basis of salient contextual information.” (Jay 2000: 149). Due to cultural and religious beliefs the intensity of swearing in L1 could be avoided by applying L2 which would be English (Dewaele 2010: 130) as the impact is not as strong. This observation is further verified with the result of Fraser’s study on a comparison of insults across languages. There he found that animal-based insults in English do not have the same meaning

⁵⁹ LX = One of the languages of a multilingual acquired after the establishment of the L1(s) and undetermined in terms of chronology of acquisition or proficiency (Dewaele 2010: xiv).

in other languages as, for example, in some languages a donkey symbolizes stupidity whereas in Japanese it does not or if an Italian calls somebody a rabbit the speaker intends to call someone a coward but in English the animal metaphor of a rabbit stands for rapidity (Fraser 1981: 439-440).

As can be drawn from this section, nativeness only has an influence to some extent. Although, NS learn swearwords from a very early age on and can adapt an insult more easily to a situation, it does not mean that NNS cannot develop similar skills. If a NNS reaches a higher proficiency level in an L2 he/she can decode the meaning of insults more easily. However, the speaker is not as closely related to swearing in an L2 as comparable in his/her L1.

In conclusion, it can already be said that if the differences between NS and NNS and their self-reported perception of insults does not show any significant results this can be related to the proficiency level of the NNS and might be related to gender, too.

6. *Breaking Bad* – All Hail to the King

This chapter presents the American TV show *Breaking Bad* summarizing the most important facts and briefly discusses its critical reviews. Additionally to that, a brief summary of its five seasons will be illustrated with regards to plot development, followed by a short presentation of the main characters of *Breaking Bad*. This information allows drawing a connection between the characters, the plot and their usage of insults. It is a necessary presentation of the context of use, without which the analysis of the empirical part would be incomplete.

6.1. Facts & critics

Breaking Bad was originally aired in the United States on the private channel AMC from January 20, 2008 to September 29, 2013 on Sunday 10 PM primetime. The TV show consists of five seasons which altogether consist of 62 episodes.⁶⁰ Every episode has its own title and their average episode length is 50 minutes (Metacritic,

⁶⁰ The amount per season varies. Season 1 has 7 episodes including the pilot, season 2, 3 and 4 have 13 episodes and season 5 has 16 episodes. In the US season 5 was split into two seasons. <http://breakingbad.wikia.com/wiki>.

Breaking Bad). The narrative takes place in the nonfictional city of Albuquerque, New Mexico⁶¹, and tells the story of chemistry teacher Walter White breaking bad. The content of *Breaking Bad* is rated TV14 by Fox Broadcasting which means that parents are strongly cautioned and teenagers under the age of 14 should not watch this show.⁶²

The definition of the show's genre varies from crime drama, to thriller, over contemporary western to even black comedy (Poniewozik 2010; Nevins 2013; Bland 2013). All these different themes can be traced back to the TV show's creator Vince Gilligan who is also one of the executive producers together with Mark Johnson and Michelle MacLaren. After the first season had been aired in 2008, *Breaking Bad* already won seven awards within the same year. One of the most important awards was the first Prime Emmy Award for Bryan Cranston's *Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series* as Walter White. Anna Gunn (Skyler White) won two Prime Emmy Awards (2013 and 2014) for *Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series*. And also, Aaron Paul (Jesse Pinkman) won three Prime Emmy Awards (2010, 2012 and 2014) for *Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series*. In 2014 Cranston finally won his first Golden Globe Award for *Best Actor in Television Series* and *Breaking Bad* won in the category *Best Television Series – Drama*. Throughout the past seven years *Breaking Bad* was nominated for 260 awards of which it won 108 (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0903747/awards>, Der Standard 2014). By now *Breaking Bad* is named as one of the best TV shows of all time and a record breaker, too.⁶³

The majority of critics agree that the performance of *Breaking Bad*'s actors and actresses is outstanding. Even Anthony Hopkins wrote an email to Bryan Cranston congratulating him and praising his colleagues:

If you ever get a chance to -- would you pass on my admiration to everyone - Anna Gunn, Dean Norris, Aaron Paul, Betsy Brandt, R.J. Mitte, Bob Odenkirk, Jonathan Banks, Steven Michael Quezada -- everyone -- everyone gave master classes of performance ... The list is endless. [...]

⁶¹ Initially it was planned to take place in Southern California but was replaced to New Mexico due to tax incentives (Nevins, Local IQ).

⁶² For a detailed description see TV Parental Guidelines: <http://www.tvguidelines.org/ratings.htm> as well as section 2.2.3.

⁶³ For further information on record breaking ratings see <http://www.metacritic.com/tv/breaking-bad> and Janela (2014) *Guinness Book of World Records 2014*. In 2013 Yahoo! posted the five best shows of the year on its internet platform yahoo TV. Although *Breaking Bad* was listed Tim Molloy's statement rendered the rest of the article useless: "Forget the best shows of the year. This is the best show ever made. [...] On Walter White's meth purity scale, it was 98 percent wonderful. Maybe 99. Maybe even 100." (Molloy 2013). Additionally to that, Maureen Ryan from Huffington Post declared *Breaking Bad* as "[...] one of the great shows of television's Golden Age." To read more about sources that praise *Breaking Bad* see: Moore (2013), Hickey (2013), Lawson (2012).

Thank you. That kind of work/artistry is rare, and when, once in a while, it occurs, as in this epic work, it restores confidence. You and all the cast are the best actors I've ever seen. Anthony Hopkins (Jessica Derschowitz 2013).

He even compared *Breaking Bad* to the high peak of English Literature after he had been watching the entire show within two weeks "From what started as a black comedy, descended into a labyrinth of blood, destruction and hell. It was like a great Jacobean, Shakespearian or Greek Tragedy." (Derschowitz 2013).⁶⁴ Apart from all the previously mentioned qualities of the TV show there are several issues which state the opposite.

First, Blake Ewing US-American attorney from Texas says that the TV show may actually draw people's attention towards this drug and actually persuade them to try it. Moreover, *Breaking Bad* might take away the danger or "[...] normalize the idea of meth for a broad segment of society that might otherwise have no knowledge of that dark and dangerous world." (Klausner 2013).

Second, although the majority of viewers agree on the compelling plot and character's development it is stated that before Gus Fring appeared in season 3 almost every episode's plot is basically repetitive. This critique is further expanded by Stephen Bowie who points out plot and character similarities with *The Sopranos*, *The Wire* and *Weed* (Bowie 2013).

Third, all other main characters are superior and underdeveloped compared to Walter White and do not really take up an active part, they are not "[...] equal [...] in stature." (Bowie 2013). As for example, Jesse is depicted as Walt's sidekick, Walter Junior's appearance throughout season 5 is marginal and Hank expresses his anxiety with macho comments.

Fourth, females are portrayed stereotypically as "[w]eak, mewling, kleptomaniacal, rocking high-heels at eight months pregnant, goth girlfriend, Walter White attempted rape victim, welfare dependent latina, helpful junkie prostitute [...]" (www.fanbros.com/breaking-bad-is-overrated) and only defined by their relation to men. According to Bowie this inferiority counts for Skyler as "[...] a character who has been depicted as that prim and naïve [...]" (Bowie 2013).

⁶⁴ To read more about plot development see Lawson 2014, Maureen Ryan 2014 and Tim Molloy 2014.

To sum up both sides it has to be said that the majority of critics still favors and praises *Breaking Bad*. Yet, the underdevelopment of some characters and the limited active appearance of women are criticized and thus worthwhile investigating.⁶⁵

6.2. *Breaking Bad* synopsis

This section pictures the relationship and characteristics of the main characters. On the following pages brief synopses from season 1 to season 5 as well as character descriptions intend to shed some light on this TV show.

6.2.1. Season One

On the days before his 50th birthday chemistry high school teacher Walter White gets diagnosed incurable lung cancer stage 3. Paralyzed by these news Walter, at first, keeps his diagnosis from his 40 year-old pregnant wife Skyler and their handicapped teenage son Walter Junior. Threatened by financial problems, bored in a highly overqualified job and mistreated in his second job at car wash Walter looks at the black side leaving nothing behind for his family but debts and grim future.

At Walt's birthday party Hank, his brother-in-law, invites him to join a DEA-operation to get some excitement in his life during which Walt meets his former student Jesse Pinkman. Walt sees his final opportunity to provide for his family and seeks Jesse to propose a business deal. He will be the meth cook and Jesse the dealer. Although, Jesse does not seem to be very a fond of his former chemistry teacher's intention to become his new partner he gives in.

After they have cooked their first batch of crystal meth Jesse wants to sell it to his distributor Krazy-8. However, a misunderstanding necessarily leads to the dissolvent of two dead bodies in acid and leaves Jesse and Walt behind with no distributor. Jesse's first meeting with drug kingpin Tuco ends at the hospital with several severe injuries and no money. Walt uses fulminated mercury, blows up half of Tuco's office and thus, convinces the drug kingpin to start doing business with them. At the same time, Skyler notices her husband's physical and mental absence, and worries about him. Walt does not let Skyler in on his secret and their relationship becomes more distanced.

⁶⁵ See section 7.4.

In general it can be said that episode one is by far the one which uses comedy the most when it comes to Walt and Jesse operating together. This imbalance of genius and fool is fought within several occasions and therefore provides many examples for swearwords being used both to insult and bond. Yet, the presence of Hispanic drug kingpins counteracts the comical effect of this season as they use strong and aggressive language.⁶⁶

6.2.2. Season Two

After Walt and Jesse witnessed Tuco beating one of his associates to death, they rightly see their lives in danger. Out-of-his-mind-and-drugged Tuco hijacks both, takes them out into the desert to his uncle Hector Salamanca and keeps them as his hostages. However, as Jesse and Walt manage to flee, Hank arrives at the scene and shoots Tuco.⁶⁷ As a reward Hank gets promoted to El Paso where he becomes an outsider due to his lack of Spanish. Later he suffers from a panic attack after the Mexican Cartel blew up several federals right in front of him.

Walt and Jesse's relationship becomes closer yet more professional as they decide to create their own distribution system. After one of Jesse's friends has got shot he drifts away in drug abusiveness and both realize they are not capable of running a drug empire by themselves. As one of Jesse's friends, Badger, gets caught by the police selling meth on the street they need to hire a lawyer. Fortunately, they find the right man for this job – Saul Goodman. Later, Saul introduces Jesse and Walt to a new business associate – Gustavo Fring.

Gus is the owner of the fast food chain *Los Pollos Hermanos* and runs the largest drug dealing business in New Mexico. After an intensive and very productive weekend of meth cooking out in the desert Walt and Jesse are sitting on a huge meth batch, however, unable to sell due to recent circumstances. Saul arranges a meeting and although at first Gus refuses to work together with Walt due to Jesse's drug addiction, he eventually agrees to buy their remaining batch for \$1 million. Previously to that Jesse got kicked out of his aunt's house and found a new place in a duplex right next to Jane, former heroin addict and daughter of the owner. They start a romantic relationship. Jesse still devastated from his friend's death tries to ease his

⁶⁶ On more information about the seven dirty words see section 3.2. as well as 7.6.

⁶⁷ Throughout episode two there are several flashbacks revealing the story of new characters, yet they are mainly spoken in Spanish and therefore excluded from the empirical evaluation.

pain with drugs and drags Jane back into her addiction. After Jesse has awakened from his trip and finds all his meth gone he seeks out Walt to find answers. Walt refuses to give Jesse half his share stating that he would spend it within a week on drugs and be dead. Once Jane finds out about the huge amount of money she blackmails Walt and thus forces him to give Jesse his share. By accident, Walt becomes witness of Jane choking on her vomit and decides to deny assistance and therewith causes her death. The morning after Jesse is terrified and gets lost in his addiction again. Walt rescues him from out of a drug house and puts him into rehab.

Meanwhile Walt's cancer got into remission and he decides to undergo surgery. While he is sedated he accidentally talks about his second cell phone and thus revives Skyler's doubts about his honesty. A few weeks afterwards Skyler urges him to leave the house as she wants a divorce and is sick of all his lies. Not knowing what to do Walt goes out to his backyard and witnesses two airplanes colliding high above Albuquerque. As it turns out, Jane's father works as an air-traffic controller, too, and accidentally misguided the two airplanes.

6.2.3. Season Three

Walt accepts Skyler's decision under the premise that he is still allowed to financially provide for his family. At the beginning Skyler refuses his offer but later she realizes how much she is already involved and besides that she does not want Walter Junior to find the truth about his father. Yet, she tries to push Walt away from her and has an affair with her boss, Ted Beneke. Later, she decides to launder Walt's money in their newly bought car wash, the one in which Walt used to work.

As Gus was very satisfied with Walt's product he offers him a deal in which Walt could earn \$3 million within three months. Although Walt is tempted he refuses Gus' offer as he wants to repair his damaged relationship with Skyler. However, after he finds that Jesse is out of rehab and not only cooking meth again but also selling his product to Gus, he accepts Gus' offer. Together with chemist Gale Boetticher he starts working in an underground super meth lab below an industrial laundromat with the latest equipment. Meanwhile, Hector spends his remaining days in a retirement home and hired his two nephews to revenge Tuco's death. However, Walt's assassination would collide with Gus' business plans. Therefore, he uses his connections to the Mexican Cartel and orders Walt's assassins back offering Hank as

their new victim. After Hank's return from El Paso he trails an old RV in order to find the mysterious Heisenberg and eventually busts Jesse and Walt in their RV on a disposal site. They can lure him away under the false pretenses that Marie had a car accident and is in hospital. After Hank finds out that he had been fooled he drives over to Jesse's house and beats him to hospital. Walt manages to convince Jesse to business up again as partners in Gus' meth lab and he drops charges against Hank who can keep his job. Relieved Hank is on his way home as he receives an anonymous call warning him that two men are going to attack him. This call eventually saves Hank's life as he is prepared for the attack and able to kill one of the Salamanca cousins and severely hurt the other. Although Hank survives the attack he remains paralyzed. As Marie and Hank's insurance only covers basic treatment, her sister Skyler reveals Walt's secret (gambling addiction) and gives her the money.

In the meantime Jesse attempts to sell some meth on the side and sneaks away small doses in order to sell it to other rehab patients. During one of these meetings he meets Andrea and starts dating her. Jesse finds that Andrea's younger brother Tomas was the one who shot his friend Combo. Jesse is outraged as he finds out that these dealers actually sell their own product and therefore must be working for Gus. Jesse wants to take revenge, yet is stopped by Walt and Mike, an associate of Gus. They have a meeting and want to talk the problem through. However, the same day Tomas gets shot on a playground. Jesse is again outraged, does not trust Gus anymore and wants to shoot the two dealers. He can only be stopped by Walt who runs the two dealers over with his car. Jesse goes into hiding and Gale is reintroduced as Walt's lab assistant.

Gale starts asking more and more questions about the process of cooking meth and Walt realizes that Gale should replace him in the near future. He meets up with Jesse and asks him to find out Gale's address in order to kill him. Gus' associates, Mike and Victor, pick Walt up in front of his house and take him to the underground meth lab. Walt proposes to hand out Jesse's whereabouts but needs Mike's cell to call him up. By doing so he tells Jesse to go and kill Gale or otherwise they will kill him. As Gale opens the door to his apartment Jesse shoots him in his eye and saves Walt's life.

6.2.4. Season Four

Gus' reaction to Jesse and Walt's disobedience is to install cameras in the lab. Additionally to that he kills Victor right in front of Jesse and Walt with a utility knife. In Gale's apartment the police find his lab notebook with detailed description of producing methamphetamine. This notebook is handed to Hank who is still in therapy at home. At the beginning Hank is not interested eventually he changes his mind and finds it awkward that a seemingly strict vegan has a *Los Pollos* (fried chicken) bag in his apartment. Hank follows this trace and suspects Gus to be the mastermind behind a large drug business. Yet, he does not have any proof.

Skyler is being kept busy laundering money for Walt in the car wash. However, once her former boss Ted Beneke informs her about an IRS investigation of his business she is alarmed. She decides to help him and even asks Saul to give Ted the needed amount of money to pay back his debts. Ted accepts the money; however, refusing to pay his debts. After Saul has send over two of his guys to threaten Ted and made him sign a check for the IRS he breaks his neck during a clumsy attempt to escape. Although he survives the accident he remains paralyzed and opens Skyler's eyes to the danger of Walt's business.

Meanwhile Jesse is sure he is going to be killed one way or another and turns his house into a big party scene. Gus sees the very close relationship between Jesse and Walt as a danger to his business as well as Jesse's relentlessness and tries to drive a wedge between the two men – successfully. Walt is aware of this ongoing and gives Jesse a capsule of ricin with which he should poison Gus. At this point Gus is kept busy by the Mexican cartel. They stop his trucks, shoot his drivers and therewith force him to talk to them. In a flashback it is revealed that Gus has his own past with the cartel, especially with Hector Salamanca and the head of the cartel, Don Eladio Vuate. Eventually Gus, Mike and Jesse go down to Mexico and Jesse cooks a high class batch. Afterwards Gus poisons the entire Mexican Cartel and therewith revenges the death of his former friend and partner Max.

Back in Albuquerque, Walt has to drive Hank around on his search for evidence as he has already linked the laundry to *Los Pollos*. While Jesse is cooking in the underground lab, Hank and Walt are driving towards the laundry and Walt can only stop Hank from going in there by causing a car accident. This incident nourishes Jesse's doubt about Walt's loyalty. Tyron, Victor's replacement, and Mike take Walt

out into the desert where Gus threatens Walt's entire family if he interferes any longer and eventually fires Walt without notice. Walt rushes to Saul and asks for help in order to get a new identity for his family and warn Hank. Unfortunately, Skyler gave \$800,000 to Ted and thus, Walt is unable to pay the fee. Skyler, Walter Junior and Holly spent the next days at Marie and Hank's house as it is guarded by the DEA due to an anonymous call which said Hank's life is in danger. As Andrea's son Brock is taken to hospital due to an unknown illness Jesse suspects Walt of poisoning the child to take revenge. He seeks out to kill Walt for good. However, Walt can open Jesse's eyes and reveal Gus' intentions to him. Together they decide to kill Gus.

Although Walt and Hector are enemies they team up and lure Gus into Hector's room at the retirement home by false pretense. Gus thought that Hector betrayed him to the DEA and comes by to kill Hector for good. Walt connected a bomb to Hector's wheelchair and together Gus, Tyron and Hector are blown up. Walt returns to the lab, releases Jesse as he was captured before by other associates of Gus and together they blow up the laundry. Meanwhile it turned out that Brock was not poisoned by ricin but ate poison berries – the Lily of the Valley. Skyler calls up Walt and tells him the shocking story of Gus Fring's death and Walt tells her "I won" (*Breaking Bad*, S04E13). The last scene shows a Lily of the Valley plant in Walt's backyard.

6.2.5. Season Five

Season five starts with a flash-forward from almost the end of the season, showing Walt with hair and a beard eating breakfast in a restaurant on his 52nd birthday. In the men's room he exchanges keys with a stranger and opens the trunk of a car which contains a machine gun. After Walt, Jesse and Mike have destroyed the remaining evidence of their meth lab they decide to team up again. As it turns out Gus's methylamine supplier was Lydia Rodarte-Quayle who works for the parent company *Madrigal* of *Los Pollos Hermanos*. After police investigations supply runs short and Lydia proposes the possibility of robbing a train with methylamine.

Meanwhile Saul arranged a new meth lab for Walt and Jesse and together with *Vamonos Pest*, a pest control company they manage to cook meth in houses covered with tents. Todd is one of the employees and assists them during their train robbery. At the end of their adventure a small boy stops near them with his motocross and Todd without flinching shoots the child. Jesse is outraged and wants

him out of the operation but by then Todd already knows too much. Mike gets stalked by the DEA and decides to retire. Both, Mike and Jesse team up against Walt and want to sell their share of methylamine to their competitors. Also, by then Skyler turned her back on Walt and as he has nothing left in his life than his meth business he makes a new contract with Declan, a meth producer and distributor from Phoenix.

As Walt and Lydia's business is growing overseas they are making more money than one could ever spend in a lifetime. Skyler does no longer know how to launder that big amount of money and by showing Walt this huge pile she keeps in a storage room she can finally convince him to retire. For a moment everything seems to turn out just fine. Skyler and the kids move back in and together with Hank who got promoted they have a BBQ together. While Hank is sitting on the toilet and searching for something interesting to read he finds the book *Leaves of Grass* with a dedication to 'W.W.' by a certain 'G.B.' and the same quote he found in Gale Boetticher's lab notebook. Hank is shocked as he finally realizes that Walt is Heisenberg. Once Walt finds a tracking device on his car and confronts Hank with it they have an argumentation in which Walt puts his cards on the table. Further Walt reveals that his cancer has spread again and he will be dead anyway before Hank can even arrest him. Hank immediately calls Skyler and arranges a meeting. Yet, he pushes her too fast, asking her to bear witness against her husband. Walt rushes to Saul, gets his money and buries it in the desert.

Marie and Hank are devastated and want to bring Walt down. They arrange a meeting, yet Skyler and Walt hand over a video in which Walt blames Hank as the mastermind behind the drug empire. The fact, that Marie took Walt's money in order to pay for Hank's treatment leaves them both no other choice but to remain quiet. Meanwhile Lydia is not satisfied with the new cook's product and during a meeting Todd's uncle and his friends kill them all. Todd is reinstated as meth cook. However, Lydia is not satisfied with the quality of Todd's product either. Eventually Jesse finds out that Walt poisoned Brock. He goes crazy and wants to burn down Walt's house. At the very last minute Hank runs into the house and stops Jesse promising him that together they bring down Walt. Hank and his partner Steven Gomez record Jesse's confession and set up a trap for Walt. Jesse calls Walt and tells him he is burning all of his money. Walt rushes to the spot where he buried it and thus leads them to it. Once he is aware of his mistake he calls up Todd's uncle. However, as soon as Walt spots Hank he fears for Hank's life and calls Jack off. Yet, it is too late. Todd's uncle

and his friends arrive and kill both agents. Jesse can hide under the car but Walt reveals his hiding place and rubs it in Jesse's face that he killed Jane. Jesse becomes Todd's hostage and slave meth cook. He and his uncle keep him like a dog in chains and even kill Andrea after he once has tried to bail out. Before Hank got shot he called Marie, told her he busted Walt and will be home soon. Marie urges Skyler to tell her son the truth about his father. Once Skyler arrives at home and finds Walt she immediately knows that something has gone wrong and keeps asking for Hank. The situation gets out of control and Skyler refuses to go with Walt threatening him with a knife. They end up on the floor rolling around and Walter Junior calls 911. As there is no other choice left Walt flees to Alaska and prepares for his final visit in Albuquerque. First, he visits Elliot and Gretchen, former business partners, and threatens them to give his son his money in form of a donation once he turns 18 as he does not want to take it from him. Second, he says good-bye to Skyler and Holly. And third, he does not only poison Lydia but also meets Todd's uncle and kills them with an automatic machine gun hidden in the back of his car.

At the end Jesse and Walt face each other but Jesse decides not to kill Walt. Instead he drives away laughing hysterically and Walt dies as he has been injured protecting Jesse from the bullets of the machine gun.

6.3. Character description

The main objective of this section is to become familiarized with the main characters as well as reoccurring supporting characters as they are pivotal to the plot development, and add comedy, satire or drama to the show.

6.3.1. The Whites

Walter Hartwell White is a 50 year old overqualified high school chemistry teacher who changes his morals abruptly after he gets diagnosed lung cancer. The more time he spends with Jesse and other members of the gangster milieu the more he adapts their social behavior – ambitious regardless of the consequences. Already in the first episode Walt experiences fundamental change from a reserved, rational teacher⁶⁸ to

⁶⁸ The profession of a teacher is usually one for women as it is not a prestigious job. Therewith, Walt is depicted as a weak and effeminate character who becomes manly once he takes up the profession of

an emotional and demanding character. His hidden emotions reveal frustration, despair and aggressiveness which are most audible when Walt quits his job with the words 'Fuck you, Bodgan!' (*Breaking Bad*, S01E01). As Walt walks down the path of moral decline he loses control and gets confronted with his weaknesses. During his final talk on the phone with Skyler he gets rid of his emotional burden:

You're always whining and complaining about how I make my money, just dragging me down. While I do everything. And now-- now you tell my son what I do after I've told you and told you to keep your damn mouth shut. You stupid bitch. How dare you?! [...] You, you have no right to discuss anything about what I do. Oh, what-- what the hell do you know about it anyway? Nothing! I built this. Me. Me alone. Nobody else! (*Breaking Bad*, S05E14).

The abasement of Walt's morality is reflected both in his bodily transformation and his language. The metamorphosis of an uptight and reserved high school teacher to a ruthless criminal is the main event in *Breaking Bad*. Eventually he loses everything and the question remains whether Walter White was Heisenberg all along.

Skyler White undergoes important changes which show her being torn apart between what is morally right to do and protecting her family similar to Walt. At the beginning she is the caring and loving mother who wants to know everything about the whereabouts of her husband. She does not use strong language to offend anybody else as her 'female' weapons are threatening with divorce, suicidal messages and ignoring. She does not offend the listener but rather blames herself for not being able to fulfill socially determined and appropriate behavior (being a perfect mother). However, if so she uses strong language, too.⁶⁹ The assassination of Gus and Hank finally turn her against Walt, she stands up to her duties as a mother and protects her children with a knife.

Their son, Walter Junior suffers from cerebral palsy which requires him to use crutches. He goes to the same school in which Walter works as a chemistry teacher and has a very close relationship to his uncle Hank who represents the male role model. At the beginning he does not question the gambling story of his parents but merely accepts the new wealth of the family and especially his new car. Once he is confronted with the truth about his father and his uncle's murder he turns against his father. In general, his appearance is very peripheral.

a meth produces he is able to fulfill the role of the man in the house. Becomes sexually active and demanding, and makes decisions. See section 3.4.

⁶⁹ "I fucked Ted" (*Breaking Bad*, S03E03).

6.3.2. The Schraders

Marie is the second female character and throughout the first season a subplot about her kleptomania is illustrated. However, for the majority of the next seasons she stays in the background and only occurs marginally. In general, Marie is depicted as a bossy, gossiping wife and aunt. She mainly uses epithets and intensifiers such as “what the hell” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E01) or “Damn it, Hank” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E03) when either talking to her sister or to her husband. On one occasion she insults a female real-estate broker with “fatty” (*Breaking Bad*, S04E03). Once she finds out about Walt’s secret and Skyler’s involvement she slaps her sister in the face thus her most offensive act is physical not verbal (*Breaking Bad*, S05E10).

Hank’s character is twofold. On the one hand he is this loving family person who takes care of his wife and nephew and obviously cares about Walt’s disease and relationship problems with Skyler. On the other hand he is an uncompromising DEA-agent who tries to hide his fears and self-doubts in macho-masquerade. At work he uses strong language to set limits, personify power and also to make fun with his colleague Steven Gomez calling him a “cheese dick” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E01) and his nephew a “little bastard” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E03).

6.3.3. Jesse Pinkman

At the beginning of *Breaking Bad* Jesse plays the role of Walt’s comical sidekick. He is depicted as a slow witted school drop-out who is clearly inferior to Walt’s genius, therewith confirming the prejudice that bad language and low intelligence are interrelated.⁷⁰ He uses a variety of different intensifiers such as “big ass” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E4) or “damn” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E07). Additionally to that, he uses “shit” and “crap” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E04/E06; S02E06/12) as filler for words such as *things* and *stuff* and adds *bitch* to almost every sentence uttered. The application of so many slang words in his speech emphasizes his inferiority towards Walt and as the plot develops Jesse’s dependence from Walt becomes clearer to the audience. On contrary to Walt Jesse is naïve, falls for Walt’s lies and only in season five is he able to see Walt’s true colors. He does not mince matters even if this leads to beatings or hospitalization.

⁷⁰ See section 3.1.

6.3.4. Bonding with friends

Combo and Skinny Pete already appear at the beginning of the first season hanging out at Jesse's place and smoking crystal. The language they use is simple and characterized by slang expressions. At the time of Badger's first appearance he is on probation earning his money with spinning signs in front of a bank. In comparison to Jesse the three of them are depicted as even more slower and duller. Once Jesse and Walt start their own distribution network, the three of them become their main distributors. Especially Badger and Skinny Pete usually appear on a scene to add comical references adding humor to the scenes. They are clumsy, slow witted, and the effects of longtime drug abuse are recognizable in their slowness. They mainly use insults to bond, as a comic relief or to name things.

Saul Goodman is the lawyer criminals turn to get bailed out from jail. He is a very popular person in Albuquerque due to his late night TV commercials which are cheap both in visualization and language. As it turns out Saul is exactly the lawyer Walt and Jesse were searching for. Saul is an alternative comical figure in the plot of *Breaking Bad* as Jesse and Walt's comical meth producing does no longer build the center of attention. Saul always knows someone who knows someone who might be of help and he always knows what to say in the right situation to either calm down his customers or cheer them up. His language is cunning as one of a sales person and a shrewd lawyer.

6.3.5. Dealing with enemies

Gustavo Fring is the one person one would never accuse of being the head of a drug empire run under the disguise of a fast food chain (Los Pollos Hermanos). The reason for Gus' waterproof disguise is the language he uses. He never speaks ill-considered or without any control, he does not swear, does not argue; he is always nice and friendly. As Gus' calls it this is professionalism something both Walt and Jesse lack. On the contrary to Gus' controllability several characters are led by their addiction to power, money and drugs and lack euphemisms.

The most offensive insulter in the entire TV show is Tuco Salamanca, Hispanic drug kingpin in Albuquerque and nephew of Hector Salamanca. As it turns out Tuco is an unpredictable sociopath who does not only use offensive language to express

his intentions but additionally to that beats disobedient employees to death or to a pulp. The two meth heads – Spooze and his girlfriend are by far the ones who use offensive language by means of ‘normal’ communication. The second couple of meth heads are high on drugs and completely out of their mind. While one is busy digging a whole the other utters uncontrollable screams and both use strong language (*Breaking Bad*, S04E06). The reason being for them to talk in such an offensive and low way is that they are socially and morally degenerated which is depicted in their mental and physical deterioration.⁷¹

As can be seen in this section the center of attention is Walt’s metamorphosis from weak and effeminate teacher to active, strong and demanding drug producer. As he depicts the superior character his language is more complex than Jesse’s slow witted mind and slang vocabulary. As the theme of the plot gets darker less comical references are added by Jesse. Yet, additional characters such as Saul, Skinny Pete and Badger comical effects are added from time to time. Drug consumers and distributors use strong language to depict their degeneration and loss of social morals and can immediately be identified as users whereas Gus manages to deceive his opponents with control of emotions and language.

II. Empirical part: Fictional representation & self-reported perception

The second main part of this paper shows the results of the empirical analysis of insults used in *Breaking Bad* as well as the evaluation of a questionnaire designed for NS and NNS of English and their self-reported perception of insults. The final section will present a discussion of this study.

7. Fictional representation of insults in *Breaking Bad*

This chapter focusses on the TV show and presents the most frequently used insults as well as a gender-specific addressee-addresser analysis. The outcome of this analysis on the frequency of insults will form the data for the questionnaire. Additionally to that the question will be answered which insult can function in terms of

⁷¹ See section 3.4.

bonding and if any relatedness towards gender and the source of the insult can be exemplified.

7.1. Material and method

The data source of this study is the scripted episodes of five *Breaking Bad* seasons. As I was able to find the episode scripts online I proceeded in the following way⁷²:

The scripts were printed, watched five seasons of *Breaking Bad*, highlighted swearwords, insults and curses and noted if an insult served a bonding function or not. Apart from that I checked the accuracy of the episode scripts. Proof for my decisions whether an insult fulfilled a bonding function or not could be drawn from the context of the specific scene (facial expression, intonation, gestures as well as reaction of the listener/s) as well as the reaction of the listener. Afterwards I summarized all swearwords in an excel list according to the episode and per season and extracted those which addressed a person. My next step was to examine the frequency of these insults. Therefore, the free concordance tool *AntConc* was of great help.

The next steps were to individually analyze each season in order to find the insults which are most frequently used. The objective here is to identify those insults which address persons both direct and indirect⁷³. The results of this analysis will be used to create the questionnaire for NS and NNS presented in chapter 8.

The outcomes of most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad* are presented and discussed on the following pages.

7.2. Most frequently used insults per season

The figures below show the insults which have the highest frequency of occurrences in each season starting from season 1 to season 5. The numbers are given in total and the derogatories include plurals as well as self-referent forms. The figures presented below list all occurrences of insults which were uttered more than once and address a person. Those bars colored in red highlight the three most frequently used insults.

⁷² http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/episode_scripts.php?tv-show=breaking-bad [15 Aug. 2014].

⁷³ *Direct* here means the speaker directly addresses the listener with an insult; *indirect* means that the speaker refers to the addressee who is not physically present.

Figure 1 below illustrates which insults are most frequently used in the first six episodes of season 1 including the pilot.

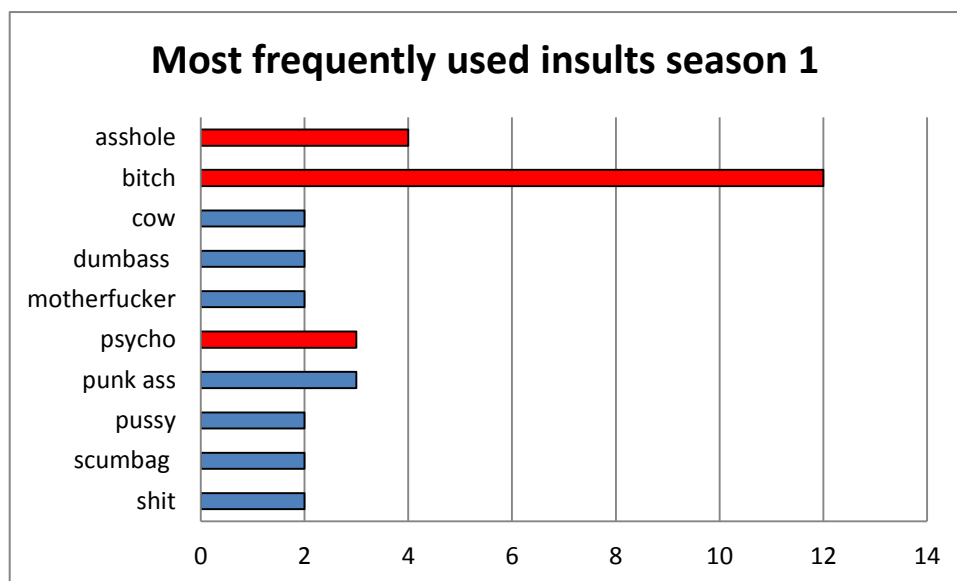


Figure 1 Most frequently used insults in season 1

As can be seen from Figure 1 the term *bitch* is by far the most frequently used personal insult throughout season 1. Six out of 12 occurrences are uttered by Jesse and either fulfill a bonding function or insult the listener. The other six occurrences attribute female characteristics to the listener/s such as being afraid or not manly enough (*Breaking Bad*, S01E04-07). Thus, *bitch* fulfills two functions – bonding and insulting.

Asshole is the second most frequently used insult. It is used twice to express discontent with the behavior of the addressee and once as a joking way of admiration for good work. *Punk ass* and *psycho*⁷⁴ share the same number of occurrences and with three hits. All three occurrences of *psycho* refer to an abnormal behavior of the addressee which caused either physical abuse or overprotection (*Breaking Bad*, S01E01, E02, E05, E07). *Punk ass* as well as *psycho* are applied where it stresses rebellious behavior of the addressee. All other six insults only occurred twice.

It can be argued that the main reason for *motherfucker*⁷⁵ and *pussy* not to be uttered more often is that they belong to the seven dirty words and therefore are dealt with caution even by AMC.⁷⁶ As *motherfucker* is a very strong and offensive

⁷⁴ There is one occurrence of the compound *psycho bitch*. In this figure it is counted for *bitch* and not for *psycho*.

⁷⁵ The abbreviation *mofo* is not included in this evaluation as it is a euphemism of the insult. The same goes for *son of a* as the insult is not fully expressed.

⁷⁶ For regulations on national broadcasting see section 3.2.

insult⁷⁷ its utterance is legitimized as follows. First, it was used by two Hispanic characters and second, both are involved in the drug dealing business.⁷⁸ As both characters are very aggressive and dangerous this offensive way of talking further emphasizes the danger of the scene as well as the decline in morals of the speakers. As has already been highlighted in section 3.4 words such as *bitch* and *asshole* are no longer considered as a very offensive form of insults and thus, allow the writers to let their characters insult each other.

Figure 2 shows a slightly different picture. The main reason is that season 2 has 13 episodes which are almost twice as many and therefore a higher number of occurrences can be expected.

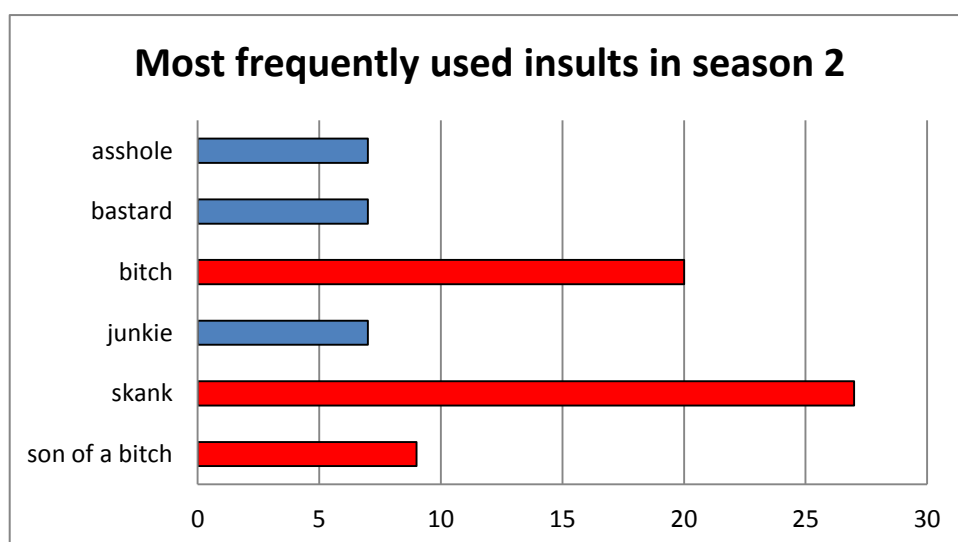


Figure 2 Most frequently used insults in season 2

It has to be stressed that the reason for the high number of occurrences of *skank* is due to a scene in which Jesse claims his money back from two meth heads – Spooze and his girlfriend – who robbed Skinny Pete. The couple has an argument and Spooze repeatedly calls his girlfriend a *skank* which makes her very angry as he does not stop. While he is lying under an ATM machine and trying to break it open he does not stop calling her a *skank*. This teasing eventually leads to his early death as she drops the ATM machine on his head.⁷⁹ Both characters are depicted as

⁷⁷ This can be verified in Sapolsky, Shafer and Kayle's research (2010) on offensiveness in TV shows.

⁷⁸ Tuco who is a lunatic drug kingpin and Emilio a meth cook.

⁷⁹ As *skank* is exclusively used by two characters who play minor roles and do not reoccur after this episode the insult *skank* is not included in the questionnaire as it is not representative for the entire TV show.

members of the lower class, degenerate in bodily appearance and moral standards, and thus their coarse language perfectly fits for the sake of completeness as *lowlife degenerates*.

The term *bitch* is the next in this ranking. 12 out of the 20 occurrences were uttered in the episode mentioned above by either the two drug addicts (Spoooge and girlfriend) or Jesse. The remaining 8 hits are either uttered in order to attribute female qualities and/or deviant behavior to men or calling other women a *bitch* due to their antisocial behavior.⁸⁰ Therewith, *bitch* does not fulfill a bonding function but is mainly used to insult the listener in contrast to season 1. What is striking here is the first occurrence of *son of a bitch* as it did not occur even once throughout season 1. However with regards to the multiple functions of *bitch*, *son of a bitch* is entirely used to insult the male opponent for unacceptable behavior.

High frequency of the word *junkie*⁸¹ can be explained two reasons. One, as Jesse and Jane slip into their drug addiction *junkie* is repeatedly used to refer to both of them mainly by Walt who expresses his disappointment with Jesse. And two, the word is used to either refer to Spoooge or his girlfriend.

Bastard and *asshole* do not only show the same number of occurrences, but they also serve the same purpose. Both terms are either used to insult or fulfill a bonding function. If they are used to insult both express the disparaging attitude of the speaker towards the addressee. In their bonding function they are used between Jesse and his friends.

Season 3 as well as season 2 has 13 episodes and although the occurrences in total show the same number slight changes can be seen as Figure 3 shows below.

⁸⁰ There is one occurrence of the insult *punk bitches* uttered by Combo to address rival drug dealers. It is not included in *bitch*, too.

⁸¹ Although it is arguable whether *junkie* is an insult or not I have included it in the analysis of insults given the fact that it was used as an insult and not just as a term to refer to a drug addict.

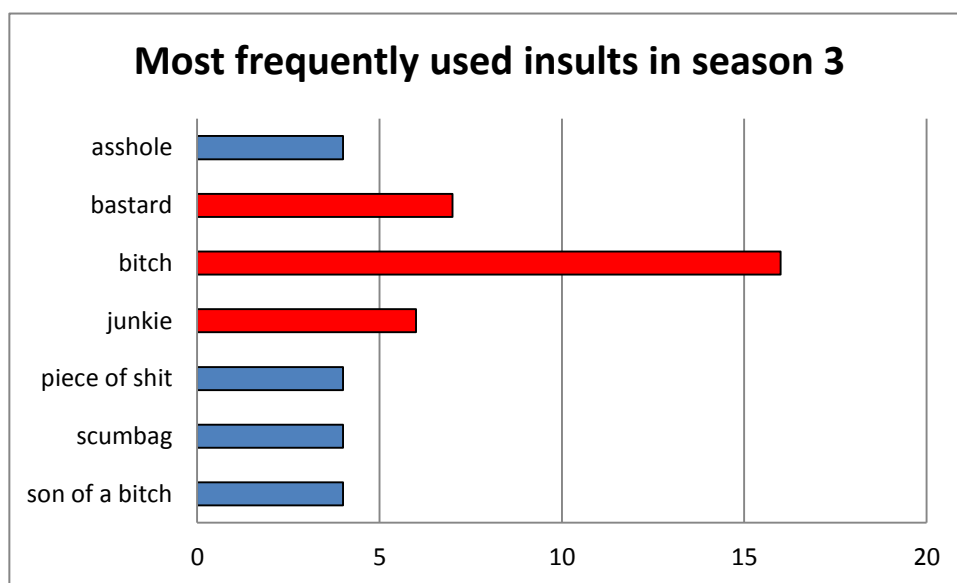


Figure 3 Most frequently used insults in season 3

Again, as in season 1 and season 2 the leading position is held by the term *bitch* which is uttered ten times by Jesse mainly to insult or negating the term with the help of self-referent forms e.g. “I’m not your bitch to order around” (*Breaking Bad*, S03E08). Calling others a *bitch* turns out to be Jesse’s catchphrase this is why it has a high frequency throughout the season. *Bitch* is also uttered by Saul, Hank, Skinny Pete and Badger who use *bitch* mainly to attribute female characteristics to a male, to point out antisocial behavior of females or to bonding with each other.

Another interesting fact is the higher frequency of *bastard*. In season 2 *bastard* only occurred 2 times and yet in season 3 it is used seven times. *Bastard* is used both to offend somebody else and to show affection. If it is used to offend Hank, for example, uses it to refer to Jesse while he is tracking him down or Stephen Gomez addresses Hank’s assassin. If it is used to show affection, *bastard* is uttered by Hank or Saul to refer to the poor state of a friend e.g. “and now his wife kicks the poor bastard out of his own house” (*Breaking Bad*, S03E02). The occurrence of *son of a bitch* is cut by half.⁸² This term is only applied to express astonishment (Hank’s survival of his assassination) and discontent with the behavior of the addressee (Walt’s return to his home and the Salamanca twins testing the quality of a life vest on its seller). As the production of crystal meth does no longer constitute the center of

⁸² It is Important to mention that episode 10 is mainly dedicated to Walt’s unsuccessful fly hunt. While he is determined to catch a fly in his lab he calls it several times a *son of a bitch* and *bastard*. Jesse shows sympathy and tells Walt the story about an opossum hiding in his aunt’s house referring to it with *bitch*. However, references to animals are excluded from this evaluation as the gender of a fly or an opossum in English is neutral.

attention and everything is strictly regulated by Gus, Jesse and Walt do not argue with each other as often as in season 2. This also contributes to the decrease of the use of insults between them.

The comparatively high frequency of *junkie* is still connected to Jesse's addiction which he has overcome at the beginning of season 3. If the word *junkie* is used it exclusively addresses Jesse six times in season 3.

*Asshole*⁸³, *piece of shit* and *scumbag* are used equally frequently. They all derive from the same source (obscenity with emphasis put on scatology) and thus, are used to express the same disgust and low reputation of the addressee. However, *asshole* is once used as a comic relief when Hank gets visited by his colleague Steve Gomez (*Breaking Bad*, S03E09).

In general, it can be stated that the application of *bitch* reveals a certain pattern which can be considered as Jesse's catchphrase as well as a bonding repetitious catchphrase of his friends. A trend which further is verified with the results presented in Figure 4 below:

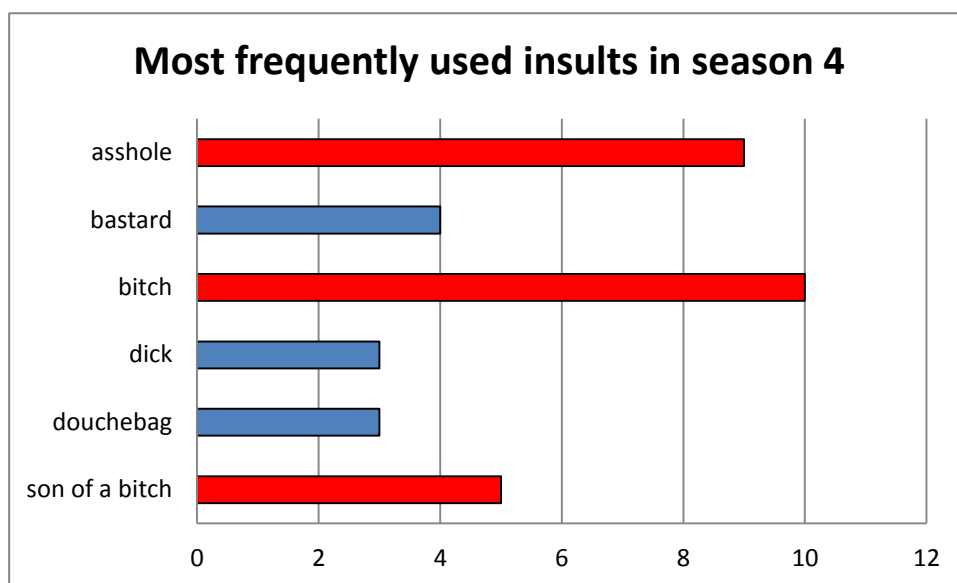


Figure 4 Most frequently used insults in season 4

What is pivotal to highlight in Figure 4 is that there is a clear cut between the previous seasons when it comes to the quantity of occurrences. Although all three seasons have 13 episodes, only season 2 and season 3 have more than 10 occurrences of *bitch*, whereas season 4 is below 10 occurrences with only 7 *bitches*. While I was watching the TV show I got the impression that as darker and more serious the plot

⁸³ There is one scene in which Tortuga talks with his boss. But their conversation is in Spanish and therefore the two occurrences of *asshole* are excluded from this list (*Breaking Bad*, S03E03).

unfolds the fewer insults are used as the scenery is already depressing and dark enough. Therefore, the characters do not need to emphasize the tragedy with strong language. Besides this reduction of derogatories the most popular insults remain the above three swearwords highlighted in red: *bitch*, *son of a bitch* and *asshole*. *Bitch* basically fulfills the same function as in the three previous seasons and is uttered seven times by Jesse both to insult and bond. Interestingly to find is that six times out of nine occurrences Jesse uses *asshole*. This can be explained therewith that Jesse goes down to Mexico with Gus and has to defend the superiority of his product against Mexican meth cooks and uses *asshole* in several incidences to show his opponents that he is the one in power and at the same time refers to their low status. After he has accomplished his mission in Mexico he certainly feels closer to Gus' business and looser to Walt. As they get involved in several arguments Jesse defends himself by calling Walt an asshole.

Although the plot development becomes the darkest within season 5 the results of the analysis show a different picture to the above stated as can be seen on the next page in Figure 5.

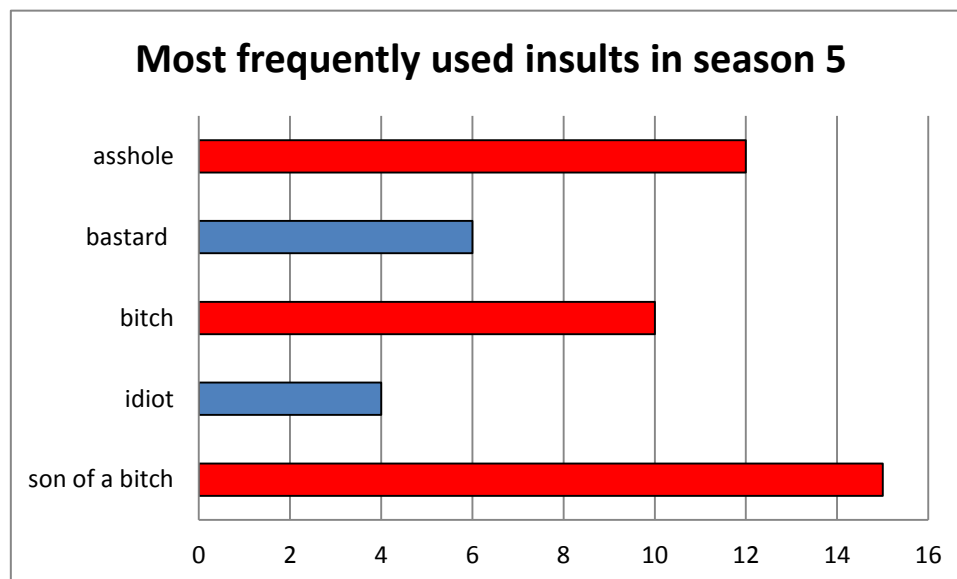


Figure 5 Most frequently used insults in season 5

In season 5 everything collapses and nothing is safe anymore. This is the main reason why the frequency of insults increased compared to the previous seasons. Season 3 and season 4 emphasize the moral decline of all the main characters. Although suspicion arises it can always be allayed and the dramaturgy does not necessarily need so many insults as the collapse is an ongoing process. However,

once the escalating tension can no longer be eased the catastrophe cannot be stopped and explodes violently. The characters express their shock, disgust and anger with the increasing number of *son of a bitch*, *bitch*, *bastard*, *idiot*, and *asshole*.

More than half of the above illustrated insults refer to Walt as the direct and indirect addressee – 26 occurrences out of 47 – as his family is disappointed in him being a criminal and cheating them for so long. On the contrary, Jesse is only seven times addressed with an insult. Therefore most of the insults of season 5 basically depict Walt's cruelty and the great disappointment in him.

Bitch shows a frequency of ten occurrences it is 7 times used by Jesse. However, what is different is that he exclusively uses it to insult and provoke Walt. The only occurrences in which *bitch* is used to fulfill a bonding function is by Skinny Pete and Badger. As has been mentioned before the couple adds comical relief to the scenes as Jesse's part in the show has become too dark to add comedy.

Although the TV show is aired on AMC, a private channel which is not as strictly bound to the regulations of the FCC, the scriptwriters still pay attention to which insults they prescribe for their characters. Those insults which are known as the seven dirty words are mainly avoided or if they are uttered they are either used by socially deviant characters (e.g. drug addicts) or by ethnic minorities (Hispanics).

In order to illustrate the average distribution of insults per season Figure 6 below shows the normalization of insults per installments.

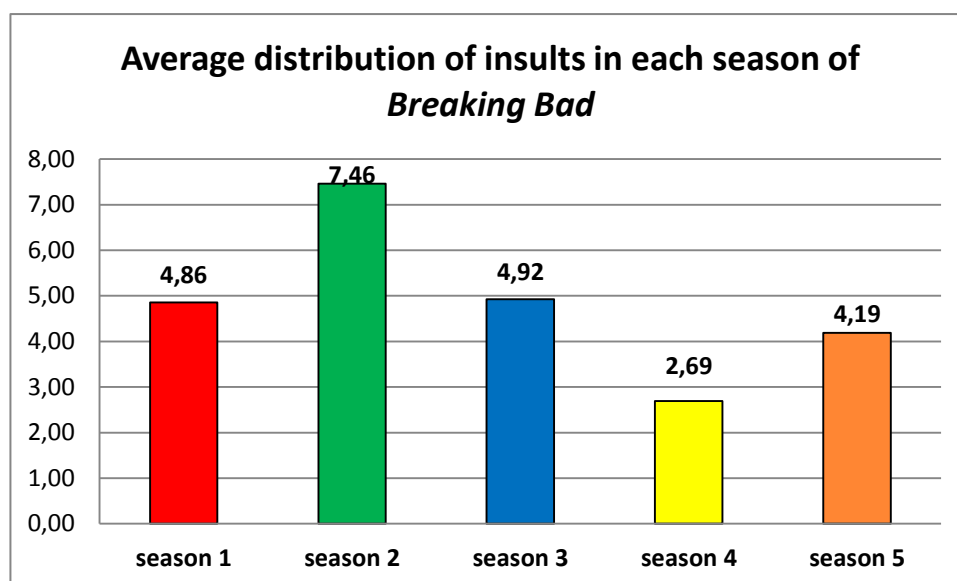


Figure 6 Average distribution of insults in each season of *Breaking Bad*

The comparatively high number of insults in season 2 is mainly related to the two drug addicts (Spoooge & girlfriend) and their ongoing argument throughout one installment which counts in total 27 occurrences of *skank* and seven *bitches* within the episode *Peekaboo*. If these occurrences were excluded season two would show the same average distribution as season one and three. As can be seen here both season 1 and season 3 use a comparatively large number of insults with regards to the different number of installments. Apart from the extraordinary high distribution of insults in season 2 the remaining seasons' distribution can be explained through reference to the series structure and the development of the storyline.

In season 1 Jesse is depicted as a slow-witted high school dropout who clearly has difficulties following Walt's train of thoughts whereas Walt struggles with Jesse's simpleness. Their teamwork most often leads to arguments and fights in which they do not mince matters. Still, their problems always have a comic tone. Another reason for the comparable limited occurrence of insults is Walt's working environment as it is still to a great extent at school and in his leisure time he spends time with his family, yet it already starts to become less. Besides, the audience should not be scared off from too offensive language. In season 2 the theme already starts to become darker once one of Jesse's friends gets shot and he and his girlfriend start taking drugs again. After Tuco got shot by Hank Jesse and Walt try to run their own drug business which leads to several incidences in which they have to deal with unpleasant side effects e.g. Spoooge. These characters usually use more swearwords and insults in their active speaking parts. The dark theme is further emphasized with flash-forwards at the beginning of every episode in which men in white overalls are shown collecting evidence in Walt's garden. In spite of the fact that Walt manages to trade his crystal meth and, therewith, is able to provide for his family the bleak and desperate outlook takes up every episode. Additionally, the language becomes more offensive and the storyline more violent e.g. Walt watching Jane choking to death. Subplots such as in *Peekaboo* or in *Fly* on the one hand show human downfall as both drugs addicts live in a very dirty and dark house and, on the other hand, Walt's fly hunt indicates that his masquerade will no longer hold and he is going to lose his family which eventually happens in season 3.

The wheel of fortune turns, yet, for the worse for Walt. He has to leave his family and his wife wants a divorce and has an affair. What makes season 3 in comparison to season 1 and 2 special is the fact, that if insults are uttered they bring

the speaker's feelings to the point whereas in the previous seasons they sometimes appear to be uttered randomly and do not have such a strong effect on the scenes. The reason for season 4 to show a comparable low number of insults can be explained through the new working conditions of Walt and Jesse and the falling apart of their friendship. They do not only talk less but also spend less time with each other and distrust becomes a growing issue. On the one hand, we have this dark scenery which does not need insults as threatening to kill somehow does not always ask for personal insults. And on the other hand, there is this calm before the storm because the audience knows that Walt quitting his job cannot be the solution. By then Walt works for Gus Fring and as he and Jesse have already lost Gus's trust when they shot Gale Boetticher, cameras are installed in the lab. Therefore Walt and Jesse do not talk during working hours and consequently do not argue with each other that much as before. Apart from that Gus is a professional who does not need strong language to achieve his objectives, as, for example, Krazy-8 and Tuco did. Season 4 focusses on intimidation which is not represented through verbal violence but through monitoring and the ongoing knowledge that your boss is going to kill you once your job is done. As has been mentioned above the plot of season 4 is even darker and more threatening than in the previous seasons and insults are not used as emotional emphasizees. Season 4 shows that money does not make one happy as long as one is alone and this dreariness comes to a halt once Walt manages to kill Gus.

Although season 5 has by far the darkest and most depressing theme of all five seasons it fits perfectly well to the other seasons and their insult distribution. Within this season the catastrophe is no longer knocking at the door but it is depicted in its full impact and brings everybody down. Season five finally reveals Heisenberg's real identity and the monstrosity of Walt's actions suddenly becomes clear and is expressed with insults as *son of bitch*, *bitch* and *asshole* which mainly refer to Walt. By far he is the most attacked addressee of insults in season five. There is no character that does not have to suffer from Walt's actions and eventually the protagonist gives his life to save somebody else's (Meyer 2008:113-115).

Apart from the dramaturgical construction of this TV show there are some additional reasons influencing the distribution of swearwords across the season, for example, Jesse's preference for the use of *bitch*. He turns it into his catchphrase. For Jesse, *bitch* fulfills mainly two functions – bonding and insulting. Apart from Jesse other characters such as Hank, Walt and Mike also show a repetitive usage of the

same insults. This can be linked with the high frequency of *asshole*, *bastard* and *son of a bitch*. These insults usually refer to antisocial and/or inappropriate behavior of the addressee. They can also be classified as insults which refer to their social deviation or ancestry. Yet, *asshole* and *bastard* can be used to express affection for the addressee, too.⁸⁴

The following section will evaluate and analyze the top ten most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad* which form the data for the questionnaire for NS and NNS.

7.3. Top ten most frequently used insults

After the previously illustrated analysis of insults per season an excel chart was created with the total number of occurrences of the above mentioned insults including plural forms and alternate spelling, and calculated the total number of the most frequently used ones with the help of the concordance program *AntConc*. Figure 7 illustrates the results of this evaluation of insults which are used both to insult and to serve a bonding function or comic relief.

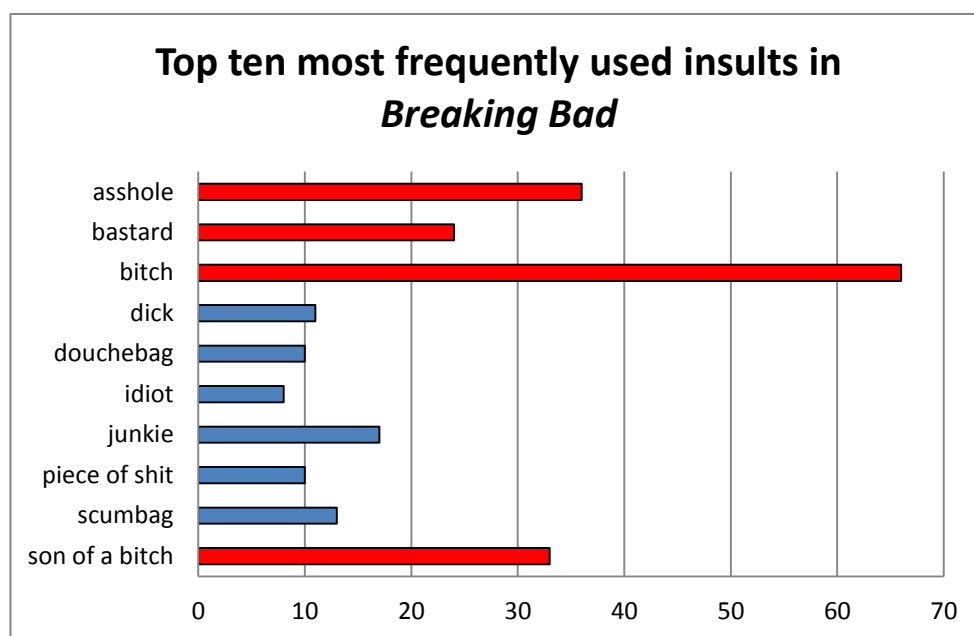


Figure 7 Top ten most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad* which directly and indirectly address a person

⁸⁴ See section 7.5. for a closer analysis of the bonding function in *Breaking Bad*.

The most striking fact seen in Figure 7 is that *bitch* is by far the most frequently used insult throughout all five seasons of *Breaking Bad*. This can be explained by Jesse Pinkman using *bitch* for almost everybody and everything without regard for gender, situation or appropriateness. Yet, it is not exclusively used by Jesse but also by other characters that either attribute female qualities and/or behavior to males or stress inappropriate behavior of females. The increased presence reveals that the audience does no longer perceive *bitch* exclusively as a strong and offensive derogatory term as otherwise AMC would have limited the occurrence as it did, for example, with the still very offensive insult *motherfucker*. The high frequency further shows that speakers by now must have got familiarized with the term and therefore the rating TV 14 seems justified. The result of this analysis confirms Jay's theory that the exposure to a certain insult decreases its original offensiveness for which Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye's study of 2010 found further evidence (Jay 1992; Sapolsky, Shafer, Kaye 2010: 48). Additionally, the results of this analysis illustrate that *bitch* has managed to find its way into everyday-life vocabulary without being as offensive as it used to be. It would be wrong to say that *bitch* lost its original meaning moreover it expanded its semantic meanings and can be used on various occasions to express a variety of meanings e.g. as a replacement for *something*, an epithet and even as a filler.

The derogatory term *son of a bitch* is used in two functions. On the one hand, it is used to communicate to the addressee or listener that certain behavior is inappropriate, antisocial or simply strange and the speaker does not approve of it and feels offended. On the other hand *son of a bitch* can also express a bonding function between the speaker and the addressee. Yet, it has to be pointed out that the speaker applies different body language, intonation and adds an adjective such as *little* or *tough* to qualify its intensity (*Breaking Bad*, S05E15, S03E08).⁸⁵

Asshole and *bastard*⁸⁶ are ambivalent insults, too, and show the same application pattern as *son of a bitch*. Apart from that, all three insults are not included in the seven dirty word list and therefore are not dealt with precaution which could be one reasonable explanation for their high number of occurrences throughout *Breaking Bad*. The fact that they can be used to express a bonding function is another important reason for the high occurrence on private channels. Additionally to that, the ranking of the first three most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad* shows

⁸⁵ For more information on the bonding function of insults see section 7.5.

⁸⁶ As has been pointed out above the original meaning of *bastard* has lost its potency and is no longer considered as a strong insult (Hughes 1991: 253).

similar results as studies carried out in 1995 and 1997 by the Media Research Center which found that *ass*, *bitch* and *bastard* were most often used on television. A results which is further confirmed by Kaye and Sapolsky's study on coarse language in prime time television which found *bitch*, *bastard* and *son of a bitch* to be amongst the most frequently used insults (Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 307).⁸⁷

Although *junkie* is not an insult per se I included it in this list because it was mainly used to express Walt's disgust with Jesse's addiction which led to several losses in their business and, in general, it is an unfriendly way to address a person being addicted to something. Walt insults Jesse several times a *junkie* as he messes up important meetings due to his addiction. Thus, *junkie* can be classified as an insult which expresses both low intelligence and asocial behavior. Coming to the smaller group of insults it has to be said that there are two reasons for their limited occurrence and a very contradictory for that. One, insults such as *idiot*⁸⁸ or *dick* are not very often used because they are not offensive enough and can be considered as rather neutral insults. And two, insults such as *scumbag* and *piece of shit* are very offensive and therefore limited occurrence is ensured in order to prevent the audience from raising any complaints.

These ten insults will be used for the questionnaire which will be discussed in the next chapter. Further gender-specific addresser-addressee analysis of these insults follows in the next section.

7.4. Gender-specific addressee-addresser analysis of top ten insults

The following section presents the results of the detailed analysis of the top ten most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad* with focus on gender-specific usage.

The objectives here are threefold: First, it should be identified if the ten insults show any gender relations in terms of their addressers and addressees. Additionally to that it will be discussed if the fictional representation derives from its original meaning found in *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (Dalzell; Victor 2006). Second, as male characters talk more than the female

⁸⁷ Although *asshole* was not listed in the ratings the semantic relation between *ass* and *asshole* is prominent. Further, Kaye & Sapolsky listed *bullshit* and *jackass*.

⁸⁸ *Idiot* as well as *psycho* has 8 occurrences throughout *Breaking Bad*. Yet, as *psycho* is once used in the compound "*psycho fucks*" (*Breaking Bad*, S05E15) I decided to choose *idiot* as it was used without any other nouns. Additionally to that *idiot* occurred once in Spanish *idiota*, however as it is not in English it is not included here.

characters an analysis of the turns and the uttered insults will be presented with regards to homo- and heterosexual conversations. Third, as the preceding evaluation showed there are several instances in which insults are used in self-reference form. As slight differences could be observed while analyzing data for the questionnaire the main focus of the third section will be put on gender-specific differences in self-referent forms.⁸⁹ The results of this chapter represent the fictional scripted usage of insults which will be compared in the following chapter with the results of the conducted questionnaire.

7.4.1. Gender-specific role allocations

Certain insults are limited to only one gender as they are either a metaphor for male or female body parts e.g. *dick* or they already contain the gender inevitably in the term itself as for example *son of a bitch*. On the contrary to them others are not limited to the gender of the addressee and can be considered as gender-neutral insults. The following categorization in four groups aims at classifying whether the ten insults show any correlation with the gender of their addresser and the addressee.

Group 1: males address males

Group 2: females and males address males

Group 3: gender-neutral addressing

Group 4: males address both genders

7.4.1.1. Group 1 – males address males

Group 1 of gender-specific role allocations is restricted to one gender – male. As it turned out after a closer look at the gender of the speaker and addressee it showed that the following four insults are exclusively used by men to address men.

- *piece of shit*
- *scumbag*

⁸⁹ This analysis only focusses on insults which either fulfill an insulting or bonding function between two characters. Insults which are used as epithets or address animals or items are excluded from this analysis as both do neither address a person or animate objects and are thus insignificant for our analysis with the focus on gender differences.

- *dick*
- *bastard*

Piece of shit is the only insult in this group which is exclusively used in singular form which is inevitably required through its metaphorical comparison between a person and a piece of body waste. Interestingly, is that the dictionary description does not refer to a male but defines *piece of shit* as “something disgusting or of very poor quality; a person who is greatly disliked” (Dalzell & Victor 2006, 2: 1478).

On the contrary to an insult exclusively used in singular form *scumbag*, *dick* and *bastard* are more versatile as they are uttered in both singular as well as plural form. The reason for *dick* being solely used to address males can be explained with the metaphorical comparison between the addressee and a male sex organ. The definition found in the dictionary lists ten different meanings of which only four refer to males and even one definition defines *dick* as a synonym for clitoris (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 1: 582).

Bastard originally referred to an illegitimate child and is one of the oldest insults in this list as it has been around since the 16th century and refers to “a fellow, a man” (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 1: 102). In Jay’s publication *Cursing in America* it is described as an insult which highlights “the social ineptness, non-caring, self-centered, harmful, or mean qualities of the target” (Jay 1992: 179).

The last insult which is applied exclusively by males in the fictional world of *Breaking Bad* is *scumbag*. It offers three possibilities of inferred meaning but is mainly used to express that someone is “a low, despicable person” (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 2: 1690).⁹⁰ Although in *Breaking Bad* *scumbag*, *bastard*, *dick* and *piece of shit* are predominantly used by males their definition given in the dictionary of slang shows that they are not limited to male addressees as the term *person* does not explicitly define the gender.

7.4.1.2. Group 2 – females and males address males

Group 2 summarizes those insults which are either uttered by females or males yet, they only address male listeners. The second group consists of the following two insults:

⁹⁰ Other definitions refer to a condom or a prostitute (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 2: 1690).

- *son of a bitch*
- *asshole*

What is important to point out is that the insult *son of a bitch* does not primarily insult the son but above all affronts the mother's promiscuity. This insult has been around for centuries and was first recorded in 1605 to refer to "a despicable person" (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 2: 1817). Although the dictionary definition does not explicitly address a male as the target, it is exclusively used to address male opponents in *Breaking Bad*. The one time it is uttered by a female is when Skyler indirectly calls Walt a *son of a bitch* as he has returned to their home without her permission (*Breaking Bad*, S03E03). On the contrary to *son of a bitch*, *asshole* directly refers to the low qualities of the addressee and compares the behavior to the excretory organ. *Asshole* belongs to the category of scatology. Although both genders possess this particular body part which would claim gender neutrality in *Breaking Bad* it is only used to refer to males, too.

7.4.1.3. Group 3 – gender-neutral addressing

The third group presents gender-neutral insults as they are used interchangeably by both genders to refer to both males and females. Group 3 consists of the following three insults:

- *bitch*
- *idiot*
- *junkie*

From the previous results of the analysis of *Breaking Bad* it was predictable that *bitch* is not exclusively used to address females but moreover in this TV-show it is used to address males, too. *Bitch* is a gender neutral insult which can be used cross-gender. This is further verified with the definitions given in Dalzell and Victor's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (2006: 165) which refer to females and effeminate males. Drawing on Jay this shows that in the fictional environment of *Breaking Bad* in which characters are asked to demonstrate manliness the most frequently uttered insult is to question their masculinity by calling them a *bitch*. Therewith the speaker denies the manhood of the addressee and attributes female passiveness and

submissiveness (Jay 1992: 178).⁹¹ Yet, the usages of *bitch* uttered by females, of course, do not offend the listener with attributing effeminate behavior. Moreover, if females use *bitch* they express that the listener is a “socially harmful woman or a social deviant” (Jay 1992: 180), a “despicable woman” (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 1: 165) or as Coyne, Sherman and O’Brien highlight “[...] bitches not only violate basic social rules [...] but also violate those gender role standards requiring passive, docile behavior in women” (Coyne, Sherman & O’Brien 1978 quoted in James 1998: 405). As Hughes (1991: 209) points out *bitch* was originally used by both genders and only later was mainly used to refer to females. Further he raises the question if this only happened by accident or reveals “a ‘patriarchal’ conspiracy against women” (Hughes 1991: 209) as eventually *bitch* became an even more provocative insult to a female than *whore* (Hughes 1991: 228).⁹²

The second insult which shows gender-neutrality is *idiot*. What differentiates *idiot* from the other insults is that it is the one which is most frequently used in a self-referenced form as for example “Like I’m an idiot” (*Breaking Bad*, S05E14). Moreover, it can be stated that although *idiot* is gender-neutral no cross-gender usage was uttered meaning that no female addressed a male with the term *idiot* and vice versa. Yet, it was used by both genders but only to refer to the same gender. This result confirms the outcome of the distribution of genders by Hughes (1991: 208) who found that although *idiot* is a gender-neutral term it is exclusively used to refer to males. The only difference is if it is used by means of self-reference.

The third and last term of this group is *junkie*. The gender-specific analysis showed that eight out of the ten occurrences which insulted a listener were used by a male to refer to a male. Yet, cross-gendered addressing occurred, too, and therefore it can be stated that *junkie* is the only gender-neutral insult both in terms of addresser and addressee.

⁹¹ As Jay’s *Cursing in America* was published in 1992 the term *bitch* is not mentioned in his list. This indicates that the frequent use for males must have become more popular after the publication.

⁹² Already in 1987 Barbara Risch observed that *bitch* and *dick* were used by female and male students interchangeably therewith losing their gender-specific usage. Yet, as results show *dick* in *Breaking Bad* is only used to refer to males (Risch 1987: 357).

7.4.1.4. Group 4 – males address both genders

The last group is a very small one and consists of only one insult which was mainly used by males to address males. However, one time in plural form it addressed both genders (Jesse's parents). The last insult is

– *douchebag*

Douchebag's original meaning is a shower kit for females and males. Yet, it is also used to refer to a "despicable person; a socially inept person" (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 1: 642). As has been mentioned above the singular form of *douchebag* was used by a male addresser to insult a male addressee. Yet, in one occurrence Jesse refers to his parents "[...] my parents being greedy kleptomaniac douchebags" (*Breaking Bad*, S02E04) as he gets kicked out of his aunt's house. Dalzell and Victor list one definition of *douchebag* which refers to a female, too, yet it is limited to prison slang as it addresses "a promiscuous woman prisoner" (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 1: 642). James' survey showed that students also use *douchebag* in order to refer to "[...] an ugly woman, a woman who mistreats others, or a 'dirty' prostitute" (James 1998: 416).

In short, those insults which are exclusively used by male addressers and addressees show that their fictional representation does not reflect the prescribed definition from the dictionary as they could also refer to females but do not.

7.4.2. Gender-specific addresser-addressee analysis

This section will shed more light on the fictional construction of gender with regards to their usage of insults. This is a necessary step to identify overlaps between the fictional representation of insults and the self-reported perception of NS and NNS of English. As Núria (2012) found in her study of gender on cross-cultural television programs the media mainly represent unequal and traditional gender models. Yet, if women want to gain power they have two choices, either they use their physical attractiveness or act violently and aggressively and, therewith, imitate masculine behavior (Núria 2012: 240-242, 244-245).⁹³

⁹³ Núria's data source included three TV series – *Gossip Girl*, *Sin Tetas No Hay Paraíso* and *Física o Química* – as their target group is teenage-oriented, music videos and self-portrayals in social media. See section 5.1.

Breaking Bad tells the story of Walter White's moral and social decline. The characters he surrounds himself with are members of the criminal underworld and mostly male. Thus, the male predominance on screen is predictable and therefore an analysis of the gender of the addresser and the addressees has to be split into two parts in order to be of any value for the analysis. The first part includes conversations in which female and male characters are involved and insults are uttered as it is expected that both would have time to respond to an insult and therewith could break with stereotypical behavior patterns. The second part will present the average distribution of insults by females and males throughout the first five episodes of the five seasons. Thus, an optimal distribution of the gender can be estimated and a comparison of the uttered insults by men and women can be drawn.

7.4.2.1. Cross-gender arguments

During the evaluation of the data the issue arose that the incidences in which speakers used insults in argumentations and in which both the addresser and the addressee were physically present were very limited. Therefore, the following steps were taken: First, I filtered those insults of the previously mentioned top ten insults which were used by both genders. The insults *idiot*, *scumbag*, *piece of shit*, *dick* and *bastard* could already be excluded as they are solely used by one gender. As a result Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of the gender of addressees and addressers in total numbers of occurrences.

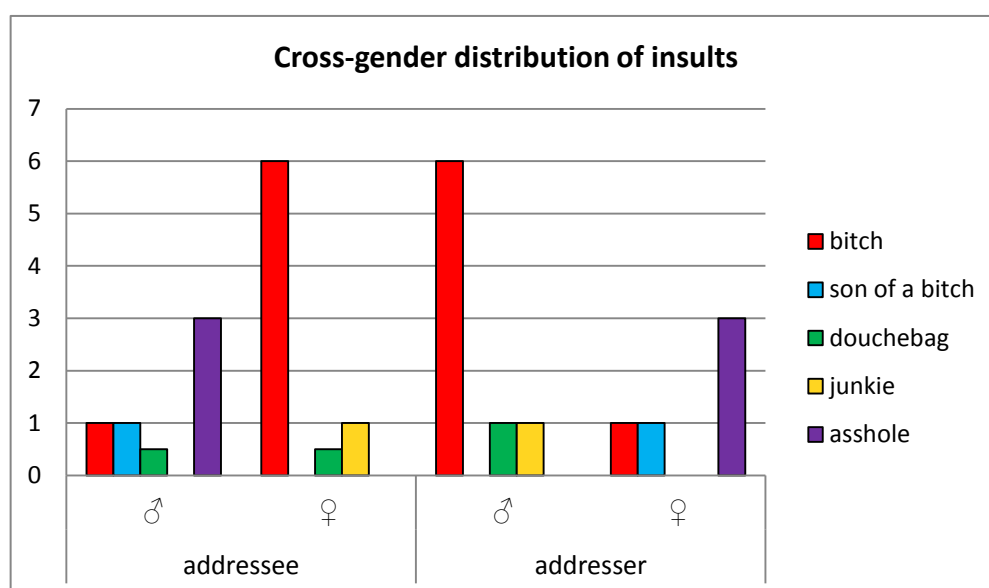


Figure 8 Distribution of the gender of the addressees and addressers of insults with regards to their occurrences including indirect references

Figure 8 highlights the comparatively high usage of *bitch* by male addressers to refer to female addressees with regards to a onetime usage by a female junkie calling Jesse a *bitch* (*Breaking Bad*, S02E06). All seven occurrences are used offensively by both genders thus verifying the findings by Lakoff (1975) and Eble (1996) and demonstrating a temporal consistency, too, as *bitch* is only used as a form of bonding in homogenous groups.⁹⁴ In comparison to that, both *asshole* and *son of a bitch* are exclusively uttered by female addressers to refer to social inept behavior of men e.g. when Skyler expresses her discontent about Walt's return back home she calls him a *son of a bitch* (*Breaking Bad*, S03E03). To further specify in which conversations women and men directly exchanged insults table 1 below shows this final distribution in *Breaking Bad*.

Table 1 Distribution of gender relation between addressee and addresser of insults which directly address the listener

	♀ > ♂	♂ > ♀	♀ > ♂	♂ > ♀
	occurrences		frequency	
<i>bitch</i>	1	3	17 %	50 %
<i>asshole</i>	2	0	33 %	0 %
Total:	6		100 %	

As table 1 shows only two out of ten insults remain which are used by both genders in conversations in which speakers and listeners insult one another – *bitch* and *asshole*. The first is clearly the one insult which mainly addresses females whereas the latter is exclusively used to refer to men.

This trend could already be predicted when looking at Figure 8 as these two insults were the ones most frequently used by both genders. Yet, table 1 highlights that if both male and female characters are involved male characters favor *bitch* as an insult for females in 50 % of the cases whereas females effeminate their male opponents in 17 % of the occurrences by calling them a *bitch*.⁹⁵ On the contrary, female characters used *asshole* to insult the male listener 33 % but males did not use this insult even once in order to refer to females.

In all four occurrences in which *bitch* was used it always referred to a mother and her inability to take care of her family and fulfill a socially determined role for

⁹⁴ Fine and Johnson found that men, on the contrary to women, believe that *bitch* is more offensive for women (Fine & Johnson 1984: 71). See section 5.1.

⁹⁵ In this particular sample the 17% refer to one utterance by a female speaker.

females.⁹⁶ Even in one incidence in which the drug addicted mother calls Jesse a *bitch* she unintentionally highlights her lack of motherly care and his weakness “I’ll show you a bad mother, bitch!” (*Breaking Bad*, S02E06).⁹⁷ This result reflects what Jay defines in *Cursing in America* as a reason for the usage of the insult *bitch* as referring to someone “[...] that does not do what is expected” (Jay 1992: 180). The two uses for *asshole* both describe behavior of the addressee which refers to a decline of socially inept morals of the addressee and social inept behavior (Jay 1992: 179).

7.4.2.2. Inter-gender arguments

As has been pointed out above, the main cast of *Breaking Bad* consists of male characters that are at the same time more relevant for the plot development and naturally have more active speaking time. Although there are two female characters, Skyler and Marie, their contribution to the storyline is marginal, especially in the case of Marie. Skyler is mainly depicted as mother who starts working as a secretary and later launders Walt’s money and Marie is basically her younger sister, aunt and wife. In order to receive any data which resemble the active speaking time of females and males and their insulting behavior the ten most frequently used insults are not the corpus in this section. Thus, in order to show whether females insult more or less I proceeded as follows. The first five episodes of the five seasons were watched and the turns taken and insults uttered by both actors and actresses were counted. Table 2 below shows the results of the counting as well as the average value.

Table 2 Ratio of insults to turns by males and females

	♀ female		♂ male	
	turns	insults	turns	insults
<i>in total</i>	232	1	735	32
<i>average</i>	0.43%		4.35%	

As has already been suggested above women take fewer turns and insult less than men (232 compared to 735 turns in total). The percentage given indicates that

⁹⁶ See section 2.1. Victorian era.

⁹⁷ In this scene Jesse is lying semiconsciously on the floor while she is threatening him.

females insult 0.43% whereas in comparison to that men insult 4.35% out of their turns taken.

The female characters that were counted were the two main characters Skyler and her sister Marie as well as a lawyer and a secretary. Both women are married and as the results show they do not use insults to emphasize and express their emotions. Although both have their own way of showing discontent they never really lose their temper. Yet, the one occurrence of an insult is uttered when Skyler calls her younger sister a kleptomaniac bitch sister. Drawing on Glascock it can be stated that females are still underrepresented in terms of their speaking time (Glascock 2001: 658-659, 661, 665, 667) which can be reasoned with the fact that Walter White is the center of attention whereas his wife and sister-in-law are peripheral and rather supporting characters. Additionally to that three out of four actresses are presented in traditional professions such as housewife, secretary or nurse which again depicts women in traditional roles and thus their insulting behavior resembles traditional depiction of women, too. Further explanation for that can be found in the fact that the writers of *Breaking Bad* were mainly male. This is an issue which has already been discussed and proofs to be right.⁹⁸

Male characters are not only than three times as much present as active speakers but show a higher average occurrence of insults (32 to 1 insult in total; 4.35% to 0.43% per turn rates). Those insults uttered by men are either used to offensively insult the listener or they fulfill a bonding function between both speakers. Men in *Breaking Bad* work in traditional male professions except for Walt. However, he takes up a new profession as meth producer and therewith takes up a male profession in which he is in power. If men use insults offensively they want to emphasize their power towards the listener even more. This is mainly performed to demonstrate power in form of hierarchy (employer – employee, drug kingpin – drug producer, cop - criminal). Besides that males use insults to bond with other male characters. Again, insults are neither used in a cross-gendered way, yet only in homogeneous groups.

⁹⁸ See section 5.1.

Table 3 below shows the distribution of females and males in terms of their turns and insults.

Table 3 Ratio of male and female turns and insults

	turns	insults
female	23.99%	3.03%
male	76.01%	96.97%

These numbers indicate again that out of all the turns counted females took around 24% whereas the number given for males is three times as high. The percentage distribution of insults shows that of all insults uttered within the first five episodes the majority was uttered by males (96%) whereas females only scored 3%.

In conclusion it can be said that females are underrepresented as they took fewer turns than their fellow actors. Additionally to that they insulted less, too. These results show that females are mainly depicted in traditional roles and are verbally less aggressive than males.

7.4.3. Gender-specific uses in self-referent forms

Some of the above mentioned insults are used in self-referent form meaning that the characters refer to themselves as the addressee by saying for example “I’m just the bitch mom” (*Breaking Bad*, S04E04) and therewith indirectly rephrase others, too. The most frequently used insults in this context are *idiot* and *bitch*.

In case of the latter it is crucial to stress that the inferred meaning by the addresser differs according to the gender. For example, *bitch* used by Jesse is negated “I’m not your bitch” (*Breaking Bad*, S03E08). On the contrary to that, as Skyler quotes Walter Junior’s opinion of her and her future plans to get a divorce she does not negate the insult but stresses her difficult position and quotes his perspectives on her decisions e.g. “I’m just the bitch mom [...]” (*Breaking Bad*, S04E04) or “[...] he’ll blame his bitch mother [...]” (*Breaking Bad*, S04E06).

The former (*idiot*) differs from *bitch* as a sarcastic tone is added for example when Skyler explains to Walt why she has to be part of carwash “[...] I’d rather have them think I’m Bonnie what’s-her-name than some complete idiot” (*Breaking Bad*, S03E11). When Jesse is questioning Walt’s judgment “So you’re chasing around a fly

and in your world I'm the idiot" (*Breaking Bad*, S03E10) or denying that Walt cares about him:

Hank: He cares about you. Can't you see?

Jesse: Oh, yeah. You mean when he's not, uh, ripping me off or calling me an idiot or poisoning people that I care about? Yeah, no, Mr. White's gay for me. Everyone knows that (*Breaking Bad*, S05E12).

Additionally to that, *scumbag* shows a onetime occurrence in which Jesse expresses his inability to fulfill his parents' expectation and quotes them in a conversation with his little brother in which his intonation and gesture add sarcasm to the scene (*Breaking Bad*, S01E04).

Although *junkie* is only used twice in this context in both cases it is used to refer to Jesse's drug addiction which simultaneously led to Jane's backslide. In season 2, for example, Jane calls Walt to blackmail him and introduces herself with "It's Jane. You know, of Jesse and Jane. Jesse's junkie girlfriend" (*Breaking Bad*, S02E12). In season 4 Jesse is surprised by Gus' proposal to cook Walter's formula without him and reminds Gus about his former low opinion of him "You asking me if I can cook Mr. White's crystal? Without him? Me? The junkie loser you were about to waste and dump in the desert a month ago?" (*Breaking Bad*, S04E09).

The self-referent form of *asshole* basically quotes somebody else with the intention to brighten the listeners' expectations and hopes for the future. For example, Jesse's therapists talks to his group and wants them to participate by getting their attention with "I'm such an asshole! It's totally hopeless" (*Breaking Bad*, S04E07). In the second occurrence Jesse talks with Walt about his cancer treatment and basically wants to show that he cares as he listened to Walt's previously expressed doubts and repentance (*Breaking Bad*, S02E10).

As can be seen here the usage of insults in a self-referent or quoted form can fulfill different functions. Either the speaker conveys sarcasm, negation, hopelessness, superiority or even sympathy for the addressee which again shows a difference according to the gender of the speaker.

7.5. 'Yo biatch!' – Bonding in *Breaking Bad*

One of the main research questions is whether the most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad* fulfill a bonding function or not.⁹⁹ Important factors which need to be taken into consideration for *dysphemistic euphemisms* (Allan & Burridge 2006: 39) are “context, tone, social codes and degree of deliberation” (Hughes 1991: 207). These parameters have already been included during the analysis of *Breaking Bad* in form of note taking while watching the TV show. If, however, it was unclear to define whether an insult was used to bond or to insult the scene was watched again. Eventually, the data shows that there are insults which are only used to insult the listener. These insults are collected in group A. The second group, group B represents insults which are used both to bond and to insult. Out of all occurrences they show a frequency greater than 10 %. Group C is formed with those insults which are used to bond and insult, too. Yet, as their bonding use shows only a one-time occurrences or else a rather small number it is referred to with a frequency less than 10% out of all the occurrences.

- Group A – offensive insults
- Group B – Friendliness > frequency of 10 %
- Group C – Friendliness < frequency of 10 %

7.5.1. Group A – offensive insults

The first group here consists of those insults which are exclusively used in an unfriendly, insulting and offending way and have never showed even one occurrence with the slightest indication of a joking or bonding function. Group A includes the following three insults:

- *piece of shit*
- *scumbag*
- *junkie*

⁹⁹ For a definition of bonding see section 5.2.

As has been pointed out in the previous section *piece of shit* was only used in singular form and in an offensive way to call a person it is important to note that in all occurrences *piece of shit* is never used to directly address a person but to refer to the addressee who is absent in the specific scene. In some cases adjectives as *psychotic*, *miserable*, *lying* and *little* are added to further stress the condescending attitude of the speaker.

Eight out of 13 occurrences of *scumbag* did not directly address a person, either. Yet, the reaction within the remaining four incidences shows the offensiveness behind the words. For example, Tuco answers Jesse's insult by calling him a *retard* (*Breaking Bad*, S02E02). Jane defends Jesse by calling her father a *scumbag* (*Breaking Bad*, S02E12). The only character who shows a different reaction is Walt when he gets called a *scumbag*. First, as Mike calls him a *scumbag* with the request of handing him the keys he simply obeys as at that time he depends on Mike's help and is fully aware of his wrongdoings (*Breaking Bad*, S05E01). And second, he responds to Jesse's insult by calling him too stupid to understand what he did for both of them (*Breaking Bad*, S05E13). In those occurrences in which *junkie* directly addresses a listener the response is either an argument

Walt: Damn junkie!

Jesse: No, give me that!

Walt: Too late! This is going down the toilet. Watch it go!

Jesse: No, that's worth 40 grand, you stupid shit. (*Breaking Bad*, S01E03)

or both start fighting with each other and roll around on the floor (*Breaking Bad*, S02E04). In episode 12 of season two Jesse misses calls from Walt and finds all their crystal meth gone. Once he is talking on the phone and Walt repeatedly calls him names he does not respond. As Walt is very angry at Jesse and Jesse is aware of his mistake he does not fight back because he probably feels guilty (*Breaking Bad*, S02E12).

7.5.2. Group B – Friendliness > frequency of 10 %

The following two insults show very diverging trends in terms of word form when it comes to their fulfillment of a bonding function.

- *bitch*
- *bastard*

A crucial fact to highlight here is that if *bitch* is used in a bonding form by the speaker either the word form changes for example from singular to plural form i.e. *bitches*¹⁰⁰ or the pronunciation is altered for example on Jesse's answering machine greeting income callers with "*What up, biatch?*" (*Breaking Bad*, S01E02). The only occurrences in which *bitch* is used in an unaltered word form and still serves a bonding function is when uttered between Badger, Skinny Pete and Jesse.¹⁰¹ As the three of them belong to one social group – Caucasian, early twenties, school dropouts and badass wannabes – they share the same slang and its most prominent feature is *bitch*. All the other occurrences of *bitch* discriminate and offend the listeners.

If *bastard* is used to bond it mostly adds adjectives i.e. *little, poor, greedy old, dumb old, free-loading* and *sneaky* in order to ease away the offensiveness of the term. In general, one gets the impression the listener does not even notice it when somebody utters the insult *bastard* as the listener does not respond. This again supports the theory of psychological blunting (Griffiths & Shuckford 1989: page number not given, quoted in Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 305) which states that repetitive exposure makes insults less insulting.

7.5.3. Group C – Friendliness < frequency of 10 %

The last group consists of those insults which are not exclusively used 100 % as an offensive term yet, they do not show such a high frequency as *bitch* and *bastard* but can be located at the bottom of the scale:

¹⁰⁰ As Jesse's house becomes a 24-hour-party place he calls his visitor *bitches* (*Breaking Bad*, S04E04).

¹⁰¹ See section 6.3.1.

- *son of a bitch*
- *dick*
- *asshole*
- *idiot*
- *douchebag*

Dick has a frequency of 10% friendly usage which is represented in one occurrence when Hank calls his colleague a “cheese dick” (*Breaking Bad*, S01E01) in a joking way with a friendly intonation. All the other occurrences fulfill an offensive insulting function. In one note from the editor of the slang dictionary it is stated that although *dick* refers to “a despicable person [loses] its taboo in the US, but [is] still chancy” (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 1: 582).

Son of a bitch is weakened with the adjective *little*, too, and therewith becomes even an affectionate term of address as for example Jack calls Todd a “little son of a bitch” as he fell for Lydia (*Breaking Bad*, S05E15). The adjective *tough* even makes it possible to express admiration for Hank’s courage “It takes one tough son of a bitch” (*Breaking Bad*, S03E08). Still, the friendly usage of *son of a bitch* only shows a frequency of 6.3 %. On the contrary to *dick* and *son of a bitch* which both use either an adjective or a compound to perform a bonding function the insult *asshole* does not need any of alternations and it is used in its pure, unaltered form.

Idiot was originally listed in group A yet during closer analysis of the reaction of the addressees it turned out that it is on one occasion used by Mike to fulfill a bonding function with Jesse as he tells him. “Next time, don't stand there like an idiot. Move your feet, run and so forth” (*Breaking Bad*, S04E09). As Jesse did not respond to Mike’s advice but continued the conversation without notice it can be assumed that he did not feel offended by it as the two have already established a respectful and friendly relationship which allows Mike to use these insults as Jesse is no longer afraid of him. Additionally to *idiot* the term *douchebag* was moved from group A to group C after a closer look at the responses of the listener. In one occurrence, Badger and a seemingly inconspicuous young man talk about the possible option of buying crystal meth. As Badger shows suspicion he asks the man to pull up his shirt to see whether he wears a wire. As he makes fun of the man’s whiteness he calls Badger a “douchebag” (*Breaking Bad*, S02E08). Badger does not seem to be

bothered as he sees himself as having the upper hand. Therefore, he is then willing to sell crystal meth and eventually gets arrested.

To sum up the possibility of using insults in a friendly way it can be stated that three – *piece of shit*, *scumbag* and *junkie* – out of ten do not show the slightest possibility of expressing a bonding function between speaker and listener in the fictional world of *Breaking Bad*. However, if insults are used in a non-offensive way they either use adjectives i.e. *little bastard*, *little son of a bitch*, change their word form from singular to plural i.e. *bitches*, add a compound i.e. *cheese dick* or alternate in pronunciation i.e. *biatch*. Yet, adjectives are also applied if the speaker wants to emphasize the insult by adding adjectives such as *little* or *stupid*. Again, the context of an uttered insult further specifies the function it should fulfill as the response of the listener is crucial to identify the social code applied between the interlocutors. In some incidences an insult was initially perceived to be offensive, yet, looking at the response made clear that the listener did not understand it as such.

7.6. Seven dirty words in *Breaking Bad*

As has already been discussed in chapter 2.2 *Cursing in film and television in the United States* the regulations and laws passed within the last decades limited not only the usage of swearwords but excluded 7 explicitly offensive terms – *the seven dirty words*.

As *Breaking Bad* was aired on AMC cable network and is rated TV14 parents are advised to let their children watch the show with caution due to the coarse language as well as the content of the show and obscene scenes. However, as AMC is not as strictly regulated as a national broadcast station, it is worthwhile to investigate whether scriptwriters used these seven words with caution or disregarded these regulations. As has been mentioned above exposure to certain swearwords over a longer period of time weakens their offensiveness and therefore the swearword becomes more ordinary – *psychological blunting* (Griffiths & Shuckford 1989: page number not given, quoted in Kaye & Sapolsky 2001: 305). Apart from that the fees for violations of the regulations passed by the FCC and the BDEA have been raised.¹⁰² During the assessment of the most frequently used insults an

¹⁰² See section 3.1.

‘insulting pattern’ with favor for certain insults has already been revealed. Yet, as the figures only show those insults with a higher frequency the real offensive ones with a one-time occurrence are excluded. To which extent the script writers of *Breaking Bad* followed the seven dirty words regulations is illustrated on the next page in table 4 which shows the seven dirty words and their number of occurrences as well as the frequency given in percentages of all occurrences throughout the five seasons of *Breaking Bad*.

Table 4 Seven dirty words in *Breaking Bad*

Seven Dirty Words	Number of Occurrences	Frequency
cunt ¹⁰³	0	0 %
cocksucker	0 (+4) ¹⁰⁴	0 %
fuck	8	4.9 %
piss	11	6.8 %
shit	140	86.4 %
motherfucker	2	1.2 %
tits	1	0.6 %
Total:	162	100 %

Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye (2010: 60-63) did a research on three television program contexts asking their participants to indicate which word according to which time during the day and on which channel (broadcast networks, cable channels, premium channels) they find most offensive. The results of their study are resembled within the results of *Breaking Bad* in table 4. As it turned out it did not matter to the audience which TV show, on which channel they were watching and at what time of the day as they all ranked *cunt*, *motherfucker*, *cocksucker* and *fuck* as the five most offensive

¹⁰³ Although this very strong expletive did not cross anybody's lips there was one scene in which the drug addict Spooze called his girlfriend a *slit* (*Breaking Bad*, S02E06). At first I thought I must have misheard him as it sounded very similar to *slut* but after several re-hearings I was sure he used exactly this word. I asked my two native speakers in class at *DeutschAkademie* (one American English and the other British English speaker both aged under 30) whether a woman could be called a *slit*. At first they told me it must be a cut and cannot be used to refer to a woman. Then they used the *Urban Dictionary* and it turned out to be a derogatory term for a woman similar to *cunt* (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=slit>). Also, this derogatory term was first recorded in 1648 in the UK (Dalzell & Victor 2006, 2, 1782).

¹⁰⁴ Although there are 4 occurrences of *sucker* they are not included in this list as it is only one part of the compound swearword.

words. In *Breaking Bad* neither *cunt* nor *cocksucker* are used, *tits* only in one scene in which Hank praises the bosom of the High school headmaster “Honey Tits. I say it's endearing.” (*Breaking Bad*, S04E12). And also, *motherfucker* was uttered twice by a two Hispanics within the pilot. Drawing on Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye's research it shows that although *shit* and *piss* belong to this group of very offensive words they are not perceived as that offensive anymore by the audience as they are bottom-placed on Sapolsky, Shafer and Kaye's scale between rank 17 and 20. The researchers justify this result with the explanation that their participants were mainly college-aged (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 63). This can be considered as the main reason for *shit* to be uttered so many times as it is just not that offensive anymore as well as the rather limited occurrences of *piss* which does no longer fulfill the function to offend the listener. Apart from that this distribution shows that scatology is not the main source of offensive insults anymore. Moreover this proves that there is a “[...] changing nature of offensive language [...]” (Sapolsky, Shafer & Kaye 2010: 48) and *shit* is not as offensive as it used to be in the 70ies when the FCC passed this law. These results support two trends in television script writing as on the one hand writers obviously try to satisfy the audience by avoiding too offensive insults and swearwords. On the other hand, insults which are labelled as less offensive are implemented in the scripts to meet the expectations of an adult audience and keep the ratings high to stay competitive in this growing market.¹⁰⁵

On the contrary to the most frequently used words in *Breaking Bad* and the seven dirty words it can be found that it is still more offensive to insult someone with the genitalia of a women than with the genitalia of men as *dick* is more frequently used and *cunt* is never used. As a study by Braun and Kitzinger found this is one of the main reasons as female genitalia are still perceived as more offensive and derogatory than their male counterparts (Braun & Kitzinger 2001: 146, 156). Further it can be stated that scatology has lost its fun and obscenity its provocativeness the new target is ethnicity or racial insults. Although these insults have been around for centuries they were never as offensive as they have been from the 1990s onwards. Political correctness is the new dogma. *Breaking Bad* does only peripherally touch this issues and if so in form of comic reliefs. By now, the seven dirty words do not include any racial insults however, it can be expected that this change will be

¹⁰⁵ See also section 3.4

adapted in new restrictions yet to come. This topic calls for further analysis which however is not intended to be discussed within this paper.

In conclusion, it can be stated that *Breaking Bad* follows a certain pattern when it comes to the utterance of insults. As Jesse Pinkman is known for his overuse of *bitch* the script writers were able to write a catchphrase for this character which distinguished not only him but the entire TV show. Having a look at the comparison between cross-gender arguments it can be concluded that *bitch* is used by both genders to address both males and females yet, 50% of the uttered *bitches* still came from male speakers to insult female listeners whereas only 17% of male listeners were insulted by female speakers. This shows that although *bitch* is used to address males, too, it only happens so to effeminate them and *bitch* remains mainly a derogatory to insult females.

The next chapter will illustrate the results of the questionnaire and allows us to make comparison not only between gender and nativeness but above all between the fictional representation of insults and their self-reported perception.

8. Questionnaire on self-reported perception of insults by NS & NNS

This chapter summarizes the results of the conducted questionnaire. The objectives here are to find differences or similarities between fictional production and self-reported perception of NS and NNS of English according to their gender. Also, one objective is to identify whether NS and NNS show any differences on the self-reported perception of the bonding function of the previously analyzed insults.

The first section will explain how the questionnaire was created and conducted. This will be followed by a discussion of the research questions for which the questionnaire should provide data. We will then go on to discuss the findings of this questionnaire.

8.1. Design

The framework of this questionnaire draws on Deborah James' questionnaire which she used in 1998 at the University of Toronto in order to identify whether derogatory terms are linked to the gender of the addressed and if so, which social factors (e.g. gender of the respondents) might influence these decisions (James 1998). As James's questionnaire already provided guiding questions which were suitable and fitting for the objectives of this research James' questionnaire structure was adapted.¹⁰⁶ However, the ten most frequently used insults analyzed in the previous chapter were chosen as the investigated derogatory terms.

The open time span for this questionnaire was from 21st August to 4th September 2014 and with the help of *Google Drive's* free tool *Create* the possibility to conduct online surveys turned out to be a timesaving application to collect data. As previously has been mentioned participants were asked questions about the ten most frequently used insults in *Breaking Bad* and their self-reported perception concerning familiarity, instant gender image of an insult, typical and personal application patterns and the possibility to use these insults in a friendly way (bonding). Altogether there were ten main questions with six individual questions which made a total amount of 70 questions. As the individual questions were repetitive an average duration of ten to fifteen minutes was expected to be needed by the participants to answer the questions. The first question which asked about the familiarity with the term was compulsory whereas the following questions were optional.

The target group of the questionnaire was twofold (NS and NNS) and therefore two individual questionnaires with the same content were provided as the data was directly saved in two different spreadsheets. One questionnaire exclusively asked for answers of NNS and as I was working at a German language institute at that time I used my students as subjects and asked them to fill out an online questionnaire. Therewith, I collected the needed data of NNS and asked them to forward the link to their friends and family. A second form was sent to NS of English. Unfortunately, there were not as many NS who attended classes at the institute at that time. Additionally to that I asked friends, who were currently abroad as well as NS colleagues at another institute I was working at and the student's representatives at the Department of English and American Studies to forward the link and post it on

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix 11.1.

Facebook in order to retrieve a higher number of data. Yet, in order to answer some of the hypothesis presented below the two spreadsheets were put together, too.

By the 4th of September I could count 222 questionnaires answered by NNS and 60 filled out questionnaires by NS. As it turned out the majority of the respondents were 245 female in total of which 44 questionnaires were answered by NS and 201 by NNS. This can be compared to 81 responses from male participants of whom 16 were NS and 65 NNS. Thus, male self-reported responses of insults might be underrepresented due to the disproportionate number of male subjects.

Apart from the questions I asked the respondents to give some personal information such as gender, nationality and language proficiency. The first is important for this evaluation of gender as it is one of the main issues dealt with in this paper. Yet, information on age as well as profession and education of the questioned individuals was not pivotal for the purpose of this analysis.

On the next pages the results will be illustrated and discussed in terms of comparability between NS and NNS, gender and bonding. The results will be summarized and followed by a brief discussion.

8.2. Research questions & hypotheses

The main objective of this questionnaire is to describe the two main issues – gender and bonding function of insults – in the self-reported perception of speakers of English. Hereby, the primary concern of the evaluation is the gender of the NS and NNS with regards to the several issues explained as follows. First, as Dewaele (2004: 205) points out NS are supposed to have a better understanding of insults and derogatory terms. As insults are mainly taught in second language acquisition with negative connotation it is claimed that NS use insults more often in order to express sympathy than NNS.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ See section 5.2. and 5.3.

Hypothesis 1a: The ten most frequently used insults of *Breaking Bad* show a higher frequency of bonding function by NS than NNS.

Additionally to that we found that bonding only occurs in homogeneous groups. Therefore, if the instant image of an insult and the gender of the participant are homogeneous the bonding function has to show a higher frequency.

Hypothesis 1b: The attributed gender of the insult and the same gender of the respondent are a premise for the occurrence of bonding.

Second, insults are mainly metaphors created through social practices and bodily experience. The predefined gender of an insult reflects socially determined schemas built on bodily experience (Kövesces 2006, 208-211). As each society shares a certain repertoire of insult-metaphors both speaker and listener need to have the same image of what is actually addressed and insulted. Yet, NNS do not grow up in an English speaking society and therefore they link different gender metaphors to insults influenced by their social surrounding and mother tongue. It is crucial to compare how an instant image, typical use and a personal use of an insult according to its gender are intertwined.¹⁰⁸

Hypothesis 2: The instant gender-specific image of an insult biases the typical and personal use by both NNS and NS.

Third, as has been pointed out in the sections above do females curse and insult less than men and prefer euphemism and mild curse words to strong, coarse language both in fiction and reality (Sapolsky, Shafer, Kaye 2010; Jay 1992; Lakoff 1975). As Jay and Janschewitz found female NS and NNS were more offended by swearwords than their male colleagues. Therefore, it can be assumed that female NS and NNS restrain more from the actual usage of insults than males.

Hypothesis 3: Female NS and NNS use insults less than male NS and NNS.

¹⁰⁸ See section 5.3.

8.3. Results & discussion

The tables presented below illustrate the evaluation of the questionnaire which has been conducted with the help of a t-test in *Microsoft Excel* and *Fisher's Exact Probability Test* ($p = 0.05$) available online under the following link: www.vassarstats.net. In Tables 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 significance and expected values were calculated with *Fisher's Exact Probability Test* and the average numbers in Table 9 were calculated with a t-test in Microsoft Excel.

Table 5 shows the answers of NNS and NS concerning statement 6 of the questionnaire 'Would use as a friendly term'. As this question was not compulsory some respondents decided not to answer it. Therefore, the total amount of responses differs from each other. In addition to the total number the last column presents the significance ($p < 0.05$) of the results highlighted in bold.

Table 5 Use of insults as friendly term in total and Fisher's contingency test ($p = 0.05$)

Would use as a friendly term	NNS		NS		$p = 0.05$
	yes	no	yes	no	
<i>scumbag</i>	27	124	12	48	0.429
<i>bitch</i>	117	102	42	18	0.014
<i>idiot</i>	103	117	16	43	0.004
<i>douchebag</i>	41	121	10	48	0.142
<i>piece of shit</i>	17	201	5	54	0.522
<i>dick</i>	54	163	19	40	0.167
<i>junkie</i>	90	104	17	42	0.011
<i>bastard</i>	81	134	21	38	0.446
<i>son of a bitch</i>	73	141	29	29	0.020
<i>asshole</i>	55	163	22	37	0.049

As can be seen in Table 5 five out of ten insults show a statistically significant difference in terms of bonding function of NS and NNS – *bitch* ($p = 0.014$), *idiot* ($p = 0.004$), *junkie* ($p = 0.011$) *son of a bitch* ($p = 0.020$) and *asshole* ($p = 0.049$). As the other remaining five insults in Table 5 do not show any statistically significant difference which is understandable for words such as, *scumbag*, *douchebag*, *piece of shit* and *dick*, which derive from American English and are not as prominent in German as other words are, for example *bitch*. Taking a closer look at the familiarity of NNS with these insults shows that 99 out of 220 NNS polled the word *scumbag*. *Douchebag* is apparently even more prominent as 112 NNS said they are familiar with this insult. This number is exceeded with 138 positive responses for *dick* and 139 NNS who know the phrase *piece of shit*. In contrast to these seemingly high numbers, 219 out of 222 NNS stated familiarity with the insult *bitch*, *idiot* is known to 220 NNS, *junkie* to 196 NNS, *son of a bitch* to 215 NNS and *asshole* to 219 NNS. These numbers support the observation that those insults which do not show any statistically significant difference are mainly too unfamiliar to NNS of English. Yet, there is one insult which cannot be grouped as insult of American origin and this is *bastard*. The reason that the responses between NS and NNS for *bastard* are similar is because the meaning of the word derives from French, and is already a prominent insult in Europe and too similar to the German word and its connotation.¹⁰⁹ Thus, it can be stated that there are two reasons for a statistical insignificance in Table 5 – unfamiliarity as well as similarity. Table 6 below further shows how the data of *bitch*, *idiot*, *junkie*, *son of a bitch* and *asshole* can be looked at with regards to the expected frequency value.

Table 6 Actual frequency value (AF) and expected frequency value (EF) of insults

Would use as a friendly term	NNS		NS	
	yes	no	yes	no
	AF/EF	AF/EF	AF/EF	AF/EF
<i>bitch</i>	117/125	102/94	42/34	18/26
<i>idiot</i>	103/94	117/126	16/25	43/33
<i>junkie</i>	90/83	104/112	17/25	42/34
<i>son of a bitch</i>	73/80	141/134	29/22	29/36
<i>asshole</i>	55/61	163/157	22/16	37/43

¹⁰⁹ Two thirds of the responses come from NS of German.

Since both NS and NNS agree upon the friendly application of *bitch* it shows that the insult has underwent a transformation from a primarily negative connotation to a word which can be used in manifold situations and has thus lost the main characteristic of an insult (psychological blunting). Previously, it was discussed that *bitch* can fulfill several functions such as being used as an expletive, a filler and, additionally, as *Breaking Bad*'s Jesse shows, it can be used as comic relief. Taking a closer look at the expected values it can be stated that, although, the majority of NNS (117 of 222) said they would use *bitch* as a friendly term the expected frequency shows a proportionally higher value of 125. Additionally, the value of negative answers was expected to be smaller (94 instead of 104). This shows that NNS are expected to use *bitch* more frequently in a friendly way but they do not use it. In comparison, NS are expected to use *bitch* less often in a friendly way, which an expected frequency value of 34 shows, yet, the actual number of responses is 42. Further, more NS were expected (26) to negate the statement but fewer did (18). This shows that although the majority of responses show that both NNS and NS report to use *bitch* more often in a friendly way than as an insult, but the expected frequency shows that NNS would be more familiar with the friendly function of *bitch* and NS would be less familiar. As the changing of the semantic meaning of *bitch* is in a constant flux it is more difficult for NNS to grasp these changes as they are not a part of the NS community and NS use the insult *bitch* more in its bleached form which adapted a positive connotation. Although *asshole* shows a similar proportional distribution of total and expected frequency as *bitch*, *asshole* is not a borrowing as, for example, the German equivalent is still *Arschloch*. Moreover, the semantic meaning of *asshole* has undergone more semantic bleaching in English than in German and can be used in more various situations in English than in German.¹¹⁰

The expected value for *idiot* shows the opposite picture. As far as the responses of the NNS are concerned they show that more NNS (103) would use the term in a friendly way, although, only 94 were expected to do so. Also, NNS should have negated the statement (126) more often, yet, only 117 NNS said they would not use *idiot* to bond. NS were supposed to use *idiot* in a friendly way more frequently (25) than they actually said they did (16). Consequently, the negative responses were expected to be higher (33 to 43). Although, *idiot*, appears in German as well as in English, there must be a different connotation to the word, or otherwise the results

¹¹⁰ This observation can only be made in German thanks to observations in everyday life experience.

would have been similar to *bastard*. The next insult *junkie* shows a similar proportional distribution of frequency in the actual number and expected frequency for NNS, yet, the NS responses differ. *Junkie* shows that the expected frequency for NNS was supposed to be less (83) than the total number actually is (90). This means that more NNS would use *junkie* in a friendly way, although, they are expected to use it less often. On the contrary, NS should use *junkie* more often (25) but they did not respond as expected, as only 17 NS would use it in a friendly way. *Junkie* as well as *bitch* are both borrowings from English and as the meaning in the original language changes the speaking community outside the American culture does not adapt to it as fast as NS do. *Son of a bitch* should be used more frequently by NNS as the expected value of 80 responses show, yet, the actual frequency is lower than this (73). NS are expected to use this insult less frequently (22), however, the total number shows that they use it more often (29).

According to the data presented in Table 5 and 6 hypothesis 1a 'The ten most frequently used insults of *Breaking Bad* show a higher frequency of bonding function by NS than NNS' is verified due the reason that 3 (*bitch*, *son of a bitch* and *asshole*) out of the 5 insults, show a statistically significant difference, and show a higher actual frequency in the self-reported responses of the NS than the expected values calculated.

As has previously been mentioned researchers found that bonding only takes place in homogeneous groups of the same sex. As soon as the groups are mixed insults are no longer used to fulfill a bonding function. Therefore, it can be assumed that the instant gender image of an insult and the gender of the respondent are crucial for his/her further estimation whether an insult can be used in a friendly way or not. Table 7 below illustrates the gender of the respondent (both NS and NNS), their instant image of the gender of the listed insults and the possibility of using it in a friendly way. The data was filtered according to the gender of the respondent, followed by a filter according to the gender of the instant image and eventually, according to the answer to statement 6 'Would use as a friendly term'. The numbers are given in total.

Table 7 The bonding function with regards to the gender of the respondent and the instant image of the top ten insults

gender of respondent:	female				male			
instant image:	female		male		female		male	
bonding:	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes	no
<i>scumbag</i>	2	10	24	113	1	2	11	46
<i>bitch</i> [∞]	115	82	0	0	42	37	0	0
<i>idiot</i>	2	3	83	102	0	1	27	49
<i>douchebag</i>	1	1	33	123	0	0	14	45
<i>piece of shit</i>	2	9	10	167	0	3	6	58
<i>dick</i>	0	0	51	147	0	0	22	54
<i>junkie</i> [∞]	6	17	59	83	4	5	30	29
<i>bastard</i> [∞]	1	1	58	130	1	0	39	36
<i>son of a bitch</i>	1	1	70	119	0	0	30	46
<i>asshole</i>	2	6	46	135	1	0	23	49

[∞]Indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the responses of females and males with female-/male-referential instant images ($p < 0.05$).

What is striking in Table 7 is the distribution between female and male respondents. Already at a first glance it can be seen that females mainly use the listed insults to address males whereas males use these insults primarily for other males and only infrequently for women. The reason for this distribution has already been presented in the previous chapter which shows that these ten insults have predominantly men as their main target, the only exception here is *bitch*.

Looking at *bitch* we do not only see that it instantly evokes an image of a female for both female and male respondents but moreover, *bitch* is the only insult in this table which would be used by both male and female respondents to bond more than to insult. This further supports the findings of Sutton and Eble who found that *bitch* can be used by members of the same sex in an affectionate way (Sutton 1995: 288; Eble 1996: 103 quoted in James 1998: 410). However, the present results reject their findings at the same time, as male respondents also primarily use *bitch* in a friendly way to address females and not males. Therefore, the result contradicts the same-

sex group theory as a premise for bonding. Additionally to that, the outcome here again shows the flexibility of *bitch* as it is used by both genders. Apart from the special status of *bitch* further comparison between female and male answers can be drawn. The only insult which did not evoke at least a one-time occurrence of a female image was *dick* which seems self-explanatory due to the fact that the word refers to biological body part, yet, it has been proven that *dick* could also be used to refer to female genitalia as well (Dalzell & Victor, 2006; 1: 582). In any case, female respondents of this questionnaire did not consider this possibility or were not familiar with it. Other insults which show very limited numbers are *douchebag*, *son of a bitch* and *bastard*. Although *douchebag* is a word which initially was used to name as a name for a women's shower kit it does not evoke an image of a woman but instead of an effeminate man whereas *son of a bitch* and *bastard* refer to ancestral relations.¹¹¹ Besides that, the majority of female respondents indicated they would use the remaining insults mainly for men and not in a friendly way.

The results of male respondents further depict a similar picture. First of all, men primarily see men as the main targets of these ten insults as the distribution of these ten insults show that the majority of the participants more often have instant images of men instead of women. The only insult which immediately reminds men of women is *bitch*. The only other insult which some respondents said they have an instant image of a woman is *junkie*, yet the actual numbers differs extremely between *bitch* (42-37) and *junkie* (4-5).¹¹²

Therefore, the results of Table 7 show that the self-reported perception of NS and NNS reflects the findings of Sapolsky and Kaye (2005: 298-300) who found that men are the main target of insults in fictional representation on television. Moreover, the analysis of the fictional gender-specific role allocation, which found that males are primarily addressed except with words such as *idiot*, *bitch* and *junkie*¹¹³, is further maintained. Taking a closer look at the statistically significant insults *bitch* and *bastard* in Table 8 on the next page illustrates the actual frequency with the expected frequency value.

¹¹¹ See results of gender analysis in section 7.4.

¹¹² The reason being for *junkie* has been discussed within hypothesis 1a

¹¹³ One of the female characters is a junkie. See section 7.4.1.

Table 8 Actual frequency value (AF) and expected frequency value (EF) of 3 insults

II^{114} . GoR ¹¹⁵ . bonding:	female				male			
	female		male		female		male	
	yes AF/EF	no AF/EF	yes AF/EF	no AF/EF	yes AF/EF	no AF/EF	yes AF/EF	no AF/EF
<i>bastard</i>					58/69	130/119	39/28	36/47
<i>junkie</i>					59/68	130/121	30/21	29/38
<i>bitch</i>	115/112	82/85	42/45	37/34				

The results here show that for *bastard* 69 responses are the expected value of female respondents who have an instant image of a male and would use the term to bond whereas only 58 is the actual frequency. So although women use *bastard* the value is below the expected number which means that they are actually supposed to use *bastard* more often to bond than to insult. In comparison to that male respondents said they have an instant image of a male and would use the term in a friendly way in 39 cases. This frequency is above the expected value and indicates that men use *bastard* too often to bond and according to the expected value should use it less. This shows that men no longer use *bastard* primarily as an insult as the expected value is below (36). On the contrary, women are expected to use the term more often in a friendly way and less often to insult. As has been pointed out before *bastard* is a typical insult which is used primarily by women to insult men and this is further supported with these results (Jay 2000: 169; Jay 1992: 178). *Junkie* shows similar results since the actual frequency of female respondents who have an instant image of a male and would use it in a friendly way is proportionally lower than the expected value (59 to 68) whereas men have a proportionally higher actual frequency value (30) in comparison to the expected value (21). This again shows that women state they use *junkie* more to insult men than to bond with them. Also, men state they use both *bastard* and *junkie* more often to bond, although, the expected value would indicate the opposite.

The only insult which would be used by both male and female respondents to bond with females is *bitch*. What we can see in Table 8 is that women show a proportionally higher actual frequency value (115) than expected value (112). This means that these results show that women already use *bitch* more to bond than to

¹¹⁴ II = instant image.

¹¹⁵ GoR = gender of respondent.

insult other women. On the contrary, men show a proportionally lower actual frequency of a bonding function with women than the expected value has calculated and also shows that men use *bitch* proportionally higher to insult than to bond. Yet, the comparison of the expected values in Table 8 shows that men are expected to use *bitch* more often to bond than to insult whereas women actually use *bitch* more often than expected. Further, women use *junkie* and *bastard* more than they are expected to insult men whereas men use both terms in homogeneous groups more often to bond. Therefore, the gender of the respondent biases the instant image and the bonding function. The comparison between the actual frequency and the expected frequency show that bonding is primarily reported to be applied in homogeneous groups and further supports the findings of Eble and Sutton (Sutton 1995: 288; Eble 1996: 103 quoted in James 1998: 410).

Table 9 below shows the results of the questionnaire for both NS and NNS, their averaged typical and own use ratings as well as the instant image of the insults answering hypothesis 2 'The instant gender-specific image of an insult biases the typical and personal use by both NNS and NS.' Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale from 1-7 where they would locate the ten insults. The beginning of the scale 1 means the insult is considered as a typical female-referential insult whereas the end of the scale 7 shows that the respondents see a male-referential usage of the questioned insult. As the majority of the responses came from female participants it can be expected that the high numbers of male-referential insults is due to this disproportionate distribution. However, besides what we have already found in previous chapters, not only do the fictional usages of the ten insults show a preference for male-referenced insults but also the definitions provided in contemporary dictionaries show that these insults are primarily used for males. The numbers in Table 9 on the next page show the averaged responses of the participants according to their typical and personal usage as well as the instant gender image with the frequency given in percentages.

Table 9 Questionnaire results for typical use, personal use and instant image of insults

	NS				NNS			
	<i>typical use rating</i>	<i>personal use rating</i>	<i>instant image and %</i>		<i>typical use rating</i>	<i>personal use rating</i>	<i>instant image and %</i>	
<i>scumbag</i>	5.7	5.7	95%	M	5.8	5.9	93%	M
<i>bitch</i>⁺	2.2	2.7	100%	F	1.9	2.1	100%	F
<i>idiot</i>⁺	4.1	4.2	95%	M	4.5	4.6	99%	M
<i>douchebag</i>	6.0	6.0	100%	M	6.0	6.1	99%	M
<i>piece of shit</i>	4.8	4.8	92%	M	4.6	4.6	91%	M
<i>dick</i>^o	6.5	6.3	100%	M	6.7	6.7	99%	M
<i>junkie</i>⁺	4.1	4.1	70%	M	4.3	4.4	91%	M
<i>bastard</i>⁺	6.2	6.1	96%	M	5.8	5.8	99%	M
<i>son of a bitch</i>⁺	6.2	6.0	98%	M	6.5	6.5	99%	M
<i>asshole</i>^o	5.0	4.8	96%	M	5.1	5.3	98%	M

⁺ Indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the responses of NS and NNS ($p < 0.05$).

^o Indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the responses of personal use of NS and NNS ($p < 0.05$).

What is striking here is to see the gender distribution of the instant images of insults given in percent. The majority of instant gender images is mainly between 90-100% of instantly evoked male images. Additionally, both NNS and NS share the same gender-specific image regardless of the L1. These findings show two different results. On the one hand gender-specific stereotypes of insults are cross-border and, on the other hand, the dominance of male-referential insults in this list is further supported since the only insult which evoked an instant image of a female is *bitch*.

Further, the results were analyzed according to their statistical significance which shows that the difference between typical and personal usage of NS and NNS is crucial for *bitch* (typical $p = 0.03$; personal $p = 0.002$), *idiot* (typical $p = 0.001$; personal $p = 0.001$), *junkie* (typical $p = 0.02$; personal $p = 0.004$), *bastard* (typical $p = 0.01$; personal $p = 0.03$) and *son of a bitch* (typical $p = 0.01$; personal $p = 0.008$).

However, *dick* (personal $p = 0.01$) and *asshole* (personal $p = 0.01$) only show a significant difference in the personal use of NS and NNS. Although, NS and NNS indicated they instantly see a female when they imagine a *bitch* they differ in their personal and typical use as NS tend to use it as a more neutral insult (typical 2.2; personal 2.7) than NNS (typical 1.9; personal 2.1). All the other male-referential insults such as *bastard*, *dick* and *son of a bitch* show that the instant gender (96-100%) the typical (5.8-6.7) and personal (6.0-6.7) use of an insult do not differ from each other but are closely related. Yet, *idiot*, *junkie* and *asshole* show that although the instant image is usually male the typical and personal usage is rather gender-neutral instead of male-referential. Additionally, the averaged usage shows typical use between 4.1 and 4.6 whereas the personal usage reported by NNS shows that they rather tend to use it with a higher tendency to refer to males.

In conclusion it can be said that the hypothesis cannot be verified as the results show that the instant image of an insult influences the typical and personal use. Yet, as in the case of *idiot*, *junkie* and *asshole* the averaged numbers show that the insults can also be used in a gender-neutral form.

Table 10 below presents the actual frequency (AF) of respondents who stated they would use the listed insults themselves or not and the expected frequency (EF). This table illustrates the answer to hypothesis 3 which proposes that female NS and NNS curse less than male NS and NNS.

Table 10 Self-reported applications of insults by female NS (FNS) and NNS (FNNS) and male NS (MNS) and NNS (MNNS) given in actual frequency (AF) and expected frequency (EF)

	FNS AF/EF	MNS AF/EF	FNNS AF/EF	MNNS AF/EF
<i>use insult myself</i>	273/284	115/103	739/762	334/310
<i>don't use insult myself</i>	158/146	42/53	697/673	250/273

Comparing FNS and MNS it can be highlighted that their difference shows a statistical significance of $p = 0.01$. The numbers (sample size) of NNS are too large for the Fisher's test, yet, both the Yates ($p = 0.02$) and Pearson ($p = 0.01$) value show that the difference between FNNS and MNNS has a statistical significance, too, and therefore is of importance of this evaluation.

As the numbers above show FNS reported that they use the given insults more often (273) than they negated the statement (158). However, if we have a closer look at the expected frequency one can see that FNS insult proportionally less (273 to 284) and conclusively, the expected value for 'don't use insult myself' is proportionally more (158 to 146). In comparison to FNS, FNNS show similar results. The actual frequency of the self-reported statements on their insult usage (739) is also proportionally lower than the expected value (762). Concerning the self-reported habit on using insults by FNS and FNNS it can be stated that regardless of their L1 women insult less than they are expected to do. Having a closer look at the proportional distribution of male respondents and the relation of actual and expected frequency one immediately sees that both MNS and MNNS insult more than expected. MNS show an actual frequency of 115, yet, based on the expected value (103) it should be lower. The same goes for MNNS who stated an actual frequency of 334, however, the expected value is below this number (310). To sum up, Table 10 shows that women insult less than they are expected to do and therefore hypothesis 3 is verified.

9. Conclusion

The main objective of this diploma thesis was to analyze the fictional representation of insults and gender in the US-American TV show *Breaking Bad* and interpret the results of a questionnaire designed for NS and NNS of English reporting on their self-perception of insult usage.

The main finding of the gender-specific analysis of these ten insults was that *bitch*, *idiot* and *junkie* were the only gender-neutral insults in *Breaking Bad*. Yet, if the fictional usage of these three terms is compared with the result of the questionnaire it can be stated that only *bitch* evoked by the majority of respondents an instant image of a woman. Another main issue of this paper was to identify whether insults can be used to fulfill a bonding function or not. As we found did researchers such as Sutton or Eble assert that bonding only happens in homogenous groups of the same gender and as soon as a member of the other sex enters a conversation bonding is no longer practiced. The results of the fictional *Breaking Bad* analysis and of the questionnaire further support these observations.

Looking at the distribution of cross- and inter-gender arguments in *Breaking Bad* in both cases women use insults less than men. These findings are further supported with the self-reported responses of the NS and NNS which show that women regardless of their L1 insult less than their expected frequency value shows and men insult proportionally more.

Another important finding between NS and NNS of this questionnaire is that their results only marginally show a statistical significant difference. The reason being for this outcome is that the majority of the participants indicated a proficiency level of C1 and above.

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11. Appendix

11.1. Questionnaire

Dear participant!

On the following pages you will find a questionnaire which is part of a study on the fictional usage of insults on account of their real-life production. The questionnaire takes about 10 minutes to complete. If the terms are too offensive you may withdraw any time and leave questions blank you do not wish to answer. At the end of this questionnaire you are asked to give some personal information about yourself as an aid to interpret the data according to your gender, nationality and language skills. This questionnaire is anonymous and all responses will be confidential.

If you have any comments feel free to write them down at the end of the questionnaire! Thank you for your time and help!

INSTRUCTIONS

Please read through the instructions before you start with the questionnaire! On the next pages you will find 10 derogatory terms of English with 6 questions each.

Questions 1, 4 and 6:

You are asked to answer these questions with either **YES** or **NO**.

Question 2:

You are asked to answer whether you instantly imagine a female (**F**) or a male (**M**) person when you hear this term.

Questions 3, 5:

Question 3 asks you to tick on the scale right to the question whether you think this term is typically used for females or males. Number 1 on the leftmost means the term is exclusively used for females, number 4 in the center indicates that it is used for both sexes. Number 7 on the rightmost means the term is used for males only.

Question 5 asks you the same as Question 3. However, here you are asked to tick your personal usage of the term.

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
a) scumbag							
1. Familiar with term: Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image: F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself: Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term: Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) bitch							
1. Familiar with term: Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image: F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself: Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term: Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) idiot							
1. Familiar with term:							
Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image:							
F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself:							
Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term:							
Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) douchebag							
1. Familiar with term:							
Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image:							
F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself:							
Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term:							
Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) <i>piece of shit</i>							
1. Familiar with term:							
Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image:							
F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself:							
Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term:							
Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) <i>dick</i>							
1. Familiar with term:							
Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image:							
F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself:							
Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term:							
Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g) junkie							
1. Familiar with term:							
Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image:							
F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself:							
Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term:							
Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h) bastard							
1. Familiar with term:							
Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image:							
F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself:							
Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term:							
Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i) son of a bitch							
1. Familiar with term: Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image: F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself: Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term: Yes: ____ No: ____							

	females			neutral		males	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j) asshole							
1. Familiar with term: Yes ____ No ____							
2. Instant image: F ____ M ____							
3. Typical use for females versus males	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
4. Use term myself: Yes ____ No ____							
5. My use for females versus males:	____	____	____	____	____	____	____
6. Would use as friendly term: Yes: ____ No: ____							

Please fill out the personal information about yourself:

Gender ☐ female ☐ male

Nationality

First language:

Second language:

Other languages:

Level of English:

Comments:

Thank you again for your help!

11.2. Abstract

As has been found by sociolinguists (e.g. Jay 1992) and linguists (e.g. McEnery 2006) women use insults less frequently than men. Social Learning Theory suggests that the behavior of members in a society is heavily influenced by their social environment. As television and media have become an ever-growing part in our society the question remains whether TV also has an influence on the insulting patterns of speakers and if there are differences or similarities with regards to the gender of the speaker as well as the insult itself.

This thesis aims to show the fictional representation of gender and the usage of insults in the US-American TV show *Breaking Bad* as well as the self-reported perception of native speakers and non-native speakers of English. The first will be analyzed with the help of the concordance tool AntConc analyzing gender-specificity and bonding function in *Breaking Bad*. The latter will gather data in the form of an online questionnaire to see how speakers perceive their own usage of insults.

The results show that women the fictional female characters in *Breaking Bad* as well as women in real life insult less frequently than expected regardless of their L1 and, in general, that bonding is practiced in homogeneous groups of the same sex with the only exception being *bitch*.

11.3. German summary

Soziolinguisten wie Jay (1992) und Linguisten wie McEnery (2006) haben bereits in ihren Untersuchungen festgestellt, dass Frauen anders bzw. weniger als Männer schimpfen und beleidigen. Die sozial-kognitive Lerntheorie besagt, dass die äußeren sozialen Umstände entscheidenden Einfluss auf die Mitglieder einer Gesellschaft und auf deren Sprachvokabular ausüben. Da Film und Fernsehen in den letzten Jahrzehnten zunehmend größeren Einfluss auf unsere Gesellschaft ausüben, stellt sich nun die Frage, inwiefern die Sprache, welche in diesen Massenmedien zum Einsatz kommt, in Bezug auf Schimpfwörter bereits im Alltag der Rezipienten Einzug gefunden hat.

Diese Diplomarbeit teilt sich in zwei Bereiche. Im ersten theoretischen Teil wird auf die Entstehung der Schimpfwörter im englischsprachigen Raum eingegangen, wie auch auf die Entstehung des Zensursystems in den USA. Darüber hinaus werden psycholinguistische Modelle präsentiert, Schimpfwörter nach ihrer Funktion klassifiziert und sozio-kulturelle Einflüsse wie gender-spezifische Schimpfwörter, der Gebrauch des Schimpfwortes als Ausdruck der Zuneigung und die Unterschiede zwischen Erst- und Zweitsprache dargestellt. Der empirische Teil der Arbeit teilt sich abermals in zwei weitere Teilgebiete. Auf Basis einer Adressatenanalyse und einer Einstufung des Anstößigkeitsgrades der jeweiligen Beleidigungen, widmet sich der erste Teil der Untersuchung der US-amerikanischen TV-Serie *Breaking Bad* und den dort verwendeten geschlechtsspezifischen Schimpfwörtern. Im darauffolgenden Abschnitt werden die Ergebnisse einer online Befragung ausgewertet und auf Unterschiede bezüglich Erst- und Zweitsprache und des Geschlechts der Umfrageteilnehmer/innen untersucht. Des Weiteren wird hinterfragt, ob die Anwendung eines Schimpfwortes im freundschaftlichen Kontext (bonding) möglich ist oder nicht.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die fiktionale Repräsentation der Schimpfwörter in Bezug auf die Sprecher/innen männlich dominiert ist. Zudem zeigen die Resultate der Auswertung, dass die Selbstwahrnehmung der Befragten nicht dem erwarteten Werten entspricht. Die Teilnehmerinnen bleiben unter dem erwarteten Wert, während die Teilnehmer meist deutlich darüber liegen.

11.4. Curriculum vitae

Persönliche Daten:	Mag. Tanja Maria Schmidbauer österreichische Staatsbürgerschaft, ledig
Ausbildung:	4 Klassen Volksschule Lambrecht Lambrecht 33, 4772 Lambrecht 4 Klassen Hauptschule Taiskirchen Schulstraße 6, 4753 Taiskirchen im Innkreis 5 Klassen HAK/HAS Ried im Innkreis Gartenstraße 1, 4910 Ried im Innkreis Reifeprüfung an der Handelsakademie Ried im Innkreis am 23. Juni 2005 2007-2013 Studium der Geschichte an der Universität Wien, Diplomprüfung am 19. März 2013 Seit 2007 Studium der Lehramtsfächer Geschichte, Sozialkunde, Politische Bildung und Russisch an der Universität Wien Seit 2009 Studium der Lehramtsfächer Geschichte, Sozialkunde, Politische Bildung und Englisch an der Universität Wien
Berufliche Erfahrung:	September 2011-August 2014 Deutschlehrerin an der DeutschAkademie – Sprachschule GmbH, Opernring 1E, 1010 Wien; im Ausmaß von 48 h/Monat Seit September 2011 Leiterin eines Englischkurses bei Ahoj Europa Neu – Woodhams & Maurer GmbH, Rochusgasse 6, 1030 Wien, im Ausmaß von 8 h/Monat September 2013 – Mai 2014 Deutschlehrerin für Hauptschulabschluss in der VHS Großfeldsiedlung, Kürschnergasse 9, 1210 Wien, im Ausmaß von 20h/Monat
Fähigkeiten:	Fremdsprachenkenntnisse in Englisch inkl. Business English, Russisch, Grundkenntnisse in Französisch und Latein August 2005 bis August 2006 Cultural Care Au-Pair in Seattle, Washington, USA Zweiwöchiges Sprachtandem in Nischnij Novgorod (Russland) vom 1. August – 22. August 2008 Wintersemester 2010/11 bis Sommersemester 2011 Erstsemestrigentutorin an der Slawistik Wien Zweiwöchiges Sprachtandem in Moskau am Puschkina Institut für russische Sprache vom 10. Juli – 30. Juli 2011