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Breaking maxims in conversation

A comparative study of how scriptwriters break maxims in *Desperate Housewives* and *That 70's Show*

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1. Introduction and aim

- Speaker B is in the store to by crisps the day after a big night out. When she reaches the counter the salesperson, speaker A, says:

  (1) A: “Peckish?”
  And speaker B replies:
  B: “Hung-over”

Jenny Thomas states in her book *Meaning in Interaction* that speakers frequently mean much more than their words actually say (Thomas 1995:1). That is, the hearer interprets a meaning that is not clearly stated in the utterance of the speaker. When communicating we constantly encounter utterances that are confusing to us when standing alone out of context, when they are put into context however, we can interpret the words and phrases in a way that makes us understand the intentional meaning of the utterance. The reason is that we as speakers and hearers, according to the American philosopher-linguist Paul Grice, operate under the cooperative principle, which means that both speaker and hearer converse with good intentions. In other words, the speaker utters words and phrases in order to deliver a message to the hearer, who interprets a meaning with the knowledge that there is a message behind the utterance.

In (1) the expressed meaning ‘peckish’ could mean that speaker B has a craving for anything, while the implied meaning of the utterance, dependent on the context which it is uttered in, makes it clear to the hearer that speaker A is referring to the crisps. In addition, speaker A understands the implied meaning of B’s utterance as ‘I am hung-over, that is why I’m peckish for crisps’, instead of just interpreting hung-over with its literal meaning. Just the word hung-over would mean hanging over something and would make no sense to the hearer in the context.

In order to show what goes on in conversation, Grice introduced four conversational maxims. A speaker might fail to observe a maxim but still get the intended meaning through to the hearer. Failing to observe a maxim is often referred to as ‘breaking a maxim’. In sitcoms these maxims are constantly broken to create humour.
In my essay I will examine how scriptwriters use these conversational rules in order to create humor and evoke feelings among to touch the viewers. I will focus on the two shows *That 70’s Show* and *Desperate Housewives*, the first of which is comedy and the second drama. I will explore which maxims that are most frequently broken in the different shows and why they are broken. Are they the same maxims or do they differ? In which situations are the maxims broken and are they broken for different purposes? I will also determine whether a generalization can be made as to which maxims the scriptwriters break in comedies versus drama shows.

2. Background

2.1 Pragmatics

J.L. Austin, a philosopher at Oxford University (1940s-1950s) who was interested in language, laid the groundwork for what was to become Pragmatics. He wanted to know how humans communicate as efficiently as they in fact do. In the early 20th century, other philosophers were interested in creating an ideal language, but Austin wanted to know how humans manage to communicate despite the imperfections in language. One important reason for why Austin was interested in language was that he was “convinced that we do not just use language to say things (to make statements), but to do things (perform actions)” (Thomas1995:31). He examined how an utterance can perform an action.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which studies how speakers use language to achieve their goals and how hearers interpret the meaning the speaker wishes to convey (Aitchison 2003:104). This was developed by other researchers after Austin’s death. A conversation depends not only on the speaker, who is trying to deliver a message, but also on the hearer, who draws a conclusion from the implication of the utterance, depending on the context in which it occurs. In contrast to syntax and semantics, pragmatics focuses on human cooperation and knowledge instead of on linguistic meaning and structure only. Semantics, which concentrates on the study of meaning of the lexical item and lexical structure, is the precursor to pragmatics, which focuses on the intended meaning dependent on the context (Aitchison 2003:88104).

As mentioned earlier, pragmatics is the branch of linguistics concerned with how humans use language, what the speaker means and how the hearer interprets the words uttered. A sentence
uttered by a speaker can be separated into two levels of meaning: 1) the literal-propositional, i.e. the expressed meaning, which remains the same no matter what the context is: 2) the implied meaning, which is what the speaker means on a specific occasion (Thomas 1995:2-8). The expressed meaning is the meaning that we understand by interpreting the word or phrase based only on the information we get from the words uttered. To give an example:

(2) Are you thirsty?

A sentence like (2) is easy to interpret where the obvious meaning is a request for information about the hearer, i.e. if s/he is thirsty. However, the same sentence can have a different meaning besides the literal-propositional. That meaning will be dependent on the context in which the sentence is uttered. Suppose that the speaker and the hearer are lost in the desert and have had nothing to drink for days; an utterance like (2) might then be uttered as a joke, the hearer is obviously thirsty, in order to embolden in a time of struggle. In another context it could mean that the speaker wants the hearer to get him/her a drink. This is considered to be an example of speech acts, where the speaker intends the hearer to carry out an action.

Speech acts were classified by the philosopher Searle who, like Grice, studied under Austin. (Thomas 1995:93) They are “actions that are carried out through language” (Finegan 1994:335); in other words, a “way of doing things with words” (Chaika 1994: 468). To give an example:

(3) I now pronounce you husband and wife

With these words uttered, the couple are married, i.e. the speaker performs an act with his words. Some speech acts have to be carried out under certain conditions called felicity conditions. A felicity condition is “a condition which must be in place for a speech act to be performed appropriately” (Grundy 1995: 209). The words uttered in (3) must be uttered by a priest, a justice of the peace or a rabbi (Finegan 1994:337) and two witnesses have to be present for the act to be valid.

2.2 Grice
Paul Grice, the American philosopher who is considered to be the “father of pragmatics” (Aitchison 2003:104), was fascinated by how the hearer gets from the expressed meaning to
the implied meaning. That is, his aim was to explain how the hearer gets from what is said to what is meant (Thomas 1995:56).

2.2.1 Implicature
In many verbal exchanges, the hearer needs to look for an implicature, i.e. the implication of the utterance not directly stated in the words but hinted at for the hearer to interpret. Grice discussed two different types of implicatures: the conventional and the conversational. The conventional implicature has the same implication no matter what the context is (Thomas 1995:57). “It is conventional in the sense that (a) it does not derive from knowing the rules for talk (therefore it is not conversational) and (b) it is almost always associated with the particular lexical item (and thus a kind of natural meaning)” (Grundy 1995:47).

(4) He is smart but not at all boring

The implicature in (4), dependent on the word but, is that most people who are smart are boring. The implication of but shows the contrast between what comes before and what comes after it (Grundy 1995:47).

‘Conversational implicature’, on the other hand, is generated directly by the speaker depending on the context. This implicature may or may not be understood (Thomas 1995:58). The same expressed meaning can have different implications on different occasions. To illustrate this I have taken an example from Cruse’s Meaning in Language (Cruse 2000:349):

(5) A: Have you cleared the table and washed the dishes?
   B: I’ve cleared the table.
   A: Am I in time for supper?
   B: I’ve cleared the table.

In the first example speaker B’s implication is that s/he has cleared the table but has not washed the dishes, while in the second example speaker B’s implication is that speaker A is late for dinner (Cruse 2000:349).

2.2.2 The Cooperative Principle
In order to explain how hearers interpret the utterance implicature, Grice introduced the Cooperative Principle (CP). The CP runs like this: “Make your contribution such as is
required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grundy 1995:37). According to the Cooperative Principle both speaker and hearer converse with the willingness to deliver and interpret a message. The speaker and hearer cooperate and that is why they communicate efficiently (Thomas 1995:63). What makes sense in conversations differs between and within cultures (Finegan 1994:339).

### 2.2.3 Conversational maxims

In order to illustrate how we interpret meaning, Grice presented, in addition to the Cooperative Principle, four conversational maxims to show how we communicate effectively in the light of certain rules. Thanks to Grice’s maxims, we can interpret and understand the underlying implication of an utterance (Thomas 1995:63).

#### 2.2.3.1 The maxim of quantity

The maxim of quantity requires the speaker to give the right amount of information when s/he speaks, which means not to be too brief or to give more information than the situation requires. A speaker fails to observe the maxim when she says “hung-over”, meaning that she is hung-over and that is why she is peckish for crisps (1). Just “hung-over” is too little information. Another example of non-observance is when a speaker says: “I’m feeling good today, but yesterday I was very ill, and the day before that, even worse”, when someone asks, by way of greeting, “How are you doing today”? In the greeting context the utterance contains too much information and the maxim is not being observed.

#### 2.2.3.2 The maxim of quality

The maxim of quality is a matter of giving the right information. The speaker says nothing that s/he knows to be false or for which s/he lacks sufficient evidence (Thomas 1995:67). The other maxims are dependent on this maxim since, if a speaker does not convey the truth then the utterance is false, even if the right amount of information is given or the speaker is clear and orderly when speaking (Finegan 1994:341). An example of non-observance is: “you look good with your new haircut” when one actually believes the opposite. The statement is then an untruth, the speaker fails to observe the maxim in order to be polite.

#### 2.2.3.3 The maxim of relevance

The maxim of relevance requires the speaker to be relevant to the context and situation in which the utterance occurs (Thomas 1995:70). For instance, a speaker should not say “I am on
the phone” when someone asks if s/he wants dinner. Here the utterance meaning is irrelevant and the speaker fails to observe the maxim.

2.2.3.4 The maxim of manner
The maxim of manner is a matter of being clear and orderly when conversing. The speaker describes things in the order in which they occurred and avoids ambiguity and obscurity (Thomas 1995:64). A speaker fails to observe the maxim of manner when s/he says “I went to bed and got undressed” when, of course, s/he undressed first and then went to bed.

2.2.4 Non-observances
Any failing to observe a maxim may be referred to as ‘breaking a maxim’. When a speaker breaks a maxim, the hearer looks for the implicature since s/he assumes the cooperative principle to be in operation. Non-observance of maxims is often used intentionally in order to evoke humour or to avoid discomfort. Grice discussed five ways of not observing a maxim. To break a maxim “is the prototypical way of conveying implicit meaning” (Grundy 1995:41).

2.2.4.1 Flouting
When flouting a maxim, the speaker does not intend to mislead the hearer but wants the hearer to look for the conversational implicature, that is, the meaning of the utterance not directly stated in the words uttered. Therefore, when the speaker intentionally fails to observe a maxim the purpose may be to effectively communicate a message (Thomas 1995:65). Accordingly, if working under the cooperative principle the hearer will interpret the message and fill in the missing information relying on the context. To illustrate:

(6) The two friends Ross and Rachel get drunk one night in Vegas and make the mistake of getting married. At the breakfast table Ross and Rachel’s friends ask them what they are going to do. Ross has already been married twice before and knows the routine of divorce (Friends. The One After Vegas. Kanal 5).

Rachel: oh I guess we’ll just find a divorce lawyer
Chandler: I think, I think Ross already has one.

Chandler knows that Ross has a divorce lawyer and flouts the maxim of quality when he claims to think Ross has one and does not say that he knows he does. Everyone understands the implicature and the effect is humorous. Maxims can be flouted for various reasons, such as to create humour or irony as well as to avoid an uncomfortable situation.
2.2.4.2 Violating
In contrast to flouting, when violating a maxim the speaker intends to mislead the hearer. The speaker speaks the truth but implies what is false (Thomas 1995:72).

Violating is frequently used in advertising when the advertising agency wants the consumer to buy their product, often claiming that by buying a certain product the customer can save up till 25% and not stating that s/he actually will. This leads the customer to draw an incorrect conclusion, namely that s/he will save 25% by buying the product.

2.2.4.3 Opting out
When opting out of a maxim the speaker is unwilling to cooperate and reveal more than s/he already has. The speaker chooses not to observe the maxim and states an unwillingness to do so (Thomas 1995:74). An example of opting out can be:

(8) If a doctor or a nurse, who has complete confidentiality regarding his/her patients, is asked by the police or the press to reveal something about the patient that s/he is treating, he/she will reply:

A: I am sorry but I can’t tell you anything.

The doctor or nurse opts out of the maxim of quantity when s/he gives less information than what is requested.

2.2.4.4 Infringing a maxim
When the speaker infringes a maxim s/he unintentionally deceives or fails to observe the maxim. The speaker does this with no intention of generating an implicature (Thomas, 1995:74). Infringing occurs when the speaker does not know the culture or does not master the language well enough, as when s/he is incapable of speaking clearly, as for example, when drunk (Mooney 2004:910; Thomas 1995:74). To Illustrate with an example from A. Mooney:

(9) Someone learning English as a second language speaks to a native speaker.

   English speaker: Would you like ham or salad on your sandwich?
   Non-English speaker: Yes.

The interlocutor has not intentionally generated an implicature, s/he has not understood the utterance. However, the answer might be interpreted as non-operative. “This is a case of social implication in the absence of implicature” (Mooney 2004:910).
2.2.4.5 Suspending

When one suspends a maxim, it is understood that what is said is not completely true or that there are things the speaker ought not to say, for example taboo words. It may be due to cultural differences that a speaker suspends a maxim or to the nature of certain events or situations (Thomas 1995:77). To illustrate with an example from Thomas (Meaning in Interaction):

(10) …they told him he could not be cured, Bistie’s daughter said in a shaky voise. She cleared her throat, whipped the back of her hand across her eyes. ‘That man was strong’, she continued. ‘His spirit was strong. He didn’t give up on things. He didn’t want to die. He didn’t hardly say anything at all. I asked him. I said, My father, why- She stopped

“Never speak the name of the dead, Chee thought. Never summon the Chindi to you, even if the name of the ghost is Father” (Thomas 1995:77).

Chee suspends the maxim of quantity when mentioning a name of a dead person, a taboo in her culture.

2.3 Misunderstandings

When a hearer misinterprets the intentional meaning of the speaker’s utterance misunderstandings occur. This happens when a listener looks for a different implicature than the speaker intends (Lundström 2004:6). It can lead to the hearer becoming offended. For example:

(11) Two sisters are in the kitchen. One says to the other: It’s so dirty in here; someone ought to clean this place.

The interlocutor might take this utterance as an insult if she assumes that her sister is trying to indirectly tell her that she ought to clean because she made a mess although the speaker only wishes to suggest that it is filthy and someone ought to clean up.

2.4 Summary

The understanding of how we communicate effectively has increased since pragmatics became a part of linguistics. Grice had, as Austin before him, a massive impact on today’s pragmatics. Grice’s maxims and the cooperative principle are used not only to understand how we communicate but also why and when we are uncooperative. When we converse we constantly fail to observe maxims in order to emphasize a message, create irony or to avoid unpleasant situations; in other words, to communicate effectively. The different non-
observances lead to different interpretations which are dependent on the context in which they occur. Breaking maxims simplifies conversations and dialogs become, thereby, more effective. Since it requires an extensive study to establish how often maxims are broken in interactions between humans in real life situations, I decided to examine how non-observances of maxims are used in TV shows. In this essay I will concentrate on where and how frequently flouting and violating occurs in a drama and a sitcom.

3. Method

I decided to look at a drama and a comedy in order to compare and contrast how maxims are broken in them. By choosing two somewhat new and popular TV shows as my primary material, I aim to show how scriptwriters use maxims in order to produce and mediate different emotions to the audience.

3.1 Material

I chose to work with data collected from the drama show Desperate Housewives and the sitcom That 70’s Show in order to demonstrate how script writers create humor and drama to emphasize the different situations in the shows. In Desperate Housewives the main characters are middle-aged rich housewives living in the suburb, Wisteria Lane where love affairs, infidelity and murder are common. Desperate Housewives mostly attracts an audience of adult women. That 70’s Show, on the other hand, appeals to younger adults and teenagers since it is about six young people, in their late teens. The humorous situations are often cheeky and off-color.

I collected data by writing down dialogues where non-observances of the four maxims occurred. I looked at which of the four- quality, quantity, relevance and manner- were broken in each show and which were broken most frequently. Furthermore I looked at the reason to why the maxim was broken and distinguished between flouting and violating a maxim. I observed how frequently violation and flouting occurred for each maxim. I collected data from three episodes of That 70’s Show which were thirty minutes long each and two Desperate Housewives episodes which were 50 minutes long each.

3.1.1 Characters

Desperate Housewives is set, as mentioned earlier, in an American suburb. The main characters are five attractive middle-aged women: Bree Van de Camp, the perfect housewife
and mother with everything under control, at least on the outside; Lynette, the ex-career woman who has become a mother of four children whom she has no control over; Susan, the single teenage mother who always messes up, puts herself in awkward situations and depends on her daughter for everything, but has a good heart; Gabrielle Solis, an ex-model who dislikes the suburbs and misses the high pulse of the city, has an extremely controlling husband who is always at work, and starts an affair with their gardener; and finally, Edie, the neighborhood’s slut without any friends who takes pleasure in her neighbors’ miseries. The women are constantly encountering difficulties with men and their own children. Broken promises and disappointments are constantly encountered, but the women are always there to watch each others’ backs and take care of each other.

*That 70’s Show* is set in the year 1979 in a small town in Wisconsin. Eric Forman is a 18 year old, rather corny guy who has a way of messing up his life. He lives together with his mother and father, Kitty and Red Forman, and with his best friend Hyde who has lived in their basement since he was being kicked out of his mother’s house. The gang of friends who hang out everyday in the basement are: Kelso, the good looking one who is training to become a police officer although he could not be more stupid; Fez, the foreign kid who has not yet fully learned the American norms and has a problem with implicatures; Donna, Eric’s neighbor and fiancée who is smart, beautiful and wise, unlike Eric himself; and Jackie Hyde’s girlfriend who is loud and bossy. They have recently finished high school and live in a small town without too much to do, so their days are spent making fun of each other. Humor is constantly present.

### 3.2 Problems of Categorization

The problems I encountered mainly concerned categorizations. Firstly, one of my major problems was that a non-observance of an utterance often does not only break one maxim, but several at the same time. I have chosen to disregard that and look at which maxim is most clearly being broken. Secondly, the maxims of relation and manner are at times hard to separate when the utterance is both irrelevant and obscure. Thirdly, it was also difficult to determine which maxims were broken in the case of idiomatic expressions, puns and sayings. Nevertheless, I have chosen to classify such instances as breaking the maxims of relation or manner, since the literal meaning may be irrelevant or seem obscure. Another problem I had was determining how maxims were used when the characters were making fun of each other by changing voices. An example is when Hyde makes fun of Fez’s accent (see Appendix
(45)). Here I determined that the humor was dependent not only on the literal flouting, but also on the verbal action. The bold print is used to highlight the instances of broken maxims.

3.3 Categorization

Maxim of quantity
When the speaker gives too much or too little information than what is necessary for the situation s/he breaks the maxim of quantity. This is shown in the examples.

Maxim of quality
In the examples where the maxim of quality is broken, the speaker tells a lie or says something for which s/he lacks sufficient evidence.

Maxim of manner
The examples where speakers are obscure or ambiguous, and also unclear to the point that the message is indecipherable for the hearer are considered to be instances of breaking the maxim of manner. Also in this category I added idioms that are far- fetched.

Maxim of relevance
In the examples where the speaker fails to observe the maxim of relevance, the utterance in unrelated to the situation.

4. Analysis and Results
The non-observances I looked at were flouting and violating. I observed 129 breakings of maxims in That 70’s Show and 124 breakings in Desperate Housewives. Flouting occurred more frequently than violating. The cooperative principle is only in operation when the speaker is flouting i.e. do not intend to mislead the hearer and not with violating when the aim is to mislead.

4.1 Maxim of quantity
In That 70’s Show the maxim of quantity was broken 32 times (24.8%) in the shows I looked at. The maxim of quantity was violated 3 times (9.4%) and flouted 29 times (90.6%). This maxim is broken in order to create humor when the characters do not want to reveal information that can get them into trouble or when they give too much information that is funny but not needed in the conversation to make a point. Through these examples the characters are often portrayed as stupid in that they do not know where to stop. Examples:
• Flouting the maxim of quantity: The couple, Donna and Eric, are out registering for wedding gifts. Donna has bought a book, which works as a guide for them while shopping. Eric gets more and more frustrated as the book gives them instructions that make the shopping go slowly, and he looks grumpy; Donna shows Eric a page in the book:

(12) Donna: Okay, look at the groom in this picture. What is the difference between him and you?
Eric: He is a cartoon?
Donna: No, he is smiling
Eric: Yeah, because he is a cartoon.

Eric flouts the maxim of quantity when he give less information then the situation requires. He merely says: ‘because he is a cartoon’ and leaves out ‘and they smile if people draw them smiling and not because they think it is fun to scout for wedding gifts’. The utterance portrays Eric as defiant, but at the same time funny. He flouts the maxim to show that he does not think that scouting is funny at all, and Donna understands his implication. The scriptwriter lets Eric flout the maxim to make him look funny in a boring situation and to stereotype him as a typical man who hates shopping.

• Violating the maxim of quantity: Eric and Donna are standing in Donna’s bedroom. She has been mad at him all weekend since she caught him masturbating in the bathroom in her house and now he is back to face her, trying to mislead her to think that it is not his fault, by blaming her. He does this by talking too much:

(13) Eric: No, no, no I talk, you listen. Okay, this is all your fault, yeah, do you know what your celibacy thing is doing to me? Yeah, my needs have risen to Fezian levels. He’s a sick bastard Donna, and now thanks to you, so am I. Yeah you created a monster Donna and now I can’t leave myself alone.

Eric is violating the maxim of quantity and he is trying to mislead Donna by talking too much and implying something false, namely, that it is Donna’s fault that he masturbated in the bathroom. They had previously both agreed to the celibacy commitment. He wants to look innocent so that she will no longer be mad at him and think that he is behaving like a pervert.
He goes on talking until she gives up and admits to him that he is right. The argument is meant to mislead by having Donna draw a false conclusion and it succeeds.

In *Desperate housewives* the maxim of quantity accounted for 38 times (30.6%). In the examples observed flouting occurred 33 times (86.8%) and violations 5 times (13.2%). The maxim of quantity is often broken when the characters reveal less information than the context requires in order to try not to upset the listener. This also happens when the characters are aiming to save face or hide frustration in the presence of the interlocutor. In addition it is used to avoid questions and uncomfortable situations. When giving too much information, the characters are often trying to emphasize an opinion or situation by explaining it in detail. It can also be used by a character who wants to prevent the start of an argument. Examples:

- **Flouting the maxim of quantity**: *Gabi is at her friend Bree’s house and has used Bree’s bathroom for the third time that day. Gabi’s house is out of water since the plumbs stopped working; she and her husband Carlos have money problems and cannot afford a plumber. They do not want to reveal that to their rich neighbors and come up with excuses to use their bathroom. Bree senses that there is something wrong and decides to confront Gabi. She asks her why she and Carlos wash their clothes in the jacuzzi, as one of the neighbors saw them do. Gabi replies:*

  (14) Gabi: **Well there’s a simple explanation for that, I…**

Gabi flouts the maxim of quantity by giving less information than the situation requires; she does not finish the sentence she started. She understands that Bree already knows her secret and that it is no use lying. She gives too little information in order to save herself the embarrassment of telling Bree that they are out of money. Bree understands her implicature and asks how she can help her.

- **Violating the maxim of quantity**: *Susan and Mike have recently kissed for the first time after a long time of flirting. She walks over to his house to pick him up for their first big date when she sees another woman there. Mike meets her on the veranda and cancels their date. He begins to explain:*


Mike violates the maxim of quantity when not giving the right amount of information that is required in the situation with the intention of misleading Susan. He violates the maxim by saying ‘you know’ and not continuing to speak. The viewers understand that he does not want to lie by saying that Kindra and he are just friends and he does not want to tell Susan who Kindra is; she is a good friend and something more. So Mike says ‘you know’ in order to let Susan fill in the rest, perhaps ‘who I lived next door to’ instead of telling the whole story. He is aiming to mislead. By violating the maxim he is looked upon as mysterious and he becomes more interesting for the viewers.

4.2 Maxim of quality
In *That 70’s Show* the maxim of quality was broken 22 times (17%). In the examples observed flouting occurred 14 times (63.6%) and violations 8 times (36.4%). The characters break the maxim of quality in order to create humor when not admitting the cause of an action or claiming something that they lack evidence for. In addition, the maxim is broken when the characters say something that is false as a reply to something they think is stupid. When the maxim of quality is broken in *That 70’s Show* it is often obvious to the interlocutor that the speaker is telling a lie. Examples:

- **Flouting the maxim of quality:** Eric and Donna are discussing a knife that Eric wants them to register for as a wedding gift. He has picked the least attractive one in order to make Donna say that he does not have to go shopping with her. The one he points at is bejeweled and Donna gets upset:

  (17) Donna: Who are you? Liberace?
  Eric: **Yes, I am Liberace.**

Eric flouts the maxim of quality; he is clearly not Liberace. He lies to her by saying that he wants a bejeweled knife, although he really does not care about the knife. He does this in order to make Donna, who wants a normal knife think that he is bad at shopping. His implicature is that he cannot go shopping because he is just to bad at it. She understands his implicature and forbids him too go shopping with her. Liberace was a pianist-showman who
dressed in sequined suits and played very expensive, elaborately grand pianos and this also accounts for the humor. Eric flouts the maxim to be funny but at the same time to show Donna that he is determined in his cause.

- Violating the maxim of quality: *Donna, Eric and Hyde are sitting in the basement talking about Donna’s and Eric’s wedding. Hyde knows that Jackie is on her way. He does not want her to hear what they are talking about because he fears that she also wants to get married if she hears it being mentioned. Jackie enters:*

  (18) Jackie: Hey what’s up?
  Hyde: **Oh, we were just talking about sluttish cheerleaders in other schools**

Hyde knows that Jackie likes when he talks to her about other girls who he finds interesting so he brings up cheerleaders in order to prevent her from talking about weddings. It works and she starts talking about cheerleaders until she sees a bridal magazine. He violates the maxim in order to avoid getting into an argument.

In *Desperate housewives* the maxim of quality was broken 29 times (23.4 %). In the examples observed flouting occurred 14 times (48.3%) and violating 15 times (51.7%). The maxim of quality is broken when the characters are meaning to humiliate the interlocutor by saying something that is false. The maxim is also broken when the speaker wants to save her/his face and s/he tries to distract and mislead the hearer. Furthermore, it is broken when the speaker wants to threaten the interlocutor or avoid an argument. Examples:

- Flouting the maxim of quality: *Both Susan and Edie have a crush on Mike. The competition has gone on since Mike moved to Wisteria Lane and finally Susan has been asked on a date with him. On her way over to his house, in her finest dress, she walks over to Edie.*

  (19) Edie: Wow! good Lord, you look so pretty. **I hardly recognize you.**

Edie flouts the maxim with the intention of humiliating Susan. ‘I hardly recognize you because most days you look awful’ is the implication, even though what she says is a lie;
Susan always looks great. The scriptwriters make the character Edie flout the maxim to look cruel and envious.

- Violating the maxim of quality: *Edie and Susan go to a cowboy bar with a mechanical bull, to try to spy on Mike and Kindra in order to see if there is something going on between them or not. Mike sees them and confronts Susan, he asks her if she is there to spy on him and when she denies this, he says:*

  (20) Mike: Kindra and I are just friends.
  Susan: **And I came here to ride the bull.**

Susan violates the maxim of quality when she says that she came to ride the bull, although she really came to spy on Mike and Kindra. She breaks the maxim to save face and to maintain her dignity. She tries to deceive Mike into thinking that she is there to ride the bull, but Mike sees through her lie. The scriptwriter has Susan violate the maxim in order to make her seem flustered.

**4.3 Maxim of relevance**

In *That 70’s Show* the maxim of relevance is broken 41 times (31.8%). The maxim of relevance was violated 4 times (9.8%) and flouted 37 times (90.2%). The maxim of relevance is broken in order to create humor when the characters are trying to avoid subjects that can get them into trouble or embarrass them. In addition, they use irrelevant utterances when the speaker tries to indirectly tell the interlocutor something, they do not want to say straight out. Examples:

- Flouting the maxim of relevance: *The four boys are at the mini-golf course when Eric tells Hyde about his latest find.*

  (21) Eric: So, yesterday I was at this garage sale, I looked down and there it was, the Darth Vader action figure with the incredibly rare green saber.
  Hyde: **Why have I not kicked your ass yet?**

Hyde flouts the maxim of relevance by saying something whose literal content has nothing to do with the situation. His implicature is that Eric’s interest in action figures is childish, but he
does not want to tell him directly because the statement would be too weak. He flouts the maxim of relevance to show how upset he is about Eric being so childish. Eric understands his implicature and shows it by giving Hyde a look that says: I do not care what you think.

- Violating the maxim of relevance: *Donna and Eric are standing in Donna’s room. Donna has given Eric a lecture on masturbation: if he needs to masturbate, he can do it in a nice way, light candles and listen to music. Eric is starting to realize that Donna masturbates too and says:*

  (22) Eric: I’ve noticed how the candles are getting lower and lower and I never see them lit.
  Donna: **This conversation is over.**

Donna violates the maxim of relevance by saying that the conversation is over instead of responding to what Eric said. She does that because she is embarrassed and wants to avoid the subject. Eric draws the implicature that Donna does masturbate although she does not want him to know about it. The implicature Donna generates is unintended. However, she does intend to generate and implicature which says: ‘do not try to put the blame on me, I would not do that’.

In *Desperate housewives* the maxim of relevance is broken 45 times (36.3%). The maxim of relevance was violated 5 times (11.1%) and flouted 40 times (88.9%). The breaking of the maxim occurs when the characters do not want to reveal information to the interlocutor in order to avoid being hurt or to make the information sound less horrible than it is. It is also used to emphasize a statement to make it stronger. In some cases, the breaking is used to suggest that the character is mysterious and dangerous.

- Flouting the maxim of relevance: *Edie and Lynette are sitting down talking after their weekly game of poker. Susan did not attend that evening since she is too upset by the breakup with Mike.*

  (23) Edie: So, where was Susan today?
  Lynette: I’m not sure.
  Edie: **Wow, Tom must be great in bed.** Obviously you have no idea how to bluff.
Edie flouts the maxim of relevance to let Lynette know that she is aware of that Lynette is lying. Edie wants her to tell her the truth and therefore she makes this shocking statement, about Tom, Lynette’s husband, to put Lynette off her guard and to let her know that she can not be fooled that easily. The scriptwriters want to portray Edie as insolent.

- Violating the maxim of relevance: Gabi has offered to sponsor Bree’s daughter’s modeling career by helping offering her a place at a modeling school in New York. In that way she will stay away from Gabi’s lover John. When Bree finds out she is furious, she wants her daughter at home.

(24) Bree: Yes. Gabrielle, did you or did you not offer to sponsor her?

Gabi: I just wanted to help out.

Gabi violates the maxim by making excuses and not answering the question she was asked in order to save face and her friendship with Bree. This makes her look helpless and the viewers sympathize with her for trying to be a good friend, even though they know that she is only trying to get Danielle out of the way. She violates the maxim in order to deceive Bree into focusing on her goodness, instead of seeing what she did wrong.

4.4 The maxim of manner

In That 70’s Show the maxim of manner is broken 34 times (26.4%). The maxim of manner was violated 3 times (8.8%) and flouted 31 times (91.2%). The maxim is broken in order to create humor when the characters say something funny which is obscure and ambiguous. The scriptwriters portray the characters as looking stupid, acting like jerks or being odd when breaking the maxim of manner.

- Flouting the maxim of manner: Hyde and Fez visit Kelso at the police academy. When Kelso comes to greet them he has grown a new mustache. Hyde looks at him skeptically and says:

(25) Hyde: That’s why they call the fuzz the fuzz covered in fuzz.
The utterance is ambiguous, a pun. A cop is called a fuzz in American slang and the mustache is also a fuzz. The scriptwriters flout the maxim of manner in order to portray Hyde as a jerk.

- **Violating the maxim of manner:** *Kitty, Pamela, Red and Bob are in a restaurant. Kitty comments on Pamela’s short skirt in a rather negative way and Red who is very fond of short skirts agrees with Pamela.*

  (26) Pamela: See most skirts are only slid up to the knee but I think that people want to see more than that.
  Red: **Arr, arr! Here comes the waiter**

Red violates the maxim of manner when agreeing to Pamela’s statement by saying ‘arr arr’, like pirates do when they agree, and then trying to mislead Kitty, who gives him an angry eye, saying ‘here comes the waiter’. Red violates the maxim in order to save himself from getting into an argument. The utterance is a violation of the maxim of manner because what is uttered is not clear and orderly. Kitty understands his implicature.

In *Desperate housewives* the maxim of manner is broken 12 times (9.7%). The maxim of manner was violated 2 times (16.7%) and flouted 10 times (83.3%). The maxim is broken to make people look mysterious. It is also broken when the characters are making a point and want the argument to be stronger; at this point they use similes that are sometimes ambiguous. In addition, the maxim is broken when the characters want to avoid answering a question.

- **Flouting the maxim of manner:** *Paul Young has hired a private detective to find out who was blackmailing his wife. The detective comes over to his house with new information and says that it could be someone from the neighborhood who did it. Paul doubts it and the detective says.*

  (27) Private detective: **Hum, Mr. Young, sometimes evil drives a mini van.**

The private detective flouts the maxim of manner to make his claim stronger. How can evil drive a mini van? The utterance is obscure. The detective is portrayed as a mysterious and sinister man to the viewers as his implicature is: ‘even your next-door neighbor can be someone you never expected and I know what I am talking about’.
• Violating the maxim of manner: *Gabi offers to help sponsoring Bree’s daughter Danielle to get into modeling school but without the permission from Bree. Bree gets furious and goes over to Gabi to confront her.*

(28) Bree: Did you offer to help Danielle into modeling school?
Gabi: **What? Yes, no, is that how she took it?**

Gabi violates the maxim of manner when her answer is too confusing to understand what she is trying to convey. She wants to distract Bree while figuring out a good excuse to not have to answer the question. She misleads Bree into thinking that she had nothing to do with it and it all was a misunderstanding.

### 4.5 Discussion of results

In both *That 70’s Show* and *Desperate Housewives* the maxim of relevance is most frequently broken. The characters break the maxim in order to avoid subjects that would embarrass them or put them in unpleasant situations but also to hint at something that they would not want to say straight out. In *That 70’s Show* the flouts are often obvious and humor is created when the characters come off as flustered, odd and stupid. In *Desperate Housewives* breaking the maxim of relevance is used to save the interlocutor from being hurt or to make the speaker’s utterances sound less offensive then they are in order to avoid a confrontation. In addition, the maxim is broken to create irony and to make statements stronger. Scriptwriters have the characters breaking the maxim in order to make them appear mysterious, cowardly, respectful or bold. The maxim of relevance is mostly flouted and it is violated only 4 times (9.8%) and 5 times (11.1%) respectively in *That 70’s Show* and *Desperate Housewives*.

The second most frequently broken maxim varied in the two shows. The maxim of manner was the second most frequent maxim to be broken in *That 70’s Show*. It is broken in order to create humor by portraying the characters as odd and weird because of their obscure and ambiguous utterances. Flouting occurs more frequently than violating 31 times (91.2%) and 3 times (8.8%) respectively. The second most frequent maxim to be broken in *Desperate Housewives* was the maxim of quantity. This maxim is broken when the character gives too little information in order to avoid upsetting the interlocutor or to hide frustration or
information from him/her. When giving too much information, the characters in *Desperate Housewives* intend to reinforce an opinion. The scriptwriters have the characters break the maxim when they want to present them as mysterious or as having something to hide as well as to make them look angry or confused. Flouting occurs more frequently than the violations: 33 times (86.8%) and 5 times (13.2%) respectively.

The maxim of quantity is the third most common maxim broken in *That 70’s Show*. This maxim is broken in order to create humor. The characters are portrayed as out of control when they say too much. When not wanting to reveal information, the speaker gives too little information than the situation requires. The floutings are often obvious to the interlocutor and the character often appears as somewhat dim-witted. The maxim is flouted more often than violated: 29 times (90.6%) and 3 times (9.4%) respectively. The third most commonly broken maxim in *Desperate Housewives* is the maxim of quality. The characters lie to get themselves out of trouble or to humiliate the interlocutor. In these situations the speakers are presented as cunning or deceitful. The maxim is violated more often than flouted: 15 times (51.7%) and 14 times (48.3%) respectively. The reason for that is that the characters often mean to mislead the hearer.

The least frequently broken maxim in *That 70’s Show* is the maxim of quality. The characters lie only when they find no other way out of a discussion and they want to save face or to make a strong point. That the maxim is being broken is obvious to the interlocutor and it evokes humor. Flouting of the maxim occurs more often than violating and which take place 14 times (63.6%) and 8 times (36.4%) respectively. The least frequently broken maxim in *Desperate Housewives* is the maxim of manner which is broken with the intention of making the characters look mysterious or cunning. It is broken when the character is trying to avoid a question or when using an idiomatic expression in order to make a statement stronger (see appendix (72)). The maxim of manner is more commonly flouted than violated: 10 times (83.3%) and 2 times (16.7%) respectively.

Violation of maxims occurred mostly with the maxim of quality; this is the case in both shows where the characters lie to mislead in order to direct the blame away from the character. On the whole, violations accounted for 18 times (14%) of the total amount of breakings and flouting 111 times (86%) in *That 70’s Show*. In *Desperate Housewives* violations occurred, 27 times (21.8%) and flouting 97 times (78.2%).
5. Summary and Conclusion

My research has shown that the maxim of relevance is the maxim that is most frequently flouted to create the different comical or dramatic situations. The maxim of manner and quantity is also commonly flouted mainly to create humorous situations. The reason is that the characters in That 70’s Show are often meant to be portrayed as slow and weird, not mean or deceitful. On the other hand the maxims of quantity and quality are more often broken in Desperate Housewives in dramatic contexts in order to make the characters look shifty and unreliable. In addition, violations occur noticeably more with the maxim of quality than with the other maxims. In drama shows, there are more scams, infidelity and mystery and the characters have more desire to mislead their interlocutors than the characters in comedies do.

In conclusion, since my material consists of a small amount of data there can be no generalization as to which maxims are most frequently broken in TV shows in general. However my study shows that maxims are important for scriptwriters in order to evoke feelings and reactions in their audience. In the shows which I chose to examine, maxims were broken in almost every interaction. I have seen that it is necessary for scriptwriters to have the characters break maxims in order to create and develop humorous and dramatic situations in verbal interaction. Without the help of Grice’s maxims, we would not be able to properly describe the dynamics of interaction and understand the phenomenon of cooperation and non-cooperation. Here it is important to note that the conversational maxims are commonly observed in TV sitcoms and dramas for various reasons. For example, scriptwriters adhere to different maxims in order to get the intended meaning from one speaker to another. In order to create humor and drama as well as to bring out different characteristics and personality traits in the different characters, however, it is necessary to break maxims. In That 70’s Show humor is created when the interlocutor understands the speaker’s implicature and takes offence or does not and thus appears stupid. In Desperate Housewives drama is created when the speaker intends to mislead the interlocutor and appear as deceitful or when the interlocutor understands the implication of the speaker’s utterance and gets offended by it.

An interesting topic for further study would be how maxims are broken in real conversation. This could be done by recording conversations in different contexts and analyzing them. It would also be interesting to see if breaking of maxims occurs more frequently in British
English or in American English when used for humorous situations. Another idea would be to look into whether the breaking of maxims differs between the sexes.
List of References

Primary Sources

Desperate Housewives. *The Ladies who Lunch*. Kanal 5
Desperate Housewives. *Anything you can do*. Kanal 5

That 70’s Show. *Happy Jack*. Kanal 5
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That 70’s Show. *Substitute*. Kanal 5

Secondary Sources


Friends. *The One After Vegas*. Channel 5


Appendix

The examples below are accounted for in the investigation but all are not included in section four. The bold sentences are breakings. In an utterance more than one maxim can be broken but only one is mentioned for each bold sentence.

**Quality**, be truthful (q).
**Quantity**, give the right amount of information when you speak (qu).
**Relevance**, be relevant to the context (r).
**Manner**, be clear and orderly when conversing (m).

*That 70’s Show*

**Episode 1**

(1) Donna: I cannot believe how good your mom looks in a bikini. **I mean she’s approaching like me territory.** (m)
Eric: Isn’t the bikini a marvellous invention? **Imagine the first Aztec who said: I just gotta see some more belly bottom. The Mexicans are such a resourceful people.** (qu)
Jackie: Eric don’t be so stupid, everyone knows that the French invented the bikini. **The Mexicans just added on the top because they are catholic.** (q)
Eric: Another example of religion dividing, instead of uniting. **Does anyone want soda?** (r) And **FYI if God wanted Mexican women to wear tops, he wouldn’t have created tequila.** (m)

(2) Donna: Where the hell is Eric with our sodas?
Jackie: Maybe he ran home. **He is kinda a momma’s boy.** (r)
Donna: Eric? Oh my god.
Eric: **I’m busy.** (qu)
Donna: Oh my God.
Jackie: ew, was he going to the bathroom?
Donna: **NO!** (qu)

(3) Eric: Okay, okay, something happened. And I think it’s safe to say it’s certainly in the area of horrific. **Like war or when my mom sings ‘Do you Think I’m Sexy’ while she vacuums.** (qu)
Fez: What happened?
Eric: **Well, we all know that as a young man in the prime of his life, I have some needs.** (r)
Fez: **Amen brother.** (m)
Hyde: Wait a minute; this is the prime of your life? You live at home with your mom and you have to wear a nametag at work.
Eric: **Anyway,** today at the house of the woman that I was theoretically going to marry, I had some needs that I felt necessary to take care of, right then and there. (r)
Hyde: At here house? **Why don’t you just do it at the buss station like the other degenerates?** (r)
Eric: Well there I was, and there the bathroom was. **It was like to trains passing in the night.** (m)
Fez: **That’s beautiful.** (m)
Eric: You know it kind of was, and then Donna walked in.

(4) Eric: You know what? This is Donnas fault with her “no more sex until we’re married crap” you guys have no idea how hard it’s been to have no sex at all.
Fez: Yeah, it must be horrible.
Hyde: **I say you gotta pull a Nixon,** deny, deny, deny. (m)
Fez: No, you need a good story, **whenever I get caught I always say I’m looking for ticks.** (qu)
Hyde: Fez how many times have you been caught?
Fez: **Come on, I’m not stopping just because the doorknob turns.** (r)

(5) Kelso: Fellas, it’s good to see you boys.
Hyde: what the hell is that?
Kelso: The stache, yeah it’s coming on nice huh? (m)
Hyde: That’s why they call the fuzz the fuzz covered in fuzz. (m)
Fez: Like someone threw paint on Mona Lisa. Oh please, Michel Kelso is a masterpiece, you know it, I know it. (m)
Kelso: About that, I’m going by Mike now. It’s my Cop name. (qu)
Fez: But we call you Kelso.
Kelso: Yeah, but I’m gonna have to ask you to call me Mike, and as far as the stache goes, I like it. It makes me look like an authority figure. (r)
Hyde: Makes you look like a porn star.
Kelso: Either way.

(6) Hyde: You are really starting to creep me out. I’m gonna grab the beer out of the car and I’m gonna drink unto that moustache turns into a caterpillar and crawls away. (m)
Kelso: Sorry, No can do. I’ve got the KP in the am and the PT in the pm. (m)
Fez: I don’t know what any of that means but I came here to drink and play with guns damn it.
Kelso: Sorry Buddy but we get the lights out at 22.00 so I’m gonna have to ask you to move along to the barracks ASAP.
Fez: Did you just call me a sap?
Kelso: ASAP, As soon as possible.
Fez: Well you’re a sap right now. (r)

(7) Jackie: But Donna your missing the whole point here. Eric’s perversive behaviour can be a card you can play for the rest of your life. Let’s just say: you want Eric to buy you a diamond and he says no. **You just say:** WHAT? Are you busy? Next thing you know, you’re Elizabeth Taylor. (qu)
Donna: Yeah, I think I need advise from a woman in a relationship not built on blackmail. (r)
Jackie: It’s called a lesbian Donna, and you are gonna have to go to New York for that. (q)

(8) Eric: Morning.
Red: Well if it isn’t Casanova, the man who seduced himself. (m)

(9) Kitty: When you were a baby you had your hands down your pants all the time, but that is okay because it is natural, tell him Red, it’s natural.
Red: What are you an animal? (m)

(10) Kitty: You know some people get addictive and can’t even hold down a job. (q)
Red: If you don’t get someone to do it for you then you do without. In Korea I went without for two and a half years. (qu)
Eric: Dad you were there for three years.
Red: What are you, an animal? (m)

(11) Eric: Hey why did you knock?
Donna: You know why I knocked. Eric you’ve been avoiding me all day, let’s just talk about this.
Eric: There’s nothing to talk about, you obviously thought you saw something that you didn’t see. I was checking for ticks. (q)
Donna: Eric... (qu)
Eric: Fine, okay fine. I got caught, I’m embarrassed. Let’s put this behind us. I love you (r)
Donna: okay, great, fine. It’s behind us. Absolutely (q)
Eric: I said I love you.
Donna: hum. (qu)
Eric: Don’t you love me too?
Donna: Sure, you know whatever. (qu)
Eric: Can I have a hug?
Donna: Fine. What got you going at my house? I mean we were just sitting around looking at pictures of Jackie’s mom; Jackie’s mom gets you going?
Eric: What? No, No, well... (q)
Donna: you’re an animal. (m)

(12) Red: Look who tore himself away from himself long enough to join us. (m)
Jackie: Yeah, usually he is to busy for lunch.
Kitty: Alright both of you stop. Honey you washed your hands right?
Eric: Hey dad I can’t believe I’m gonna say this but can I talk to you in private for a moment?
Red: No, I don’t think so.
Eric: Dad? (qu)
Red: Alright, but keep your hands where I can see them. This really isn’t getting old. (r)

(13)Eric: Well I did it again.
Red: Again? How many bathrooms does that house have?
Eric: No, not, not that. Donna wanted to talk about the whole the horrible thing. (r)
Red: Oh, they always want to talk about it.
Eric: Yeah well we talked about it and in the course of talking about it information was reviled that made it much, much worse.
Red: And that is why you never ever talk about it. Haven’t you noticed how often I just grunt at your mother? I know how to talk, I’m not an ape. Just chose not to. It’s too late now, since you screwed it up and talked about it there’s only one thing to do; go on the offensive, make a counter attack. (qu)
Red: They never expect it. It throws them off. One time in Korea we had this little guy out numbered, 20 to 1. But then he ran at us, screaming his head off and we were so taken off guard that we just dove back into our foxholes. (qu)
Eric: And he got away?
Red: No, no, no I mean we were startled for a few seconds but then the whole company just opened up on him. (qu)

(14)Fez: This afternoon a Cadet Terry hit on me. It makes me nervous when men with guns like me.
Hyde: Fez, Cadet Terry is a woman, I know because I saw her putting cover up on her chin hair. (r)
Fez: Well then, hello there Cadet Terry. (m)

(15)Hyde: Are you ready?
Fez: you bet I am, Let’s see you do the QT in the KP with this, you SOB. (m)

(16)Eric: Listen up Donna; I’ve got something to say.
Donna: Okay but be careful Jackie’s mom were here earlier and I don’t want you to catch a whiff of her perfume and have to go and sexually assault yourself in the hallway. (qu)
Eric: No, no, no I talk, you listen. Okay, this is all your fault, yeah, do you know what your celibacy thing is doing to me? Yeah, my needs have risen to Fezian levels. He’s a sick bastard Donna, and now thanks to you Donna, so am I. (qu) Yeah you created a monster Donna and now I can’t leave my self alone. (q)
Donna: You know what? You are right. I’m sorry.
Eric: You are? I mean damn right you are. (q)
Donna: No, this has been really are and the celibacy was my idea so I need to take some responsibility for the odd and disgusting things that you do.
Eric: That’s right you do. (qu)
Donna: Next time, be like a normal person. Go to your room; lock the door, light some candles, put on some Al Green music, make an evening of it.
Eric: Oh my God Donna that was really detailed. It’s almost like... Oh my God, you do it too. (qu)
Donna: What? No, No! (q)
Eric: I’ve noticed how the candles are getting lower and lower and I never see them lit.
Donna: This conversation is over (r)

(17)Fez: So they make an evening of it?
Eric: Yeah, candles, music. God, girls do everything better. (q)
Hyde: You don’t suppose Jackie? No she wouldn’t even go to a self served gas station. (qu)

Episode II

(18) Donna: Eric, you know people only register for stuff that’s used in serving, eating and clearing of a meal
Eric: Why is it always food?
Donna: Because marriage signifies the end of trying to be attractive. (q)
Kelso: Man, register sucks. I had to register with Jackie once for her sweet 16, longest five months of my life. (r)
Donna: look, all I know is you guys are gonna buy us whatever wedding presents we tell you and none of this “all going in on one gift” crap.
Hyde: Hey, hey shut it huh, Don’t talk about weddings, Jackie’s on her way over. (r)
Eric: She is not here now.
Hyde: She doesn’t have to hear the word wedding; she will sense that it has been said. (m)
Kelso: I wish I could do that, but not so much with words but so I could see through peoples’ clothes. (m)
Hyde: Look, when you too start japing about your wedding, Jackie gets all: “Steven, when are we getting married” then I have to say that we are not gonna get married and then she kicks me in my shit. From the knees down I’m a freaking PUW. (m)
Fez: No, you have magnificent legs, I would say W O W, wow! (r)

Donna: do you two know each other?
Eric: yeah, this is the weirdo who sold me your ring. He has probably worn it more than you. (r)
Sales Person: Trust me, your business is the last place I wanna put my nose. (m)

Donna: No Eric, the wedding book says we’re gonna have to look at all the patterns; today is just a scouting trip.
Eric: Scouting? You know I was asked to resign from the scouts. (r)

Donna: Okay, look at the groom in this picture. What is the difference between him and you?
Eric: He is a cartoon?
Donna: No, he is smiling.
Eric: yeah, because he is a cartoon. (qu)

Eric: Okay, that’s it, I’m going to the sporting goods department.
Sales person: Men, can’t live with them, well you can but you have to keep quiet about it. (r)

Red: Reading another one of your dirty girl books?
Kitty: They are not dirty, they are romantic. (r)

Eric: I just spent six hours registering for wedding gifts with Donna. The only reason I’m here right now is because I pretended I was choking on ice cream.
Red: I’ll let you in on a little secret for when shopping with women. Always pick the ugliest, worst choice and you are off the hook. That’s how I got out of shopping for this couch. (r)
Eric: There was an uglier couch than this?
Red: The one I picked out had dragons on it. (r)
Eric: You’re sneaky. You know you act like you’re all about brute force but you’re a finesse player man.
Red: Trust me son, don’t budge until you hear the magic words: “oh, I’ll just do it myself”!

Donna: what do you think about this fork?
Eric: you know Donna, I think all those stuff is too ordinary for us. You know lets take something bejewelled. (q)
Donna: who are you Liberache? (m)
Eric: Yes I am Liberache. (q)

Jackie: Hey what’s up?
Hyde: Oh, we were just talking about slutlish cheerleaders in other schools. (q)
Jackie: you never wanna talk about that.
Hyde: Well I’ve finally come around darling. (q)
Jackie: Is that wedding gifts catalogues?
Hyde: Damn it (r)

Donna: Now why didn’t someone do that five years ago?
Hyde: she used to bite. (q)

Eric: Now this ok this is what I am talking about. That’s a nice fork (q)
Donna: Eric, the handle is actually a deer hoe.
Eric: Yeah, that’s the Cherokee collection. Donna, that’s the Indian way. (m)
(30) Donna: So what do you think of this fork?
Kelso: No, no, no, no! Don’t put me into this, just make Eric do it. (r)

(31) Kelso: Alright look I hate to sell him out but the poor kid lacks sedulity. Eric is, how am I suppose to put this? He’s a bit of a rufe, a little country. A maroon if you like. (m)
Donna: So what’s your point?
Kelso: I’m just saying you can do better. I mean I’m here, you are here. No one has to know. (r)
Donna: Kelso! (qu)
Kelso: Okay you can tell two people.

(32) Hyde: Pick out wedding gifts with who?
Donna: Joosaphet, remember him from high school? He was always jumping. (q)
Hyde: Did you send Forman out to do wedding stuff with Jackie?
Donna: Look I had to punish him and what better than letting him spend a day with Jackie? (r)
Kelso: Yeah, she’s got you there, your girlfriend is annoying. Plus I used to do her, so that’s gotta hurt. (m)

(33) Fez: What happened to my favourite blouse?
Kitty: A lady never talks about what happens in the bedroom. (r)

(34)Fez: He red my dirty girl book?
Fez: Yeah, I caught him, Ironic from behind. (r)

(35) Donna: I just don’t understand how you could have more fun with Jackie than with me.
Eric: I don’t know. (q) She doesn’t ask me questions; she just tells me what to do. It’s a strange kind of freedom but… (qu)
Eric: I know why the cage bird sings Donna. (r)
Donna: So you say the way to handle you is to take away your freedom and order you around? (q)
Eric: That’s how I was raised. (qu)

Episode III

(36) Eric: So yesterday I was at this garage sale, I looked down and there it was the Darth Wader action figure with the incredibly rare GREEN sable.
Hyde: Why have I not kicked your ass yet? (r)

(37) Eric: Mitch congratulations this seems like the perfect job for someone in your size, with the free lodging in the little castle in hole number six. (m)
Mitch: yeah it’s just enough room in there for me and your mom. (q)

(38) Eric: God I hate that guy, I’d tear him a new hole in one. (m)
Hyde: Wow Forman I haven’t seen you this pissed off since I chased you around the house with that spider in a Jar. You were like: Hyde I swear to God, and you never did anything. (qu)

(39) Eric: Mitch I’m so sorry.
Mitch: What? I have lost the ability to process language on the account that I have percussion. (m)

(40) Mitch: Don’t you think that we should be friends?
Eric: Okay you’re obviously having some kind of reaction to your medication. We’re just gonna go. (m)

(41) Eric: You know Mitch, If you ever wanna come and hang out in the basement… you know (qu)
Mitch: Really? Thanks. I’d smile but the left side of my face became paralysed. (qu)

(42) Kitty: Pamela, I noticed that your skirt was torned all the way all up to the thighs.
Pamela: No I actually bought it this way (r) See most skirts are only slid up to the knee but I think that people wanna see more than that.
Red: Arr, arr. Here comes the waiter. (m)
(43) Bob: That’s why I wanna ask you to move in with me.
Pamela: **Gosh Bob that’s really nice and I really want to but I’m seeing someone else, Sorry.** (r)

(44) Kelso: What are you doing?
Mitch: **Not touching you.**
Kelso: **stop it.**
Mitch: **but I’m not touching you.**
Kelso: **stop not touching me.**
Mitch: **Okay.** (m)

(45) Fez: They look happy. Why don’t we have a game?
Hyde: **Will you stop asking me why we don’t have stuff? Why don’t we have a song, why don’t we have a movie? We’re men!** (r)
Fez: I thought we were sensitive men.
Hyde: **we are not.** (q) (fez are)
Fez: one of us is.
Hyde: **shut up.** (m)/ (r)
Fez: and it’s not you.

(46) Mitch: She’s gotta be with you huh?
Kelso: I can’t say I haven’t tried my little friend. But she’s with Eric, **for now.** (q)

(47) Mitch: What’s wrong with her? Is she like an alcoholic or a drug addict?
Eric: Yeah, she’s addicted. **She needs a daily dose of this guy.** So back off. (m)

(48) Donna: Okay Kelso, truth or dare?
Kelso: truth.
Donna: have you ever snuck into my bathroom while I was showering?
Kelso: **I mean dare.** (r)

(49) Mitch: Hey buddy. Oh Eric, you didn’t tell me you had an older sister.
Eric: **oh please if you’re gonna do ‘fake charm’ then at least keep it in the frame of reality.** (r)

(50) Jackie: Donna this whole thing is your dad’s fault. Come on Donna who asks a woman to move in with him after knowing her such a short time. (r)

(51) Donna: Hey dad, how are you doing?
Bob: How do you think I’m doing? **Pam ripped out my heart and stamped on it, with shoes I paid for.** (m)

(52) Jackie: how could you do that to Bob?
Pamela: **Oh honey, Bob will be fine.** (r)

(53) Jackie: I guess you’ve got a lot of thinking to do.
Pamela: you are right, **Mas tequila Hirohito.** (r)
Jackie: **I said: Thinking.** (qu)

(54) Donna: So my honour is less important than a doll?
Eric: **Action figure, now give it back.** (r)

(55) Mrs. Forman: Eric, were you playing in the bathroom with your little doll?
Eric: **Action figure** (r), **oh no!** (qu)
Hyde: In the tub Forman? **It’s getting really hard to be your friend.** (r)

(56) Pamela: Anyway Bob, **I realised that you are the man for me.** (q)
Bob: **Sorry Pam, I’m over you O V E R over.** (q)
Pamela: I wanna move in with you.
Bob: **Here’s your key.** (qu)
Donna: Dad are you sure this is a good idea?
Bob: she makes me happy kitten. (qu)

Eric: Hey Mitch, if you ever want to hang out, you’re always, you know…. (qu)
Mitch: great thanks.

Eric: Hey, so do you think I might have a shot at Donna?
Mitch: Mitch she’s my fiancée. (r)
Mitch: So that’s a maybe. (m)

Eric: Hey Mitch, look I wanted to apologise, I thought you stole my Vader but It turns out I left… Hyde stole it. (q)

Desperate Housewives

Episode 1

Lady: So what did everybody think?
Lynette: I thought the character of Madam Boray was very inspirational. (q)
Lady: Inspirational? She poisons herself with arsenate. (r)
Lynette: Really?
Lady: you didn’t read until the end?
Lynette: I stopped after page 50. (qu)
Lady: Am I the only one who read the book?
Susan: I saw the movie, it was very good. (r)

Lady: Inspirational?
Lynette: That’s the mystery part. (r)
Susan: I figure Dana has something to do with what Mary- Alice’s was trying to hide.
Lynette: So somebody found out Mary- Alice’s secret.
Bree: and sent a note. (qu)

Paul: meaning? (qu)
Private detective: meaning that the blackmailer is probably someone you know. A neighbour, the milkman, the pool boy, a soccer mom. (qu)
Paul: A soccer mom?
Private detective: hum, Mr. Young, sometimes evil drives a mini van. (m)
Private detective: I had this gig once, tracking down this PTA mom who was helping her daughter to get a spot at the parade float. She served antifreeze to half of the home coming comity. (r)
Paul: Did you catch her?
Private detective: Mr. Young, the people who hired me didn’t hire me to catch her. (qu)

Tom: I thought we could make a formal dinner for six, we could sit, we could… (qu)
Lynette: and when do you expect this formal dinner to take place?
Tom: The day after tomorrow.
Lynette: Tom. (qu)
Tom: I know it’s a short notice.
Lynette: you think? How do you suppose I pull off a formal dinner with no warning?
Tom: I don’t know. Bree Van Dekamp does this kind of things all the time. (qu)
Lynette: What did you say?
Tom: I’m sorry forget what I said, I’ll call and cancel. (q)
Gabi: so meet me at the motel in an hour John.
John: I’ve got plans. (r)
Gabi: so cancel them.
John: They’re with Danielle; we’re going to the movies. (q)
Gabi: Sounds like a date. (qu)
John: yeah.
Gabi: Well, I have a problem with you seeing other girls.
John: and I have a problem with you having a hus band. I guess we both have to deal.

Bree: You went to an attorney?
Rex: yeah, and a good one too. (r)
Bree: He better be good because when I am done with you, you won’t have a penny left.
Rex: Bring it on. (m)

Bree: You went to an attorney?
Rex: yeah, and a good one too. (r)
Bree: He better be good because when I am done with you, you won’t have a penny left.
Rex: Bring it on. (m)

Julie: I told Mike I expect him to have you home by eleven.
Susan: What about midnight?
Julie: alright but no later, you know how I worry. (r)
Julie: so you’ve got protection?
Susan: oh my God, we are so not having this conversation. (r)
Julie: we are, because I enjoy being an only child. (qu)
Susan: Are you done?
Julie: Almost, you know I always assumed that I would have sex for the first time before you had it again.
(r)
Susan: ok, you can leave now. (r)

Susan: Hey Edie.
Edie: Wow good Lord you look so pretty. I hardly recognise you. (q)
Susan: Oh this? I have a date, right now, with Mike. We kissed FYI. (r)

Mike: I know how this looks but there is nothing between us, Kindra is just an old friend. (qu)
Susan: old friend? (qu)
Mike: yeah, you know. (qu)
Susan: yeah, yeah I know. (q) Well actually no, I don’t know. So by old friend you mean; Collage friend, old bowling buddy, saved you from drowning? (qu)
Mike: It’s hard to explain. (q)
Susan: Why don’t you try?
Mike: Look, I promise to make it up to you and you look amazing. (r)

Susan: Hey Edie.
Edie: Wow good Lord you look so pretty. I hardly recognise you. (q)
Susan: Oh this? I have a date, right now, with Mike. We kissed FYI. (r)

Mike: I know how this looks but there is nothing between us, Kindra is just an old friend. (qu)
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Susan: Why don’t you try?
Mike: Look, I promise to make it up to you and you look amazing. (r)

Edie: Hey how was your big date?
Susan: Mike had to reschedule. (qu)
Edie: oh, because of that hot girl, with the big suitcase, over there? Must be devastating FYI. (r)

Gabi: Remember when you said you wanted to be a model?
Danielle: Do you remember that? That was like last summer. (r)
Gabi: Well as it turns out Perchiks model academy has an opening for their summer program. Do you like me to sponsor you?
Danielle: Would I? Oh my God that is like one of the best schools in the country, you would do that to me? (r)

Lynette: Hey Jordana.
Jordana: Hey Lynette, How are you? You look a little tired (r), is everything okay?
Lynette: Actually I’m getting ready for a dinner party tomorrow night, six people. (r)
Jordana: Sounds fun.
Lynette: Great fun. (q). Say you don’t have any of your kids ADD medication that you can spare? Just like to helo me get over the whole… (qu)
Jordana: Gosh Lynette, I am really running low, and I really need all the energy I can get. My sister Elaine and her kids are flying in town for a week. (r)
Lynette: Yeah, that’s exiting. I wish my sister would visit more often. (r)
Jordana: yeah sisters are great. (q)
Lynette: yeah, just three or four pills? I am really hitting the wall here. (m)
Lynette: I’m not gonna forget about this Jordana.
Jordana: What is that supposed to mean?
Lynette: It means that come girl scouts, cookie times, don’t bother to bring Tina over, because we won’t be home. (q)

Kinda: Six week in the suburban jungle and this is all you’ve got?
Mike: There are over 300 families in this sub division, it takes time to check them all out. (r)

Kinda: This is a gigantic waist of your time and my father’s money.
Mike: Afraid your old man is burning trough your inheritance?
Kinda: That’s not funny. (r)

Bree: Rex, what’s this about?
Rex: I went and spruced a little. (r)

Bree: What’s all this about a model academy?
Danielle: It’s my new career. Mrs. Solis is sponsoring me. (r)
Bree: Oh is she now, and when were you planning on telling me?
Rex: She told me and I think that it’s a great idea. (r)

Bree: Did you offer to help Danielle into modelling school?
Gabi: what? Yes, no, is that how she took it? (m)
Bree: Yes. Gabrielle did you or did you not offer to sponsor her?
Gabi: I just wanted to help out. (r)
Bree: It is in New York for God’s sake, why in earth would you suggest that?
Gabi: It’s her dream, and don’t you want her to be happy. (r)
Bree: No. (q) And in the future I would appreciate you keeping your ridicules ideas to yourself.
Gabi: Bree… (qu)

Lynette: This play day was a good idea.
Mom: Yeah, thank you for suggesting it. Your boys are the only once I know who can tire out Timmy. (r)
Lynette: yup He’s a feisty one. Hey word on the street that you have been medicating Timmy? (r)
Mom: Oh yeah, for his ADD. The pills have been a God’s sent. (r)
Lynette: I bet. Can I use your bathroom?

Private detective: Is it time to bring in the police?
Paul: That is not really an option for me. (r)

Paul: I can’t wait, I need help now.
Private detective: For five grand she’s hurt, for then grand she’s gone. (r)

Danielle: Mom you can’t stop us from going inside the house.
Bree: oh no? That’s Mr Conlin, the locksmith; he’s been very helpful today. (r)

Edie: Susan, what brings you here?
Susan: I just wanted to say goodbye to Mary-Alice’s house before someone else moves in. (q)

Susan: What a small, small world. (q)
Mike: yeah, it sure is. I caught Edie hiding in the back. (r)
Susan: No, you’re kidding? Is she here?
Mike: yeah yeah, she said that “the jig is up” (m) and then she went to ride the bull. She said that you two came together.
Susan: well, yeah, we did. I thought she left. (q)
Mike: were you following me?
Susan: What? No, I just came here; you know with Edie, we just love to ride that bull. (q)
Mike: you ride the bull?
Susan: Yeah, yeah, it’s a real rush. (q)
Mike: Susan, give me a break.
Susan: No, you give me a break. I did not follow you here and even if I were, it is just because you’ve been so secret about Kindra. (r)
Mike: Kindra and I are just friends.
Susan: And I came here to ride the bull. (r)

(85)Susan: Everybody is looking at me, aren’t they?
Mike: Just the slapstick fans. (q)

(86)Kindra: so how long time have you two been seeing each other?
Susan: Well you kind of interrupted our first date, but up until then, it’s been smoking hot. (qu)

(87) Tom: what’s wrong with your eyes?
Lynette: Nothing, I’m tired. (q)
Tom: Turn around, I wanna look at you.
Lynette: I’m fine really. (q)

Desperate Housewives

Episode II

(88)Cop: So your husband, does he have any idea how many men that pays to sleep in his bed?
Maisy: There’s not a lot of sleeping going on, not if I’m doing my job right? (r)

(89)Mom: Does anybody know how it started?
Principle: I’m sorry, that is confidential information. (qu)

(90)Mike: If money is an issue?
Gabi: Oh no no no, it’s not the money. It’s just that Carlos and I are trying to prioritise some little things that we need to do around the house. (q)
Mike: And you don’t consider surge back up in the house a priority?
Gabi: It’s defiantly on the short list. (r)

(91)Julie: Are you okay?
Susan: Hi. (m)
Julie: You know I can stay home if you want.
Susan: oh no no no, I know how much you were looking forward towards this weekend with your dad, I’m fine. (q)
Julie: You don’t look fine.
Susan: Well, a little sad… Mike and I were just a fling, or not even a real fling, sort of a borderline fling. (qu)

(92)Tom: Why would Tammy lie to us?
Lynette: Because she saw Porter scratching his head at school, they all did. Now words are getting around. (m)

(93)Paul: Again, I’m sorry I changed my mind but it’s not really a good time to sell the house. Zach’s going through a lot and he wants to finish high school before moving.
Edie: Oh, forget it it’s a part of the business. I expect to get screwed over. (m)

(94)Paul: So Felicia, I heard they have a suspect in your sister’s murder… Mike Delfino.
Felicia: Oh, he didn’t kill her. (qu)
Paul: But they found her jewellery in his garage. (qu)
Felicia: but his fingerprints were not anywhere on it. (qu)
Paul: That’s just means that he wore glows. (q)
Felicia: So he’s smart enough to use glows but he leaves her blood splattered jewellery laying around for anyone to find? Please, is that what you would do if you killed anyone?
Paul: I don’t know what goes trough a mind of a murderer. I just say I wouldn’t trust him if I were you. (q)

(95)Felicia: Have you been to Salt Lake City?
Edie: No, I try to stay clear from Utha, it’s a little bit conservative to me. (qu)
(96) Edie: That’s the only nice thing I can say about my first husband, He taught me how to bluff.
Lynette: He played poker?
Edie: No, he was lousy in bed. I had to fake a lot of orgasms… you don’t have to respond (qu)
Lynette: Thank you.
Edie: So where was Susan today?
Lynette: I’m not sure. (q)
Edie: Wow Tom must be great in bed. Obviously you have no idea how to bluff. (r)
Lynette: Okay, she’s going through some stuff and I’m sure she’d prefer it to be private.
Edie: Its Mike isn’t it? I’m gonna find out sooner or later. (qu)
Lynette: She’s devastated about the break up and she haven’t left the house for days. (qu)
Edie: Why didn’t you just tell me that?
Lynette: Because it’s personal and that’s the kind of things you would only want me to tell your friends.
Edie: I’m Susan’s friend. What? I don’t hate her. (q)

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Edie: I’m Susan’s friend. What? I don’t hate her. (q)

(98) Gabi: God I have to go to the bathroom again.
Carlos: So go to Bree’s.
Gabi: I’ve already been to Bree’s twice today. (qu)
Carlos: Then go to Susan’s.
Gabi: I hate Susan’s. She has all those weird sandal candles, her house stinks of apricots. (qu)

(99) Gabi: Oh, I am materialistic? When the Johnsons bought their new 7 series you were the one who went in and traded this car for something better.
Carlos: Who ended up driving it?
Gabi: You know what? I don’t have time to fight right now. I have laundry to do. (r)

(100) Bree: I was wondering perhaps you could remove Rex’s name from that book?
Maisy: Wow, that’s a big thing to ask. Those muffins must be really good! (r)
Bree: I have some money that I have put aside for emergencies they can be all yours…
Maisy: If my keep my mouth shut?
Bree: continue to be discrete. I have 14000 dollars on that account, they can all be you (qu)
Maisy: I’m not interested. (qu)

(101) Susan: who is it?
Edie: Edie.
Susan: Oh Edie not now I’m kind of busy.
Edie: hi.
Susan: or just come on in. (m)
Edie: what are you doing?
Susan: I decided that my life is way to complicated and so I’m simplifying, I am getting rid of the clutter
Susan: Not to be rude but is there a reason you’re being here?
Edie: Look I’m feeling badly about what you’re going through with mike. Don’t worry I’m not gonna date him. (q)
Susan: It doesn’t matter anymore. (q)
Edie: well don’t get me wrong I have every intention of sleeping with him. Some mountains are just too meant to be climbed. (m)
Susan: I’m gonna learn to keep my doors locked.
Edie: how long have you been sitting here.
Susan: I don’t know, 5 minutes, give or take three hours.
Edie: that’s it, get up, get dressed.
Susan: Why?
Edie: because it’s time, you’re coming with me. It’s time to get wasted. Happy hour started 45 minutes ago. (r)
Susan: Why would I go anywhere with you?
Edie: Because that’s what normal women do when the get depressed. The put on a short skirt, they go bars with their girlfriends maybe have one too many and then they make out with some strange man in the alley. (q)
Susan: wow.
Edie: Come on, It will be fun, I swear come on, come on.
Susan: why do u even care?
Edie: I never said I care it’s just well I guess I know how it feels to have my heart stamped on. (qu)
Susan: ok.

(102) Edie: What about him.
Susan: Not my type. (qu)
Edie: oh look, I know the pickings are slim but isn’t there someone here that you are attracted to?
Susan: I hate them all, look at them just leering at us. They are so damn cocky like they know that they have the upper hand. (qu)
Edie: what are you talking about? We have the upper hand, without us they have nothing.
(103) Susan: Maybe 15 years ago not anymore, now we’re just lonely and desperate and they know it and they’re just sitting there ready to pounce, waiting for us to take any crumb they are willing to throw our way? I don’t want crumbs, I want Mike. (m)

(104) Edie: Paul? Are you serious?
Susan: I’m telling you he’s hiding something. He clamps up every time we try to ask him about Mary-Alice and then when we found out about Dana. (qu)
Edie: Dana? Who is Dana?
Susan: Paul and Mary-Alice had a baby that died. (r)
Edie: you’re kidding?
Susan: Zach killed her. (r)
Edie: Holy crap, who told you that?
Susan: Paul, he said that it was an accident but I’m telling you I think that is why Mary-Alice was blackmailed. (qu)
Edie: Mary-Alice was being blackmailed?
Susan: yeah, the girls and I found a threatening note in her stuff. (r)
Edie: What the hell kind of street do we live on?
Susan: I don’t know.

(105) Bree: Rex If you walk out of this restaurant I will scream.
Rex: Bree. (qu)
Bree: I will scream about your cruelty, then I will scream about your infidelity and just to make sure it really hurts I will scream about your distasteful sexual habits. I you wanna know what true humiliation is you just take one step. (qu)

(106) Susan: Do you believe in evil Edie?
Edie: of course I believe in evil, I work in real-estate. (r)
Susan: I’m serious. It’s just something about this house that is just so cold and creepy you couldn’t tell when Mary- Alice was alive. She just brought so much warmth and light, now it’s something… I can just taste it, can’t you sense it?
Edie: The only thing I can sense is that you have had too much to drink. (m)

(107) Susan: Are you ok?
Edie: I just stubbed my toe. (r)
Susan: Oh my God Angela.

(108) Paul: You’re returning my Key at 23.30, what the hell is going on here?
Edie: You’re right; we are too old to be playing games. (r)
Paul: what?
Edie: my note was about to tell you that I wasn’t kidding this afternoon, I really would like to keep a key to your place to use if the mood strikes me. (q)
Paul: you’ve been drinking.
Edie: Just enough to get up the courage to tell you how I feel about you. (q)

(109) Mike: Do you wanna hear what happened or not?
Susan: It doesn’t matter because I will never believe anything you say ever again. (r)

(110) Bree: Well you keep coming up with excuses to use everyone’s bathroom and then two days ago Mr Cawley looked into your backyard and saw you and Carlos doing your laundry in the Jacuzzi.
Gabi: Well there’s a simple explanation for that, I… (qu)
(111)Lynette: Just so you know, I bought Topher a set of bongo drums; I know you will love them as much as he will. (q)

(112)Tammy: No, wait, okay, alright I was wrong I admit it. I am really really really sorry. Lynette: Too little, too late. (qu) Tammy: okay, okay, I’ll tell everyone that I was wrong, that you’re kids aren’t the ones. Lynette: Well why are you standing there? Get to it.