

## Methodology notes: Analysis of eight swear/taboo word forms in SydTV-Std

This set of methodology notes applies to the analysis of raw frequency and range for eight swear/taboo word forms in SydTV-Std and to the different visualizations presented on [www.syd-tv.com](http://www.syd-tv.com) (boxplots, histograms, visualization with Kaleidographic). The eight swear/taboo word forms analysed are: *god*, *hell*, *damn*, *ass*, *bitch*, *shit*, *fucking*, *fuck*.

### Basic information

The basic settings are summarized in Table 1.

Software	Wordsmith version 7.0.0.135 (Scott 2017), Concord
Corpus	SydTV-Std (version 3.0)
Normalization	per 10,000 words; tokens in text; calculated and rounded using Excel 2007
Token definition	' not allowed within word; hyphens do not separate words <sup>*</sup>

Table 1 Basic settings

<sup>\*</sup> This means that hyphenated words (mostly compounds) are excluded, for instance *shit-faced*, *god-awful*, *butt-fuck*, *fuck-up*, *bitch-like*, *kick-ass*, *ass-kicking*, *big-ass*, *smooth-ass*, *ass-fucked*, etc. Also excluded are words like *goddamnit* or *damnit*, because these are spelt as one word, rather than two or three in SydTV (vs. alternative spellings such as *god damn it* or *damn it*).

### Procedure

Wordsmith (Concord) was used to search SydTV-Std for each form in turn. No wildcards were used in the search. Once all instances were identified, they were further analyzed qualitatively by reading each concordance line. This analysis included deletion of some instances and the classification of all remaining instances into different uses, as described below for each form. The classification used is fairly basic and derives from the data itself; no sophisticated linguistic classification schemes were applied. Some forms were analyzed in more detail than others. The classification of instances into different uses is provided here to give readers a sense of the typical (most frequent) uses of a form and the variety of different uses that are included in the frequency count for a particular swear/taboo word form.

#### 1. God

Concord identified 291 occurrences of the form *god*, in 63 out of 66 files. Clear references to a religious entity were then deleted, because they are not generally considered taboo or offensive (e.g. *Then God rest his soul*; *There is no God*; *God hates figs*; *is god mad at me?* *You are a god to me*; *That boy was talking to God*). One instance of *I swear before almighty God* was also deleted, because it was uttered by a reverend and used in a religious sense. All remaining instances of *(I) swear to god* were retained, as these are uttered for emphasis rather than in a religious sense. The same applies to phrases like *So help me god*; *god knows*; *thank god*; *honest to god*; *I pray to god*; *god forbid*; *you hope to god*. This process of deletion resulted in a total of 266 instances of *god*, across 61 files (episodes). As can be seen in Table 2 on the next page, the vast majority (208) of these 266 occurrences are instances of *oh my god*; *god*; *my god*; *oh god*.

Use	Frequency
oh my god; god; my god; oh god	208
(oh) thank god	14
(oh) for God('s) sake(s)	11
(I) swear to god	9
god knows	4
good god	4
(oh) dear god	2
oh for the love of god	2
so help me god	2
and I pray to god	2
right hand to god	1
honest to god	2
you hope to god	1
you think surely to god	1
god bless you	1
god forbid	1
what in god's name	1
god almighty	1

Table 2 *God*

## 2. Hell

Concord identified 142 occurrences of the form *hell*, in 48 out of 66 files. Clear references to hell in a religious sense and related metaphorical uses were then deleted (e.g. *you can walk out of hell, and into the light; I hope you enjoy spending eternity in hell!; the crowded sweaty hell of bouncy castles; we weren't going to mention that hell...; before hell freezes over; hotter than hell*). Some subjectivity is involved in deciding what to exclude and include here. Thus, the following were included in the frequency count: *hell on your nails; all hell broke loose; one/a hell of a; ... as hell; what in the living hell; go to hell* (see Table 3 below). This process of deletion resulted in a total of 132 instances of *hell*, across 45 files (episodes). As can be seen in Table 3, the vast majority (85) of these occurrences are instances of the wh- *the hell* structure (*what the hell, where the hell, who the hell, why the hell, how the hell*).

Use	Frequency	Notes
wh- the hell	85	<i>what the hell, where the hell, who the hell, why the hell, how the hell</i> , including one instance of <i>what in the hell</i> and one of <i>what in the living hell</i> as well as cases where the <i>what</i> is elided ( <i>the hell is...; the hell?</i> )
other structures including <i>the hell</i>	9	e.g. <i>get the hell out; cut it the hell out; the hell I will; stay the hell out of my business; way the hell out of here; (the) hell with</i>
ADJ as hell	10	including 4 x <i>sure as hell</i>
(oh) hell no/yeah	10	
(ah/oh) hell	8	
a/one hell of a	5	
go to hell	2	
no way in hell	1	
all hell broke loose	1	
hell on your nails	1	

Table 3 *Hell*

## 3. Damn

Concord identified 57 occurrences of the form *damn*, in 33 out of 66 files. None were excluded. As shown in Table 4 on the next page, the vast majority (33) of these occurrences are cases where *damn* is used as adjective or adverb.

Use	Frequency	Notes
<i>damn</i> as adjective or adverb	33	e.g. <i>get a damn job; damn happy; damn right</i>
interjection use of <i>damn</i>	21	e.g. <i>damn, girl!; oh damn; damn!</i>
<i>I don't give a damn</i>	3	

Table 4 *Damn*

#### 4. Ass

Concord identified 81 occurrences of the form *ass*, in 27 out of 66 files. None were excluded. Both literal (references to a taboo body part, i.e. buttocks) and non-literal uses (e.g. *save your ass*) are included in the frequency count. As shown in Table 5, the vast majority (59) of these instances include the structure possessive pronoun + (ADJ) + *ass* (e.g. *my ass; your ass; his ass*), which can often be replaced by a pronoun (*I, you*, etc).

Use	Frequency	Notes
possessive pronoun + (ADJ) + <i>ass</i>	59	excluding interjection use ... <i>my ass!</i> ; includes some literal uses where <i>ass</i> refers to the body part, but most of these are non-literal – however, instances of this structure could be analyzed in more detail for meaning and phraseology
SOMEONE's <i>ass</i>	2	<i>Dean's ass; that guy's ass</i>
a (real) pain in the <i>ass</i>	3	
TAKE it in the <i>ass</i>	3	
KICK/WHOO some <i>ass</i>	3	
my <i>ass</i> (..., my <i>ass</i> !)	2	
make SOMEONE an <i>ass</i> / make an <i>ass</i> out of SOMEONE	2	
a/no piece of <i>ass</i>	2	
<i>ass</i> burger	2	play on <i>Asperger</i>
that <i>ass</i>	2	literal reference to body part
<i>ass</i> ache	1	

Table 5 *Ass*

#### 5. Bitch

Concord identified 49 occurrences of the form *bitch*, in 21 out of 66 files. No instances are literal references to a female dog, and none were excluded. As can be seen in Table 6, most (43) of these occurrences are instances of *bitch* as a noun phrase (e.g. *a bitch; such a bitch; a/the ADJ bitch*).

Use	Frequency	Notes
<i>bitch</i> as head of noun phrase	43	e.g. <i>a bitch, such a bitch, that bitch, the bitch, a/the ADJ bitch</i> , including where others are addressed as <i>bitch</i> .
<i>son of a bitch</i>	4	
<i>bitch</i> as verb	1	
<i>your big fucking bitch bag</i>	1	

Table 6 *Bitch*

#### 6. Shit

Concord identified 119 occurrences of the form *shit*, in 16 out of 66 files. None were excluded. Both literal (references to defecation, e.g. *I need a shit*) and non-literal uses (e.g. *holy shit*) are included in the frequency count. As can be seen in Table 7 on the next page, in most cases (52), *shit* could be paraphrased with 'stuff', 'things', 'that', 'it', etc, or could be dropped altogether. The use of *shit* as interjection is also reasonably frequent (26).

Use	Frequency	Notes
‘stuff’, ‘things’, ‘that’, ‘it’, etc	52	e.g. <i>trying to steal our shit; shit works; wants to talk shit; let's get this shit over with</i> ; sometimes with negative connotation ( <i>believe this shit?</i> ); some instances possibly refer to drugs. A variety of different uses are included here, although not general extenders.
‘nothing’, ‘anything’, etc	8	e.g. <i>you still know shit about...; you ain't shit; you don't know shit; didn't do shit</i>
<i>shit</i> as interjection	26	e.g. <i>ah shit; oh shit; shit</i> , including 5 instances of <i>holy shit</i>
<i>a/their shit</i>	6	for a person, e.g. <i>this man can't be as big a shit as he seems; their little hair-gelled shit</i>
LOOK/SMELL like shit	3	
<i>shit</i> as verb	3	<i>go shit in the ocean; you don't shit where you eat; I shit you not</i>
you piece of shit	3	
you little/stupid shit	2	
<i>... and shit</i>	2	use as general extender
<i>V the shit out of</i>	2	
give (less of) a shit	2	
no shit	2	
a shit ton of	2	
I need a shit	2	
shit yeah	1	
doesn't know how to get his shit to flush	1	
a book, with covers made of shit	1	
covers of pure shit	1	

Table 7 *Shit*

## 7. Fucking

Concord identified 139 occurrences of the form *fucking*, in 16 out of 66 files. None were excluded. Both literal (references to sexual activity) and non-literal uses (e.g. use as intensifier) are included in the frequency count. As can be seen in Table 8, the vast majority (122) can be classified as non-literal, intensifying adjective- or adverb-like uses.

Use	Frequency	Notes
non-literal, intensifying adjective- or adverb-like uses	122	e.g. <i>shut the fucking lid; like you can fucking tell the difference; it is so fucking good to see you</i>
as verb	12	only 7/12 are literal references to sexual activity; 4 x <i>fucking with</i> and 1 x <i>fucking up</i>
infix with proper nouns	5	<i>Jiminy fucking Cricket; Kenny fucking Powers, Doogie fucking Howser; Jesus fucking Christ; West fucking Baltimore</i>

Table 8 *Fucking*

## 8. Fuck

Concord identified 126 occurrences of the form *fuck*, in 15 out of 66 files. None were excluded. Both literal (references to sexual activity) and non-literal uses (e.g. use as interjection) are included in the frequency count. As shown in Table 9 on the next page, many (31) are instances of the *wh-the fuck* structure, while uses as (phrasal) verb (26) or interjection (22) are also relatively common, and other structures that include *the fuck* also occur (18). Note that I have listed instances like *fuck me/you/it*, etc separately rather than including them as verb uses – as apparent in Table 9.

Use	Frequency	Notes
wh- the fuck	31	<i>what the fuck; where the fuck; who the fuck; why the fuck</i> , including cases where <i>what</i> is elided
other structures including <i>the fuck</i>	18	
<i>fuck</i> as interjection	22	e.g. <i>fuck! oh fuck! whoa fuck!</i>
as verb or phrasal verb	26	13 x literal & 1x metaphorical FUCK; 3 x FUCK with; 5 x FUCK SOMEONE/SOMETHING up; 4 various ( <i>I will fuck your ass up; I will fuck your face; fuck up out of here; don't fucking fuck me motherfucker</i> )
fuck me/you	9	
fuck it	4	
fuck + other NP	3	e.g. <i>fuck this guy</i>
fuck off	3	
fuck yeah/no	2	
go fuck himself	2	
ADJ as/than fuck	2	<i>hungry as fuck; faster than fuck</i>
I don't give a fuck	2	
a fuck load of	1	
trying to get my fuck on	1	

Table 9 *Fuck*

## References

Scott, M. 2017. *WordSmith Tools*. Stroud: Lexical Analysis Software.