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Linguistic Impoliteness in American Protest Music of the 1960s and
1970s: Prosody, Performance and Face-Attack

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of MPhil
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Abstract

This thesis examines how linguistic impoliteness is constructed and performed in American protest music of the 1960s and 1970s and the role prosody plays in shaping its force and interpretation. Focusing on three case studies, Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" (1963), Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" (1964) and Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" (1972), the study integrates linguistic, musicological and acoustic approaches to analyse protest songs as multimodal performances rather than as static texts. The analysis draws on Culpeper's framework of impoliteness, supplemented by Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model, to identify how face-threatening acts are directed towards individuals, social groups and institutions. To address the limitations of interpersonal models of face, the thesis develops the concept of protest song as mass-mediated face negotiation, in which face-attack is performed for dispersed and heterogeneous audiences. Building on Goffman's participation framework and Bell's model of audience design, the study reconceptualises the hearer as a layered set of recipients, including targeted addressees, ratified audiences and wider publics. Prosodic analysis, conducted using Praat, demonstrates that pitch, intensity, rhythm and timing function as key resources in intensifying and framing impoliteness, shaping audience alignment and interpretation. The findings show that impoliteness in protest music operates as a strategic and performative resource through which artists challenge authority, construct moral stance and organise audience uptake. The study contributes to impoliteness theory by extending face and facework beyond dyadic interaction to collective and institutional domains, positioning protest music as a form of mass-mediated social action.

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CONTENTS

List of Figures	1
List of Tables	2
Chapter 1. Introduction	3
Chapter 2. The Sociocultural Context of 1960s and 1970s Protest Music	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Post-war social climate and youth identity	10
2.3 The Civil Rights Movement (1960–65)	15
2.4 The Anti-War Movement	21
2.5 The Women’s Movement (late 1960s–early 1970s) ...	27
Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework: Impoliteness and Prosody in Communication	34
3.1 Impoliteness Theory	34
3.2 Introduction to Prosody	43
3.2.1 The Role of Prosody in Impoliteness	44
3.2.2 Pitch and Intonation	45
3.2.3 Rhythm	47
3.3 Musicological Perspectives	48
3.4 Protest music as a communicative and cultural practice ..	55
Chapter 4. Methodology	59
4.1 Introduction	59
4.2 Song Selection	61
4.2.1 Overview of Selection Criteria	61
4.2.2 The Three Songs	62
4.2.3 Artist positioning within protest music	68
4.3 Analytical Framework	70
4.4 Transcription and Annotation	72
4.4.1 Use of NVivo for Thematic Coding	73
4.4.2 Use of Praat for Prosodic Analysis	78
4.4.3 Presentation of Multimodal Data	84
4.5 Ethical Considerations	85
4.5.1 Copyright and Fair Use	86
4.5.2 Representation of Sensitive Content	86
4.5.3 Researcher Positionality	87
4.6 Chapter Summary	88

Chapter 5. Linguistic Impoliteness in Three Protest Songs: Case Studies	90
5.1 Analysis of Bob Dylan's "Masters of War"	90
5.1.1 Musical Setting	91
5.1.2 Lyrical Analysis	92
5.1.3 Praat Analysis of Lines 39-40	98
5.1.4 Praat Analysis of Lines 57-58	101
5.2 Impoliteness and Prosody in Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam"	105
5.2.1 Direct Condemnation and Collective Accusation: "Mississippi Goddam!" and "Everybody knows about Mississippi, Goddam!"	106
5.2.2 Sarcasm, Ridicule and Collective Face-attack: "Too slow"	109
5.2.3 Praat Analysis of Line 39	112
5.2.4 Praat Analysis of Lines 32-33	115
5.3 Prosody and impoliteness in Carly Simon's "You're So Vain"	119
5.3.1 Impolite openings	120
5.3.2 Positive Impoliteness: Identity-Based Ridicule and Distancing	122
5.3.3 Praat Analysis	125
5.3.4 Analysis of Line 5	128
5.3.5 Conclusion	131
 Chapter 6. Conclusion	 134
Bibliography	142
Appendix	149

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 NAACP march in Washington, D.C., 1963 (Source: OpenLearn, The Open University)	15
Figure 2.2 Anti-war protest, 1971 (1971 Leonard Freed / Magnum Photos)..	21
Figure 2.3 Women's liberation march, Washington, D.C., August 26, 1970 (Warren K. Leffler / Wikimedia Commons, courtesy of the Library of Congress).....	27
Figure 4.1 NVivo codebook showing categories used to identify impoliteness strategies and rapport management	75
Figure 4.2 NVivo coded transcript of Carly Simon's "You're So Vain", showing instances of linguistic impoliteness marked within the lyrics	76
Figure 4.3 NVivo coding stripes visualisation for "You're So Vain", illustrating overlaps between impoliteness strategies and rapport management categories	77
Figure 4.4 Praat Object Window	79
Figure 4.5 Praat Editor displaying waveform, spectrogram, pitch contour (blue) and intensity contour (green) for an excerpt of "Masters of War"	80
Figure 4.6 Praat Objects window showing extracted Pitch and Intensity objects.....	82
Figure 4.7 Praat Editor window showing boundary placement within a TextGrid	83
Figure 5.1 Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for "You ain't worth the blood that runs in your veins" from "Masters of War"	99
Figure 5.2 Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for lines 57-58 from "Masters of War"	102
Figure 5.3 Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for line 40 from "Mississippi Goddam"	113
Figure 5.4 Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for lines 32-33 of "Mississippi Goddam"	116
Figure 5.5 Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for a line from "You're So Vain"	126
Figure 5.6 Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for a line from "You're So Vain"	129

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Politeness and Impoliteness Superstrategies (adapted from Brown and Levinson 1987; Culpeper 1996: 355-358)	38
Table 3.2 Rapport Management Categories (adapted from Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2007)	40
Table 4.1 Analytical frameworks and operational labels used for identifying linguistic impoliteness in the study	71

Chapter 1. Introduction

American protest music of the 1960s and 1970s occupies a distinctive position within the cultural and political history of the twentieth century. Emerging alongside civil rights activism, anti-war mobilisation and second-wave feminism, protest songs functioned not only as expressions of dissent but as communicative interventions addressed to broad and heterogeneous audiences. Artists such as Bob Dylan, Nina Simone and Carly Simon used song to confront institutions, social groups and dominant ideologies, often employing language that was accusatory, confrontational or deliberately abrasive. While such songs have been widely discussed in relation to their political themes and historical significance, less sustained attention has been paid to how language is constructed and performed within recorded song and in particular to how linguistic impoliteness is realised and to the role prosody plays in shaping its force and interpretation.

This study examines how linguistic impoliteness was constructed and performed in American protest music of the 1960s and 1970s and what role prosody played in this process. It argues that protest songs from this period can be productively analysed as forms of verbal and prosodic resistance, in which confrontational language and marked vocal delivery work together to perform face-threatening acts at scale. Rather than treating impolite lyrics as isolated textual features, this study approaches protest songs as recorded performances in which meaning emerges through the interaction of words, voice, musical structure and recording practices. In doing so, it addresses a limitation of approaches that prioritise

lyrics as printed text and instead foregrounds how impoliteness is realised, intensified and interpreted through performance.

Linguistic impoliteness has traditionally been theorised within interpersonal interaction, where speakers and hearers are co-present and where face-threatening acts are negotiated in real time. Frameworks developed by Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1987), Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011), Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2005, 2007) and Bousfield (2008) have provided robust tools for analysing how face is attacked, defended or damaged through language. However, protest songs challenge the assumptions underlying much of this work. Recorded songs address audiences that are dispersed, heterogeneous and often temporally distant from the moment of production. The targets of impoliteness may include institutions, governments, social classes or collective identities rather than identifiable interlocutors. This raises a central question that this thesis engages with throughout: who is the *hearer* when a song insults an institution, a social group or a dominant ideology?

Furthermore, this study posits that recorded protest music operates as a form of mass-mediated face negotiation, in which face-threats are directed not at a single interlocutor but at collective and institutional targets. The term is used here in a different sense from Ting-Toomey's (1988, 2005) Face-Negotiation theory, which is concerned with face management in cross-cultural interpersonal conflict. In the present study, mass-mediated face negotiation refers instead to the public negotiation of legitimacy, moral standing and social identity through recorded performance and audience uptake. In this context, impoliteness functions not simply as interpersonal offence but as a strategic means of exposure, accusation and resistance. Face, while traditionally conceptualised as interpersonal, is shown here

to operate at collective and societal levels, with protest songs staging challenges to social identity face, quality face and sociality rights on a mass scale (see section 3.1 on impoliteness theory). By extending impoliteness theory into the domain of recorded performance, this thesis contributes to ongoing debates about the scope of face, the nature of offence and the role of language in public and political discourse.

Central to this argument is the role of prosody. Protest songs do not rely on words alone to communicate dissent. Pitch, loudness, rhythm, timing and voice quality shape how lyrics are perceived, whether an utterance is heard as ironic, mocking, contemptuous or final. Prosodic features are examined in this study as resources that can intensify face-threats and convert apparently neutral language into confrontational address. While prosody has been extensively studied in spoken interaction, its role in the performance of linguistic impoliteness in song remains under-examined. This thesis addresses that gap by treating prosody as an analytical resource rather than a stylistic embellishment.

By combining linguistic impoliteness theory with prosodic analysis and perspectives from popular music studies, this thesis develops an integrated approach to analysing protest songs as performed acts of resistance. It demonstrates that impoliteness in protest music is not only a matter of lexical aggression or taboo language but is realised through the coordination of verbal content and vocal delivery within specific musical and recording conventions. This approach allows for close analysis of how protest songs achieve their confrontational force and how listeners are positioned as witnesses, targets or participants in acts of symbolic aggression.

The empirical focus of the study is a qualitative analysis of three case studies: Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" (1963), Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" (1964) and Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" (1972). These songs were selected to represent three key sociocultural contexts of the period respectively: anti-war protest, civil rights activism and second-wave feminism, and are analysed in this thematic order throughout the thesis. Together, they illustrate a range of impoliteness strategies, which are examined in detail in Chapter 5, from bald on record condemnation and moral exclusion to sarcasm, mock politeness and ridicule. They also exhibit contrasting performance styles, allowing for comparison across different modes of prosodic delivery and musical setting.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative, interpretative approach. Linguistic impoliteness is analysed using Culpeper's framework, supplemented by Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model (2002, 2005, 2007) to account for attacks on quality face, social identity face and sociality rights. Prosodic analysis is conducted using Praat software to examine pitch contours, intensity patterns and temporal organisation in selected lyrical passages. NVivo is used to support systematic coding of impoliteness strategies across the three case studies. Visual representations of pitch and intensity are used not as standalone evidence but as support for interpretive claims about how vocal delivery shapes pragmatic meaning.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 situates protest music within the sociocultural context of the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on civil rights activism, anti-war mobilisation and second-wave feminism. It establishes the historical conditions under which confrontational language and heightened emotional expression became legitimate forms of public address. Chapter 3 develops the theoretical framework, outlining key approaches to linguistic impoliteness, face and

rapport management, and addressing how these frameworks conceptualise the hearer, before introducing prosody as a central resource for meaning-making in both speech and song. It also engages with popular music studies to situate lyrics within the broader contexts of performance and recording, rather than analysing them solely as written texts.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodological framework, explaining the selection of the three songs, the analytical procedures and the use of NVivo and Praat. It details how linguistic and prosodic data were prepared, annotated and analysed and addresses issues of reflexivity and ethical responsibility. Chapter 5 presents the core analysis, examining each song in turn. For each case study, the chapter analyses how impoliteness is constructed at the textual level before demonstrating how prosodic delivery intensifies, personalises or frames these face-threats in performance.

The conclusion returns to the broader theoretical implications of the study. It reflects on how protest music can be understood as mass-mediated face negotiation and considers what this means for theories of impoliteness, prosody and public discourse. It also outlines directions for future research, including the application of this framework to contemporary music and other forms of mediated political communication.

By foregrounding the interaction of language, voice and performance, this thesis shows that protest music of the 1960s and 1970s functioned as a powerful site of verbal and prosodic resistance. Linguistic impoliteness was not incidental to these songs but central to their political and rhetorical force, enabling artists to challenge

authority, expose injustice and reconfigure the boundaries of acceptable public speech.

Chapter 2. The Sociocultural Context of 1960s and 1970s Protest Music

2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the sociocultural conditions that made linguistic and musical dissent both intelligible and consequential in 1960s and 1970s protest music. It argues that post-war social movements reshaped the boundaries of acceptable public expression by legitimising confrontational language, heightened emotional display and performative challenge as tools of political engagement. Within this climate, protest music emerged as a key site in which authority could be addressed, criticised and symbolically attacked.

Civil rights activism, anti-war mobilisation and second-wave feminism each challenged dominant power structures not only through policy demands and collective action, but through shifts in tone, address and affect. These movements foregrounded moral urgency, accusation and refusal, expanding the communicative resources available to artists working within popular music. As a result, songs such as “Masters of War”, “Mississippi Goddam” and “You’re So Vain” could employ overtly impolite language and forceful delivery in ways that resonated with contemporary audiences rather than appearing gratuitous or merely transgressive.

By situating protest music within this wider historical frame, the chapter demonstrates how language, performance and emotion became central to political communication during this period. The cultural power of protest music in this period can also be understood through Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony. In Gramsci’s account, dominant groups such as state institutions, political elites and dominant media maintain authority not only through coercion but through the production of consent, shaping what appears normal, reasonable and inevitable

within everyday cultural life. He describes hegemony as a balance of “force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent” (Gramsci, 1971: 80).

From this perspective, popular music is not only a vehicle for expressing dissent but a site where dominant norms can be disrupted. Protest songs that use accusation, confrontation and heightened affect can therefore be read as counter-hegemonic interventions, challenging the communicative and emotional conventions through which social inequality and state power are routinely normalised. Taken together, the movements examined in this chapter provide the sociocultural conditions for what Hall later describes as protest music’s resistance to conventional politeness norms, a resistance grounded not in stylistic excess but in historically legitimised challenges to authority (Hall 2012: 99). Sections 2.2 to 2.5 examine the post-war youth context, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement and second-wave feminism in turn, showing how each contributed to the conditions under which linguistic impoliteness could function as a meaningful form of public critique. This contextual groundwork informs the analyses presented in Chapter 5.

2.2 Post-war social climate and youth identity

This section examines how post-war youth culture reshaped norms of public expression, producing a communicative position from which confrontational, accusatory and impolite address in protest music could emerge as socially intelligible rather than deviant. In particular, the early work of Bob Dylan reflects the generational tensions, scepticism towards authority and claims to authenticity that developed among young Americans in the 1950s and early 1960s (Scott, 2016: 1). Understanding how Dylan’s songs could adopt accusatory, confrontational and

morally charged forms of address requires attention to the formation of youth identity, the expansion of youth-oriented media and the cultural anxieties surrounding generational autonomy in the post-war period. This section thus establishes the social conditions that made the confrontational and morally accusatory address found in Bob Dylan's early protest songs intelligible as legitimate public speech rather than as deviant or expressive. Crucially, these conditions also redefined the limits of acceptable public address, enabling young artists to challenge institutional authority through forms of linguistic impoliteness that would previously have been dismissed as disrespectful, unruly or socially inappropriate.

Post-war youth culture marked a structural shift in who could speak publicly, how authority could be addressed and what kinds of linguistic challenge could be recognised as legitimate. In her study of post-war youth culture in the United States, Scott (2016: 9-10) shows that the emergence of the teenager as a distinct category, combined with mass media, advertising and expanded economic autonomy, produced a visible youth culture associated with consumption, rebellion and musical expression. Rock and roll became a key symbol of this shift, provoking adult anxieties while providing young people with a language of identity and resistance. These developments created the conditions in which confrontational and norm-challenging musical expression could become both legible and commercially viable. Music was particularly important in this process because it allowed youthful scepticism towards authority to be articulated indirectly yet forcefully, through tone, address and persona, often in ways that bordered on or embraced overt impoliteness. These challenges to authority also extended to linguistic norms, where forms of expression considered vulgar, profane or blasphemous remained socially stigmatised in mid-twentieth-century Anglo-American contexts, particularly within

religious and conservative communities. The deliberate use of such language in protest music therefore functioned not only as stylistic expression but as a direct challenge to prevailing standards of propriety and moral respectability.

Early sociological accounts support this reading of protest music as purposeful public communication. Denisoff (1973: x-xvi) characterises protest songs as instruments of persuasion and mobilisation, often articulated through accusatory and morally charged address, functioning as deliberate political interventions rather than incidental cultural by-products. Together, these accounts show that by the early 1960s, protest songs were already understood as communicative acts addressed to publics, helping to normalise direct and accusatory musical address within youth-oriented political culture.

The tension between enforced conformity and emerging youth autonomy in 1950s America produced the moral and affective conditions that enabled confrontational modes of public address. Post-war ideals of domestic stability and social cohesion were reinforced through media and education, while developmental theories framed adolescence as a distinct stage of identity formation (Scott, 2016: 11-12). These developments coincided with demographic expansion, producing a large, media-saturated cohort with a shared generational identity, even as lived experiences remained divided along racial, class and gendered lines (Scott, 2016: 12). At the same time, televised racial violence and civil-rights struggles exposed contradictions between national rhetoric and lived inequality, intensifying perceptions of hypocrisy and authority (Scott, 2016: 13-14). Collectively, these conditions produced a generation attuned to exclusion and contradiction, in which direct accusation, refusal and irony became viable strategies for challenging authority.

These cultural shifts translated into political scepticism and organised challenge by the early 1960s. Heale (2001: 132) shows that dominant constructions of American identity as white, suburban and middle-class were increasingly experienced as exclusionary, generating scepticism towards political authority and inherited norms of public discourse. This scepticism was reflected in student activism, including the formation of Students for a Democratic Society and demands for participatory democracy (Heale, 2001: 133-136). At the same time, demographic expansion and the growth of higher education created dense youth communities in which oppositional ideas could circulate and take organised form.

Within this environment, popular music became a key medium for generational expression. By the mid-1960s, artists such as Bob Dylan drew on a language of challenge and defiance that had become socially recognisable as legitimate dissent (Heale, 2001: 139-141). In musical contexts, this extended to forms of linguistic impoliteness, including direct accusation, moral condemnation and confrontational address to institutional targets, which functioned as intelligible public critique rather than as social deviance.

As Rodnitsky argues, protest music must be understood as historically contingent, with its expressive strategies shaped by changing political climates and norms of legitimacy (in Peddie 2006: 17-29). Read in this light, the confrontational tone of early 1960s protest songs does not represent a rupture from musical convention, but a recalibration of what counted as acceptable public address within youth-driven political culture. While the present study focuses on American protest music of the 1960s and 1970s, protest song has a much longer history extending across genres, regions and historical periods. Recent scholarship has emphasised the enduring role of song as a form of political communication and dissent, tracing

traditions of protest music from the early modern period to the present day (Street et al. 2025). This framing helps situate Dylan's early protest songs, as the earliest of the three songs analysed, as intelligible interventions within a broader communicative shift rather than as stylistic anomalies. These developments help explain why confrontational and accusatory address in the protest music of the early 1960s did not register as a violation of politeness norms, but as an intelligible expression of generational dissent. Read in this context, direct accusation and moral confrontation emerged as recognised forms of public critique rather than communicative deviance, anticipating what Hall later identifies as a broader cultural rejection of deference and authority in protest music of the 1960s and 70s (Hall 2012: 99).

The formation of youth identity outlined here was inseparable from civil-rights activism. The following section examines how racial politics and the civil-rights movement shaped the moral horizon and expressive tone of 1960s protest music, providing foundational context for all of the songs analysed in this thesis.



Figure 2.1: NAACP march in Washington D.C, 1963

(Source: OpenLearn, The Open University)

2.3 The Civil Rights Movement (1960-65)

This section focuses on the civil rights movement because it directly shaped the linguistic and affective resources mobilised in the protest songs analysed in Chapter 5. In particular, Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam", which represents the civil rights case study in this thesis, responds explicitly to the assassination of Medgar Evers, a civil rights activist and field secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), transforming a specific act of racial violence into a mass-mediated musical indictment. Understanding this transformation requires attention to the tactics, risks and moral rhetoric of civil rights activism

between 1960 and 1965. Figure 2.1 illustrates the public visibility and collective mobilisation that characterised civil rights activism during this period, highlighting the forms of organised protest that helped transform racial injustice into a matter of national political debate.

Between 1960 and 1965, civil rights activism reconfigured norms of public address by legitimising moral accusation, confrontation and refusal as collective political strategies rather than breaches of civility. Sit-ins, Freedom Rides and voter registration campaigns exposed the everyday realities of segregation and generated widespread media attention, forcing state and federal authorities into visible responses (Newman 2004: 70-81). These actions combined nonviolent disruption with strategic use of publicity, transforming localised protest into nationally recognised moral crises. This pattern of protest, media visibility and political pressure established a communicative environment in which direct accusation and moral condemnation became intelligible and legitimate forms of public address. Rather than being treated as excessive or inappropriate, confrontational language functioned as an ethical response to systemic injustice, shaping the rhetorical conditions within which protest music operated.

Music and performance functioned as central resources for collective identity formation and moral framing within civil rights activism, rather than as secondary expressions of political struggle. As Eyerman and Jamison (1998: 1, 160) argue, such moments illustrate this role. For the present study, the significance of these campaigns lies, not in their organisational detail, but in the way moral condemnation, spectacle and mediated visibility became central to political communication. This communicative shift is central to understanding how “Mississippi Goddam” functions in this thesis as a mass-mediated act of moral accusation rather than as a breach of

acceptable political speech. In this respect, civil rights activism supplied the moral and communicative licence for protest music's resistance to conventional politeness norms, demonstrating that confrontation and accusation could function as ethical necessity rather than communicative failure. As Reagon argues, freedom songs provided a collective framework through which direct accusation, emotional intensity and public moral witness became legitimate political resources, while Feldstein's discussion of Simone highlights how such forms of musical protest could transform experiences of racial injustice into forceful public critique (Reagon 1987: 105-113; Feldstein 2005: 1368). This historical and musical context also helps explain why the song's overt linguistic impoliteness could be both intelligible and politically effective.

Music both mirrored and amplified this communicative shift; while earlier freedom songs emphasised endurance, unity and collective affirmation, the intensification of repression and national media exposure in the early 1960s created conditions in which more explicit moral condemnation could circulate musically. Songs increasingly addressed unnamed but recognisable agents of power, such as state authorities, law enforcement and segregationist institutions, articulated anger and impatience and rejected deferential modes of appeal. This development did not replace participatory freedom singing within movement spaces but extended civil rights music into mass-mediated public discourse, where accusation, irony and emotional intensity could function as legitimate political address rather than as rhetorical excess. Within this broader tradition of freedom-song performance, "Mississippi Goddam" represents a shift from collective affirmation towards direct public indictment. What distinguishes Simone's song is not its confrontational tone, but its translation of a collectively sanctioned musical practice into a commercially

recorded form that intensified its reach while exposing it to institutional censorship (Reagon 1987: 105-113; Feldstein 2005: 1368).

By the early 1960s, civil rights music occupied multiple registers. At one end were participatory freedom songs designed for collective performance within movement spaces, sustaining morale, discipline and solidarity. At the other were professionally recorded songs that addressed broader publics through concerts, radio and commercial recordings. Nina Simone's civil rights repertoire belongs decisively to this latter category. Unlike movement anthems intended for communal singing, her songs were crafted as confrontational performances that addressed a mass audience directly, translating collective grievances into individual acts of moral indictment. In this respect, Simone's civil rights songs represent not the origin of protest music within the movement, but a late and intensified development that extended its expressive boundaries.

The fragility of these gains was underscored by acts of racial violence that intensified the moral urgency and confrontational tone of civil rights protest. NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers, long active in voter registration and in the 1960 Jackson Easter boycott demanding respectful treatment and Black clerks in white-owned stores, was assassinated outside his home on 12 June 1963 (Newman 2004: 89-90). His murder came only hours after President Kennedy's televised call for civil-rights legislation and symbolised the lethal resistance that ordinary organisers faced. Evers's death followed three months later by the Birmingham church bombing, galvanised national outrage and deepened the movement's moral tone (Newman 2004: 90). In the case of Nina Simone, the assassination of Medgar Evers forms a direct historical reference point for "Mississippi Goddam" (1964), a song examined in detail in Chapter 5. The song reflects the moral urgency and public confrontational

style developed within civil rights activism, translating these into a recorded performance that addresses a mass audience. Contemporary responses also show that this confrontational address carried institutional costs, with the song reported as having been banned by radio stations in the South and from national television due to its “bold lyrics and profane title” (Feldstein 2005: 1368). Rabaka’s account of Black radical traditions helps contextualise Simone’s anger and impatience as politically meaningful rather than excessive, situating her confrontational address within a longer expressive history that authorised moral outrage as a mode of critique (2016: 72).

By the early 1960s, civil rights activism had forced federal authority into a reactive position, exposing the moral limits of institutional civility and procedural delay. Newman documents a recurring pattern: direct action provoked violent response and national exposure, which eroded government credibility and obliged limited reform (2004: 90-93). This sequence shaped the conditions under which musical protest could emerge as intelligible public critique. Newman also shows that SNCC’s grassroots vernacular, CORE’s direct-action pragmatism, SCLC’s sermonic moral leadership and the NAACP’s legal infrastructure often clashed yet proved complementary (2004: 71-79, 86-90). This plurality helps explain why there was no single “civil rights voice” in the period’s cultural texts, a point crucial for understanding variation in tone, address and linguistic impoliteness across the protest songs analysed in this thesis.

While Newman foregrounds organisational dynamics, Hall traces how civil rights ethical vocabularies travelled unevenly into anti-war activism, revealing both continuity and fracture (2005: 1-2, 9). Read together, these accounts show that civil rights protest did not simply produce a unified expressive style but generated

multiple communicative repertoires that addressed different publics. This diversity helps explain why protest songs mobilised distinct forms of linguistic impoliteness rather than speaking from a single oppositional position. These contexts are traced further in Chapter 5, where the detailed song analysis is presented.

Finally, the prominence of youth during this period helps explain the tone and energy of its protest movements. Scott demonstrates how post-war demographics, schooling, mass media and consumer culture produced a visible, self-aware youth cohort with more autonomy, access to cars and leisure away from adult supervision and a growing association, celebrated and feared, with delinquency and rebellion. Rock and roll functioned as a youth signifier and a site of adult anxiety; by 1960 youth “seemed to permeate all aspects of American life,” with longer time in education creating a “psychosocial limbo” between adolescence and adulthood (Scott 2016: 9-17). This context nourished SNCC’s student leadership, normalised youth-led direct action and prefigured the sonic and rhetorical strategies of the protest songs analysed in this thesis (see chapter 5). “Mississippi Goddam” thus marks a moment within civil rights music at which collective affirmation was supplemented by explicit, mass-mediated moral confrontation, making overt accusation and linguistic impoliteness intelligible as politically legitimate forms of address rather than violations of acceptable public speech.

To summarise, 1960-65 forged a civil rights strategy that combined nonviolent disruption with moral appeal, generated crises that compelled federal action and diversified the movement’s organisational voice. As Hall (2005, 2012) indicates, these same networks and ethical vocabularies later shaped debates on Vietnam, but without producing a seamless coalition. For the current analysis, that lack of unity is significant, as it helps explain why protest songs address different audiences and

mobilise distinct forms of linguistic impoliteness rather than speaking from a single oppositional position. These contexts are traced further in Chapter 5, where the detailed song analysis is presented.

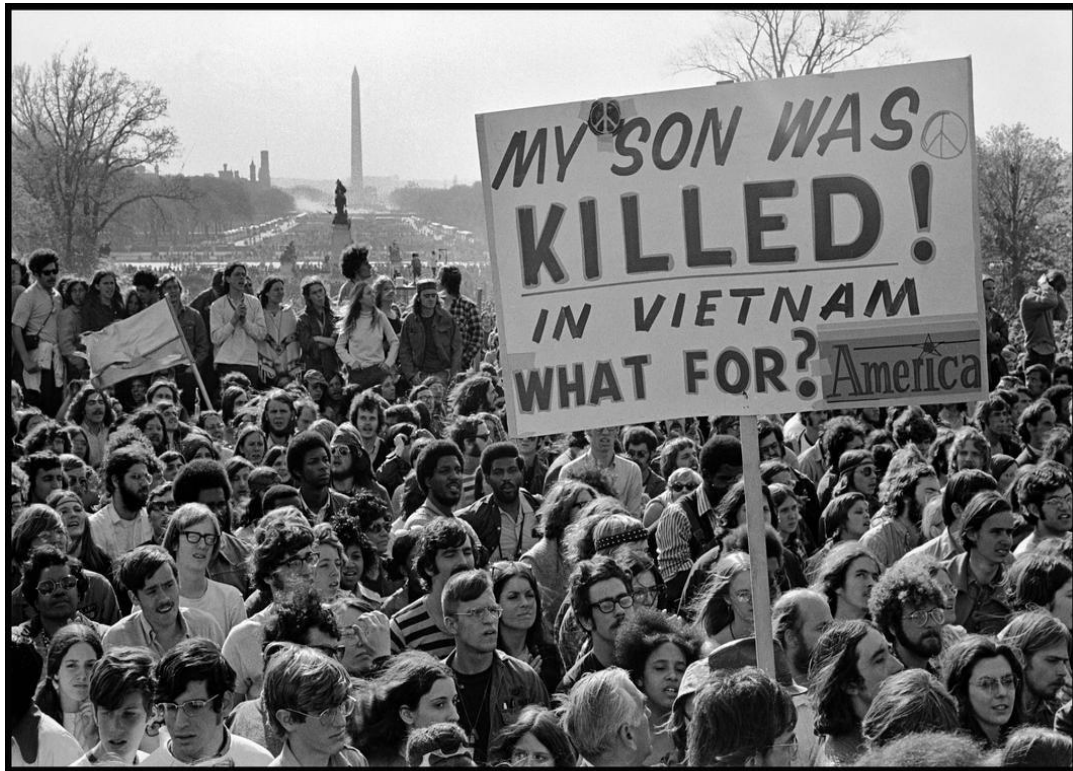


Figure 2.2: Anti-war protest, 1971

(1971 Leonard Freed / Magnum Photos)

2.4 The Anti-War Movement

The resurgence of the American peace movement in the early 1960s reshaped the moral and communicative terms through which state violence could be publicly challenged. This momentum owed much to a generation raised in the aftermath of two world wars and a rapidly militarising peace. Harrison posits that the younger generation of the 1950s and early 1960s lived with a sense that their elders had “made a mess of the world,” inheriting affluence and security shadowed by the bomb, the Holocaust and the Cold War (Harrison 2011: 19-20). The United States’

self-presentation as moral leader jarred with a world still scarred by Hiroshima and many young Americans began to read state power through the moral vocabulary of complicity and responsibility that emerged from Nuremberg. In Harrison's view, the student radicalism of the early 1960s was not a sudden revolt but "an outgrowth of the two world wars taken as a collective experience" (Harrison 2011: 19). Wartime expansion of industry and science, the "permanent war economy" that followed and the Cold War's ideological rigidity produced both prosperity and unease (Harrison 2011: 24). Those contradictions bred the political generation that would form the New Left. This is important because it helps explain why anti-war protest music of the early 1960s increasingly adopted direct, accusatory and impolite forms of address, treating institutions and power holders as legitimate targets of public verbal attack. This generational moral crisis did not remain abstract but was channelled into organised forms of dissent through existing pacifist networks and protest repertoires. For the present study, this generational context explains why songs such as Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" could deploy overt moral accusation and linguistic impoliteness without being framed solely as personal invective or rhetorical excess. Figure 2.2 illustrates the scale and visibility of anti-war mobilisation during this period, highlighting how public protest became an important means through which military policy and state authority were subjected to collective moral scrutiny.

Early peace activism established communicative norms in which disciplined confrontation, moral argument and media-conscious spectacle became legitimate forms of public dissent. Organisations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the American Friends Service Committee and the War Resisters League sustained traditions of non-violent direct action, while protests against nuclear testing and civil-

defence drills developed repertoires of public refusal and symbolic confrontation (Hall 2012: 12-16).

These practices contributed to a communicative environment in which state power could be addressed through direct moral accusation. Anti-war mobilisation drew on a shared sense of moral crisis, in which obedience to state authority was increasingly framed as complicity, and protest as an ethical response (Harrison 2011: 23). Within this context, oppositional language and confrontational address became intelligible as legitimate forms of public discourse rather than as rhetorical excess.

Music functioned as a key medium for articulating this stance. Anti-war protest songs translated abstract geopolitical violence into personalised moral accountability, addressing institutional power through direct and often impolite forms of critique (Denisoff 1973: x-xvi; Hall 2012: 105-129). In this context, Bob Dylan's "Masters of War", examined in Chapter 5, exemplifies how linguistic impoliteness and forceful vocal delivery combine to construct an authority-challenging mode of address.

Universities provided a key institutional setting in which these communicative norms were consolidated and disseminated. Student organisations and campus-based activism enabled oppositional language and moral accusation to be rehearsed, normalised and circulated to wider publics, reinforcing the legitimacy of direct and confrontational forms of address to state power.

Events overseas quickly tested these commitments. Although the Vietnam War had not yet escalated, American involvement was becoming visible through military advisers and aid to Saigon. Harrison shows how the older generation invoked Munich and appeasement to justify containment, while younger observers,

attuned to the rhetoric of anti-colonial self-determination, saw hypocrisy in defending freedom by denying it abroad (Harrison 2011: 22, 25-26).

By the mid-1960s, anti-war mobilisation expanded rapidly as existing protest networks redirected their focus toward opposition to US involvement in Vietnam. Repertoires developed through civil rights and anti-nuclear activism, including public demonstrations and symbolic acts of resistance, were quickly adapted to the anti-war context (Hall 2012: 27-28). This transition reinforced communicative norms of moral accusation, public confrontation and media-conscious dissent, further legitimising direct and uncompromising forms of public address to state power.

The character of early anti-war protest reflected this inheritance. Hall observes that in 1964-65 most actions still emphasised debate, education and public persuasion rather than confrontation (Hall 2012: 23-24). SANE and allied groups framed opposition in terms of constitutional responsibility, arguing that undeclared war and executive secrecy violated democratic principle.

Student activists, however, introduced a sharper idiom of distrust shaped by the generational critique Harrison describes. For them, the “credibility gap” between government statements and battlefield realities was symptomatic of a deeper corruption of public life. This tension produced a split in communicative style, between moderate appeals to civic responsibility and emerging forms of moral accusation that treated institutional power as a legitimate target of public condemnation. Folk musicians such as Pete Seeger and the young Bob Dylan translated that scepticism into song. “Masters of War” (1963) epitomised the tone of accusation already circulating in student and pacifist circles, railing against what Harrison calls “big science at the service of big government” and its fusion of

technology, bureaucracy and moral blindness (Harrison 2011: 23). In doing so, the song did not invent a confrontational stance but rendered it audibly explicit and publicly intelligible.

By the mid-1960s, the anti-war movement had entered national consciousness, with coordinated protests generating national media visibility and extending dissent beyond activist subcultures (Hall 2012: 24). In this context, public questioning of militarism resonated not only as a policy dispute but as a broader challenge to the culture of obedience, further legitimising direct and morally uncompromising forms of public address.

Hall's synthesis makes clear that by 1965 the anti-war coalition possessed both reach and fragility. Its inclusive structure, encompassing pacifist elders, liberal professionals, clergy, students and mothers, allowed rapid expansion but contained latent tensions over ideology and tactics (Hall 2012: 24-25). The moral authority of non-violence and civil disobedience still prevailed, yet disagreements over draft resistance and confrontation foreshadowed later splits. What remained constant was the conviction, shared by Harrison's and Hall's analysis, that citizens had a duty to expose the moral contradictions of power. In this respect, early 1960s peace activism sustained the ethical tone established by the civil-rights movement while extending its critique to the international sphere, reinforcing the legitimacy of direct, morally charged and accusatory forms of public address.

Women played an essential role in shaping the tone and legitimacy of early peace activism. Hall highlights Women Strike for Peace (WSP), founded in 1961, whose national "strike day" against nuclear testing and subsequent protests at the White House and United Nations demonstrated organisational skill and broad appeal

(Hall 2012: 17). The group's maternalist rhetoric, framed around protecting children from nuclear fallout, made dissent publicly palatable to mainstream audiences while simultaneously expanding the boundaries of acceptable political speech. Yet WSP members quickly encountered the same institutional exclusions that would later animate feminism. Harrison notes that women's entry into wartime industries and civic life "set the stage for their revolution" (Harrison 2011: 20). The bridge between peace and women's activism was therefore structural as well as ideological: anti-nuclear and early anti-war organising cultivated leadership, practical political skills and heightened awareness of gendered inequality within progressive movements themselves.

By the mid-1960s, the anti-war movement had evolved from a moral minority into a visible national coalition. It carried forward the pacifist ethos of earlier decades, absorbed the demographic energy of youth culture and drew moral vocabulary from both civil-rights activism and post-war disillusionment. Hall's chronology and Harrison's generational analysis converge on a single point: by 1965, dissent had become a legitimate form of citizenship. The subsequent escalation of the Vietnam War would test that legitimacy, but the organisational, moral and generational groundwork had already been laid. Across youth, civil rights and anti-war activism, resistance to authority was repeatedly enacted through the suspension of deference, restraint and procedural politeness, consolidating the cultural conditions under which protest music's confrontational tone could be heard as legitimate rather than transgressive, as Hall argues in his characterisation of protest music in the 1960s and 70s (Hall 2012: 99). As the next section shows, women activists who developed political credibility within these peace networks would adapt their experience to

challenge gender hierarchies directly, linking opposition to war with demands for equality at home.



Figure 2.3: Women's liberation march, Washington, D.C., August 26, 1970.

(Warren K. Leffler / Wikimedia Commons. Courtesy of the Library of Congress)

2.5 The Women's Movement (late 1960s-early 1970s)

Women's activism in the late 1960s emerged from the same organisational terrain that sustained civil-rights and peace work, before developing a distinctive agenda around gendered power and everyday life, which informs the feminist case study represented by Carly Simon's "You're So Vain". This continuity, which links the women's movement to the communicative norms established in the previous sections, is visible in the peace networks outlined earlier: Women Strike for Peace had already demonstrated that women could organise nationally against nuclear testing and later against the Vietnam War, combining moral language with disciplined protest and media fluency (Hall 2012: 16-17; Hall 2005: 9-10). By 1967-68 a

specifically feminist vocabulary began to crystallise across city-based groups and “women’s liberation” became a recognised label for a movement that treated structural inequality and personal experience as inseparable (Evans 2015: 138-140). This shift is significant for the present study because it legitimised forms of public speech that foregrounded anger, irony and direct address, features that shape the linguistic tone of the protest songs analysed later. For the purposes of this study, this legitimisation is crucial because it marks a historical moment in which overtly confrontational and face-threatening address by women could function as political critique rather than communicative deviance. Figure 2.3 illustrates the public visibility and collective mobilisation of the women’s liberation movement, demonstrating how feminist activism increasingly occupied public space and challenged established assumptions about gender, authority and political participation.

This shift in the norms of public address was not confined to marginal or subcultural spaces. Carly Simon’s “You’re So Vain” (1972), the lead single from her third album *No Secrets*, achieved substantial mainstream visibility in the United States: Chart data summarised by the Eisenhower Public Library indicates that *No Secrets* reached number one on the Billboard album chart and that “You’re So Vain” achieved major commercial success, supporting the claim that face-threatening address could circulate widely in mainstream popular music markets in the early 1970s (Eisenhower Public Library 2023). Comparable indicators of popularity for the other case studies are discussed in Chapter 5. This commercial reach indicates that an acerbic, ironic and face-threatening mode of direct address could circulate widely within Anglophone popular music in the early 1970s, providing an important cultural context for the feminist protest song examined in Chapter 5. This example is used here not as an aesthetic aside, but to demonstrate that ironic, accusatory and

potentially impolite address had become intelligible and commercially viable within mainstream popular music by the early 1970s, a condition necessary for the reception of feminist protest songs analysed later.

Second-wave feminism, referring to the feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s concerned with gender inequality in areas such as work, sexuality and everyday life, and associated with activists and thinkers such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Kate Millett, was enabled by organisational conditions that transformed diffuse grievance into sustained collective mobilisation. Freeman's early sociological account remains a foundational explanation of how organisational conditions enabled second-wave feminism to crystallise from existing movements. She argues that movements depend on pre-existing communications networks, that these networks must be adaptable to new political claims and that a precipitating crisis or organising cadre converts diffuse discontent into sustained mobilisation (Freeman 1973: 794-806). In the older branch of second-wave feminism, these conditions were met through the President Kennedy Commission on the Status of Women, its state-level successors and contacts within the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The refusal of the EEOC to enforce Title VII's sex provision acted as a catalyst, leading to the founding of the National Organization for Women in 1966 and the rapid development of a national reform-oriented structure (Freeman 1973: 797-799).

Later scholarship has retained this organisational emphasis while situating it within a broader cultural and political context. Evans's analysis shows how feminist organising also developed through informal networks within the New Left, the underground press and free universities, where women adapted skills learned in mixed-gender movements to address gendered exclusion directly (Evans 2015: 138-

140). Rather than rejecting earlier radical politics, women's liberation extended them by insisting that structural inequality operated at the level of everyday experience, a shift captured in the slogan "the personal is political" (Evans 2015: 138-140). Read together, Freeman and Evans show how feminist mobilisation combined inherited organisational infrastructures with new forms of consciousness-raising and decentralised activism. However, they do so from different analytical priorities. Freeman's account foregrounds the structural conditions that make mobilisation possible, while Evans is more attentive to how those conditions reshape political subjectivity, affect and modes of public address. Together, they explain not only how women's liberation emerged organisationally, but why it authorised new rhetorical styles that exceeded reformist norms. This distinction is analytically important for this study because it helps explain why feminist protest songs vary in their degree of linguistic impoliteness, with some adopting restrained critique and others employing overtly contemptuous or ironic address.

The organisational diversity of second-wave feminism is central to this study because it helps explain variation in the tone and intensity of public address. The organisational structure of second-wave feminism normalised performative and confrontational modes of public address, which inform the linguistic tone and delivery of the protest songs analysed in Chapter 5. Freeman's (1973: 806-807) distinction between leaders and organisers is useful: the younger branch produced few public "leaders" by design, but it relied on skilled organisers to seed groups, circulate pamphlets and link local initiatives into a discernible current. This structure allowed rapid diffusion, yet it also generated limits. Freeman (1973: 808-809) notes that "structurelessness" made national coordination difficult and left many groups strong at generating consciousness but weaker at sustaining collective projects beyond the

discussion circle. Evans's (2015: 146-147) later synthesis shows how that same looseness enabled experimentation in forms and repertoires, from child-care co-ops to guerrilla theatre, which expanded the cultural reach of feminist ideas even when formal institutions lagged. This experimentation normalised performative and confrontational modes of public address that later informed the linguistic tone and delivery of protest songs analysed in Chapter 5. Where Freeman diagnoses the organisational consequences of decentralisation, Evans shows how this same looseness enabled expressive risk-taking, helping to normalise irony, anger and confrontation as legitimate political resources rather than communicative excess.

Evans (2015) challenges the assumption that second-wave feminism was predominantly white, middle-class and ideologically unified, showing instead that it was multiracial, regionally diverse and internally contested in ways that shaped its modes of public address. She insists the first wave of women's liberation was multiracial and regionally diverse, even if media coverage narrowed the public face to a few white figures (2015: 142-145). Black, Chicana, Native and Asian American feminists built organisations and produced analyses that challenged the notion of a single universal "woman," while raising problems of "double and triple jeopardy" within movement spaces and in wider society (Evans 2015: 143-144). These currents did not always converse easily and local segregations of housing, work and politics often kept activists apart. Yet the record shows overlapping commitments, parallel organisational streams and sustained debate about race, class and sexuality from the outset (Evans 2015: 142-145).

Repertoires in these years reflected both branches. The older branch pressed cases before the EEOC, lobbied for enforcement and pursued equal treatment in employment and education, helped by the visibility that the National

Organisation for Women (NOW) and allied groups, such as the lobbyist group “Women’s Equity Action League” and legal foundation “Human Rights for Women”, secured in national media (Freeman 1973: 795-799). The younger branch excelled at performative disruption and vernacular persuasion. Evans highlights the use of humour, satire and guerrilla theatre as feminist tactics that punctured everyday sexism and made private injuries legible as public questions; the 26 August 1970 Women’s Strike for Equality, initially called by NOW but infused with the language and energy of women’s liberation, demonstrated that these idioms could scale to mass action (Evans 2015: 146-147). The result was a repertoire that ranged from court filings to street theatre, with consciousness-raising groups as a crucial hinge between personal experience and public forms of address.

The relationship between feminist activists and the New Left remained complex and this complexity matters for the present study because different feminist organisational forms authorised different styles of public speech. Evans rejects caricatures that attribute women’s liberation simply to sexism within civil rights or anti-war organisations, while acknowledging that routine subordination in those settings both sharpened critique and supplied the skills required for later feminist organising (Evans 2015: 148-149). Freeman’s chronology supports this view, showing that key women’s liberation groups emerged as New Left opportunities narrowed, making feminist organising the most viable channel for urgent political expression (Freeman 1973: 799-801).

The resulting two-branch structure is analytically significant. More institutional feminist organisations tended to pursue restrained, reform-oriented modes of address, while decentralised liberationist groups normalised confrontational, ironic and openly impolite forms of public speech (Freeman 1973: 807-809). This

distinction helps explain why protest songs associated with second-wave feminism vary markedly in tone and target, ranging from measured critique to overtly impolite and contemptuous address, as demonstrated in the analysis presented in Chapter 5.

To summarise, second-wave feminism in the late 1960s took shape through converging infrastructures and crises. The commissions network and Title VII enforcement struggle produced the older branch's legalist strategy, while the New Left's radical community and a series of affronts produced the younger branch's decentralised groups and consciousness-raising (Freeman 1973: 797-801). The movement spread quickly because networks were in place and co-optable; it resonated widely because it linked structural critique to lived experience (Freeman 1973: 794-806; Evans 2015: 138-140). Its multiracial, locally inflected streams complicate later myths and explain its diverse rhetorical tones (Evans 2015: 142-145). Its strategies ranged from lobbying to guerrilla theatre and its cultural impact exceeded its formal membership (Evans 2015: 146-147; Freeman 1973: 807-809). In the popular sphere, these shifts authorised a new voice for women that was confident, ironic and often cutting.

For this study, these intersecting histories supply the social and ideological backdrop against which protest songs of the 1960s and early 1970s can be understood. They show how challenge, irony and defiance became culturally intelligible in popular song, shaping both lyrical content and delivery. The following chapter turns from historical context to theoretical explanation, surveying key frameworks in linguistic impoliteness and performance to establish how recorded protest can be examined as a form of verbal and prosodic resistance.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework: Impoliteness and Prosody in Communication

While Chapter 2 outlines the sociocultural shifts that transformed politics and popular music, this chapter examines the linguistic and musicological frameworks needed to analyse protest songs as performed acts of impoliteness. The same cultural forces that legitimised confrontational speech in protest movements also expanded the theoretical vocabulary available to analyse it, creating a convergence between sociopolitical practice and linguistic theory. This chapter therefore surveys the frameworks required to examine protest songs as forms of verbal and prosodic resistance, proceeding from the premise that analysing protest song solely as written text is insufficient. Linguistic theory explains how impoliteness, face-attack and stance function as social action, while musicological perspectives account for how meaning is shaped through performance, vocal delivery, rhythmic organisation and sound production. Prosody occupies the overlap between these domains and establishes the basis for the analyses in Chapter 5.

3.1 Impoliteness Theory

This section addresses a central problem for the present study: how to account for linguistic strategies in protest songs where face-attack is deliberate, sustained and often central to the communicative act. While existing models of politeness and interaction provide valuable tools for analysing how speakers manage social relations, many are grounded in assumptions of cooperation, mitigation and interpersonal exchange. These assumptions limit their explanatory power for protest discourse, where confrontational and impolite forms of address are not deviations from the norm but primary communicative strategies. The discussion that follows

therefore evaluates how far existing frameworks can account for such phenomena and identifies the approaches that most effectively capture the linguistic and prosodic features analysed in Chapter 5.

One of the foundational concepts for this study is Goffman's notion of face, defined as the positive social value a person claims in interaction (1967: 5). This claim is enacted through what he calls the line, encompassing the verbal and nonverbal actions through which individuals present themselves and their viewpoints (1967: 5). Face is thus a shared and relational concept, shaped by social norms, situational expectations and affective investment in both one's own standing and that of others. Goffman's related concept of face-work, the actions taken to preserve or repair face when threatened, remains central to later discussions of face-threat, offence and social relations (1967: 7; Watts 2003: 115-139).

This section outlines the development of theories of face and impoliteness, beginning with Goffman's conceptualisation of face as socially negotiated value and tracing subsequent reformulations that inform the analytical framework used in this study. In particular, the analysis draws on Culpeper's theory of impoliteness, supplemented by Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model.

Building on interactional accounts of face, Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) explains how participants orient toward shared expectations of communicative effectiveness. His maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner provide a framework for understanding implicature and indirect meaning in interaction (1975: 26-31). As Thomas shows, this is important for explaining how speakers manage politeness and social tact through implied meaning (1995: 65-66, 73, 160). However, such models assume co-present interlocutors and shared conversational contexts,

which limits their explanatory power for protest songs as mass-mediated forms of public address.

Where Grice accounts for how meaning is inferred under assumptions of cooperation, Geoffrey Leech's Politeness Principle (1983) extends this framework by addressing the social and psychological motivations that shape indirectness. Leech critiques Grice's model for giving limited attention to why speakers choose indirect forms and to the interpersonal effects of such choices (1983:80-82). However, like Grice's model, Leech's framework is grounded in assumptions of cooperative, interpersonal interaction, which limits its applicability to protest songs as mass-mediated forms of public address where confrontational and impolite strategies are central. Leech's model is useful as a bridge between cooperative accounts of meaning and later politeness theory, but like Grice it remains grounded in cooperative interpersonal exchange.

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) builds upon the foundations laid by Grice, Goffman and Leech, offering a deeper understanding of how speakers navigate the challenges of social interaction. Their work investigates how individuals can mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) through various discursive strategies, particularly in institutional and professional contexts (Holmes & Stubbe 2003:78-86). Building on Goffman's (1967) ideas, Brown and Levinson emphasise the importance of face in social dynamics, defining it as the public self-image that individuals strive to maintain in order to avoid feelings of embarrassment or humiliation. They argue that to "lose face" means to experience a threat to a person's social identity (1987: 61). According to Brown and Levinson, face is divided into two components: positive face, which is the desire to be liked and valued by others and negative face, which relates to the need for autonomy and not being intruded upon (Brown and Levinson

1987: 61). This framework offers a systematic account of face management in interaction, although its emphasis on mitigation rather than confrontation limits its applicability to protest discourse, where face-attack is deliberate and central.

Brown and Levinson also distinguish between positive face and negative face and propose a set of strategies for mitigating face-threatening acts, including positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on-record acts, off-record strategies and withholding the act altogether (1987: 68-69). The strategies outlined by Brown and Levinson highlight the delicate balance between conveying a message and maintaining harmony in social interactions. However, for the purposes of this study, which examines contexts in which confrontation is not mitigated but foregrounded, particularly in protest song, this emphasis on mitigation limits the framework's explanatory power and points to the need for an approach that centres deliberate face-attack.

Culpeper's theory of impoliteness (1996, 2005, 2011) becomes central at this point because it explicitly addresses communicative strategies designed to disrupt social harmony. Culpeper conceptualises impoliteness as communicative behaviour designed to attack face, either intentionally or as perceived by the hearer, and his early work adapts Brown and Levinson's model to account for deliberate face-attack, including inherent and mock impoliteness (1996: 350-358). The relationship between politeness and impoliteness strategies is summarised in Table 3.1.

Strategy Type		Description	Example
Orientation			
Politeness	Bald on-record	Direct, clear FTA where face threat is minimal or irrelevant	“Sit down.”
Politeness	Positive politeness	Redresses positive face (approval, solidarity)	“Come on, mate, sit down.”
Politeness	Negative politeness	Redresses negative face (autonomy, imposition)	“Could you possibly sit down?”
Politeness	Off-record	Indirect, implicature-based	“There’s a chair over there.”
Politeness	Withhold FTA	Avoid performing the act	Saying nothing
Impoliteness	Bald on-record impoliteness	Direct, unmitigated face-attack in contexts where face is relevant	“Shut up.”
Impoliteness	Positive impoliteness	Damages positive face (approval, inclusion)	“Nobody wants you here.”
Impoliteness	Negative impoliteness	Damages autonomy, imposes or threatens	“Do it now or else.”
Impoliteness	Sarcasm / mock politeness	Politeness used insincerely to attack face	“Oh, great job.”
Impoliteness	Withhold politeness	Absence of expected politeness behaviour	Not thanking someone

Table 3.1: Politeness and Impoliteness Superstrategies (adapted from Brown and Levinson 1987; Culpeper 1996: 355- 358)

As summarised in Table 3.1, Culpeper’s typology distinguishes between different forms of face-attack, each of which can be realised in protest song. Although developed for interactional contexts, Culpeper’s typology requires adaptation for the analysis of protest song as mass-mediated discourse. In such contexts, the target of face-attack is not a co-present interlocutor but is instead collective, institutional or symbolic. Protest songs typically address social actors such as governments, industries or ideological positions, transforming face-attack from an interpersonal phenomenon into a form of public, mediated critique. This shift is

significant for the present study, as it extends impoliteness theory beyond dyadic interaction and reframes it as a resource for mass communication, where audiences are dispersed and the targets of impoliteness are constructed rather than directly engaged.

Culpeper argues that impoliteness is not a marginal phenomenon but an integral aspect of linguistic behaviour, particularly under specific conditions such as everyday interaction or structured environments including military training (1996: 359-366). His account develops over time and, in a 2005 study of impoliteness in *The Weakest Link*, he defines impoliteness as occurring when “(1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)” (2005: 38). This shift foregrounds the role of perception and evaluation in impoliteness.

Impoliteness strategies may also co-occur and reinforce one another within a single interaction. Bousfield (2008: 112) argues that when multiple impoliteness strategies are used together, their combined effect intensifies the overall force of the face-attack, highlighting how impoliteness can be layered and cumulative across stretches of discourse.

Category	Description	Relevance to impoliteness
Quality Face	Desire to be positively evaluated for personal qualities	Attacked through insults, ridicule
Social Identity Face	Value derived from group membership	Attacked through stereotyping, exclusion
Relational Face	Value in relationships	Damaged through disrespect or hostility
Equity Rights	Expectation of fairness	Violated through imposition or exploitation
Association Rights	Expectation of appropriate involvement	Violated through exclusion or distancing

Table 3.2: Rapport Management Categories (adapted from Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2007)

Building on this, Culpeper's later framework incorporates insights from Helen Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model (2002, 2005, 2007), which extends earlier face-based approaches by accounting for social identity and relational dynamics. This expanded model distinguishes between *quality face*, referring to the desire to be positively evaluated for personal attributes, *social identity face*, relating to an individual's role within social groups and relational face, concerning the management of interpersonal relationships. It also introduces *equity rights* and *association rights*, which address expectations of fairness and appropriate involvement within relationships. These developments are particularly relevant to the present study, as they provide a framework for analysing how impoliteness operates not only at the level of individual interaction but also in relation to broader social identities and institutional targets.

Bousfield's work on aggravated impoliteness further foregrounds the interactional dynamics through which face-threatening acts are enacted, resisted and escalated, highlighting deliberate conflict, rhetorical intensity and audience

interpretation in contexts of power asymmetry (2008: 76). While existing models of impoliteness provide valuable tools for analysing face-attack in interaction, they typically assume identifiable interlocutors engaged in situated exchange. This raises a central problem for the present study: who is the hearer when a protest song directs face-attack toward an institution, a social group or an ideological position?

Recent work on impoliteness in online polylogues raises a similar issue. Lorenzo-Dus, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Bou-Franch (2011) argue that impoliteness in mass-mediated online environments is frequently directed not towards a single identifiable individual but towards social groups and collective identities. They further note that analyses of impoliteness must account for wider participation frameworks and distributed recipients, rather than assuming a simple dyadic speaker-hearer relationship (Lorenzo-Dus et al 2011). Although protest songs differ from online polylogues in medium and communicative context, they present a comparable analytical problem. Face-attacks are often directed towards institutions, governments, social groups or ideological positions while simultaneously being overheard by diverse audiences (Lorenzo-Dus et al 2011). This study extends that insight to recorded protest music through the concept of mass-mediated face negotiation, in which confrontational language functions simultaneously as face attack, public performance and audience alignment.

In such cases, the addressee is not a co-present participant but a constructed social actor, while the audience is dispersed across a mass-mediated context. Building on Goffman's participation framework (1981), the hearer in protest song can be understood as a layered set of recipients, including targeted addressees, ratified audiences and wider publics. This model is further supported by Bell's (1984) theory of audience design, which emphasises how speakers orient their language toward

multiple audience roles, even in mediated contexts. Within this framework, impoliteness can be reconceptualised as a form of mass-mediated face negotiation, in which face-attack is directed toward collective or institutional targets while simultaneously organising audience alignment. This extends impoliteness theory beyond dyadic interaction and provides the conceptual basis for analysing protest songs as public acts of verbal and prosodic resistance, where meaning emerges through both address and uptake.

This perspective also aligns with Spencer-Oatey's later development of rapport management theory. Rather than treating face concerns as static categories, Spencer-Oatey emphasises how rapport is continually negotiated through interaction and how face is closely tied to social identities and relational expectations (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 96-97, 106-107). In the context of protest music, attacks on quality face, social identity face and sociality rights are therefore understood not simply as isolated instances of impoliteness but as attempts to challenge the legitimacy of particular identities, relationships and social positions. This dynamic understanding of rapport is particularly relevant in mass-mediated contexts, where performers may seek not only to attack targets but also to influence how wider audiences interpret, evaluate and respond to those targets.

Both Bousfield (2008: 265) and Culpeper (2011: 27-84) draw attention to the role of prosodic features in amplifying the emotional and rhetorical power of impoliteness. Prosody is therefore treated here as a conceptual bridge between linguistic and musical analysis, allowing impoliteness in song to be intensified through both speech-like delivery and musical design. This makes delivery central to how protest songs shape audience uptake, as discussed in Chapter 2 and examined in the case studies in Chapter 5.

In conceptual terms, the frameworks outlined here occupy the overlap between speech and music: linguistic theories explain how face-attack and stance are constructed, while musicological perspectives, introduced in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, account for how those acts are realised, intensified and circulated through vocal performance and recorded sound.

3.2 Introduction to Prosody

Prosody, encompassing elements such as pitch, intonation, loudness and rhythm, plays a pivotal role in communication by shaping how messages are interpreted and enhancing emotional and rhetorical impact (Crystal and Quirk 1964; Wennerstrom, 2001; Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 1996). In linguistic analysis, prosody refers specifically to the acoustic organisation of speech rather than to musical structure as such, even though it draws on parameters that overlap with those used in music, such as pitch, rhythm and intensity. This section explores both prosody's functions and its significance, using the sources listed to contextualise its relevance in both linguistic and musical communication, with a focus on its relationship with impoliteness and protest music.

Defining prosody and its components, Wennerstrom emphasises that prosody functions as the “‘music’ of speech”(2001:14), organising spoken language and signalling intent through patterns of intonation, rhythm, volume and pauses. Her analysis highlights the ways prosodic features guide listeners' interpretations of speaker attitudes, making them indispensable for effective communication. Couper-Kuhlen and Selting's work demonstrates that prosody, including features like stress and tempo, is central to managing turn-taking and coherence in spoken interaction (Auer, 1996:85; Wells & Peppe, 1996:109, in Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 1996). These

foundational perspectives underline the role of prosody in structuring discourse and improving clarity. Crystal and Quirk argue that prosodic features such as loudness, rhythm and tempo function as part of a non-verbal phonology that supplements lexical meaning and plays a key role in shaping grammatical and pragmatic interpretation of speech (1964:10-12). Brown and Prieto argue that prosody and gesture operate in tandem, with pitch and facial expressions interacting to shape perceptions of politeness. Their research provides empirical evidence that prosodic meaning is co-constructed with visual cues such as facial expressions (2017:367, 375). Brown and Prieto's work bridges linguistic prosody and multimodal interaction, highlighting the importance of prosodic delivery in shaping how face, stance and interpersonal meaning are perceived. For the present study, this is important as prosody functions as a conceptual bridge between speech and song: speech-based acoustic cues retain their interpersonal force when embedded within musical performance, allowing impoliteness to be realised through both linguistic delivery and musical design.

3.2.1 The Role of Prosody in Impoliteness

Culpeper et al. argue that prosody enhances the delivery of linguistic impoliteness strategies, not merely through lexical forms but via pitch, loudness and stress, understood here as speech-based acoustic resources, which amplify the interpersonal and rhetorical force of face-threatening acts (2003:1545, 1568, 1576). Furthermore, in "It's not what you said, it's how you said it!" Culpeper (2011) specifically examines how variations in prosody affect the perception of impoliteness, demonstrating that features such as abrupt intonation and exaggerated stress can intensify the negative impact of a statement. This research provides a conceptual basis for treating prosody as a key analytical resource in this study, enabling the

examination of how pitch, loudness and stress contribute to the perceived force, stance and affective impact of impolite utterances in protest song. Culpeper's study of the television gameshow "The Weakest Link" further explores prosody's interaction with impoliteness, showing how features such as clipped intonation, slowed tempo and emphatic stress in the host's delivery contribute to the perception of otherwise minimal or formulaic utterances, for example brief evaluative comments such as "That was weak" or "You're the weakest link," as confrontational or mocking (2005: 52-54).

Caballero et al., identify several acoustic markers of impoliteness - including lowered pitch, slower speech rate and increased loudness - which contribute to perceptions of rudeness and defiance in spoken interactions (2018:41). While focused on speech, these findings offer insights into how similar vocal cues may be perceived in sung performance as well, supporting the treatment of prosody as a transferable resource through which impoliteness can operate across spoken and musical domains.

3.2.2 Pitch and Intonation

Fónagy and Magdics identify pitch and intonation as central components of prosody, emphasising their role in the communication of emotional states such as anger, sadness and joy, which are themselves central to the projection of stance and confrontation in interaction. Their work demonstrates that systematic variation in pitch contours is associated with listeners' perception of emotional expression in vocal performance (1963:294-325). While foundational, these early insights have been substantially developed and empirically refined in later research. Based on a large-scale review of studies of both speech and musical performance, Juslin and

Laukka (2003) demonstrate that emotions are communicated through consistent acoustic cues across domains, with pitch level, pitch range and contour playing a prominent role. Taken together, this body of work provides a basis for examining how pitch variation in protest songs contributes not only to emotional intensity but to the perception of confrontational stance and face-attack, an issue explored in the analysis chapters of this thesis.

Palmer and Hutchins highlight how musicians manipulate acoustic signals in ways that parallel speech prosody, using pitch, timing and loudness as vocal delivery resources rather than as purely melodic structure, to segment phrases, convey prominence and express emotion. They propose that vocal music, like speech, reflects emotional states through prosodic variation, reinforcing its role in enhancing the emotional expressiveness of vocal performance; an insight that informs how music can be mobilised in dissenting and expressive contexts (2006:246, 261-262). Caballero et al. emphasise that politeness is shaped not only by linguistic choices but also by prosodic cues, such as pitch and intonation, which contribute to perceptions of respect or rudeness in speech. For example, an utterance realised with lowered pitch, exaggerated stress or flattened intonation may be perceived as dismissive or confrontational, even where the lexical content itself is neutral (2018: 40), a point returned to in Chapter 5, where prosodic delivery is shown to intensify face-threatening meaning in songs such as Dylan's "Masters of War". While not explicitly cross-cultural, their findings highlight how prosody dynamically interacts with social context, a factor that is critical in protest music, where singers address heterogeneous audiences and rely on pitch and intonation to signal condemnation, irony or refusal without lexical mitigation.

3.2.3 Rhythm

Corn describes rhythm as the 'measured motion' essential to communication, linking its appeal to human experiences such as the mother's heartbeat and breath, thus situating rhythm as a bodily and temporal resource shared by speech and music rather than a purely musical structure. He argues that rhythmic regularity engages listeners by mirroring cognitive and sensory patterns that are both intuitive and affective (1997:4-6). Patel similarly argues that rhythmic regularity reinforces lyrical meaning and emotional intensity (2008:154, 159). While his framework is not directly applied to protest music, it provides valuable insight into how rhythm may enhance emotional intensity, sustain insistence and foster collective resonance in politically charged musical contexts, which, as outlined in Chapter 2, are marked by heightened affect, moral urgency and collective address. Crystal and Quirk highlight the interplay between rhythm and loudness, arguing that shifts in volume serve both as emotional amplifiers and structural devices (1964:41-42). Moreover, Wennerstrom echoes this, showing how rhythmic patterns contribute to the cohesion and flow of discourse, including the pacing and accumulation of force in extended turns of talk, making them indispensable for effective communication.

Taken together, this literature shows that prosodic features such as pitch, contour, loudness, tempo and rhythm shape stance, emotional force and the perception of impoliteness. For the present study, this justifies close attention to prosodic realisation in Chapter 5, where lexical confrontation is analysed alongside delivery.

3.3 Musicological Perspectives

This section draws on popular music studies to explain how songs, recordings and performances produce meaning, identity and affect through performance, recording practices and musical structure. It addresses a limitation of strictly linguistic approaches by shifting attention from lyrics as printed text to lyrics as performed, recorded and interpreted within specific musical and cultural conventions, thereby providing the musicological counterpart to the pragmatic and prosodic accounts outlined in Sections 3.1 and 3.2. While prosody refers to the acoustic organisation of speech, musical devices extend and formalise these same parameters within compositional and recording frameworks.

Simon Frith's discussion of song words in *Music for Pleasure* provides an essential framework for analysing lyrics as performative. Frith posits that "a song is always a performance and song words are always spoken out, heard in someone's accent" (1988: 120). This emphasis on performance situates meaning in delivery and vocal identity rather than in words alone. In addition, Frith makes clear that "song words work as speech and speech acts, bearing meaning not just semantically, but also as structures of sound that are direct signs of emotion and marks of character" (1988: 120). Read as speech, protest songs such as Dylan's "Masters of War" can therefore be approached as acts of public address that perform accusation, condemnation and moral judgement, rather than as neutral narrative statements. This perspective is valuable for understanding impoliteness in protest music, where prosodic and vocal features communicate defiance as much as explicit content. Frith further highlights the role of vocal devices: "emphases, sighs, hesitations, changes of tone; lyrics involve pleas, sneers and commands as well as statements" (1988: 120) directly aligning with the linguistic strategies of confrontation central to this thesis.

Moreover, Frith stresses that “in analysing song words we must refer to the performing conventions which are used to construct our sense of both the singers and ourselves, as listeners” (1988: 120). By putting words to music, he concludes, “songwriters give them a new sort of resonance and power” (1988: 122).

Building on Frith’s notion of lyrics as performative, Lars Eckstein advances the argument that lyrics should be analysed as a distinct verbal art form, not as poetry set to music. Eckstein stresses that “lyrics and poetry are similar... Yet they are also different in at least one respect: while the voice in poetry is generally perceived as an internalised one encoded in the medium of writing, the voice of lyrics is by definition external” (2010: 10). This externality ties lyrics to performance, echoing Booth’s observation that “song words are only given once in a performance and then are gone, carried along by the music and succeeded implacably by the next words” (Booth, 1981, in Eckstein, 2010: 10). Eckstein thus posits that lyrics constitute a form of performance art, in which meaning is generated not by the textual artefact alone but through the acts of performance, presentation and reception (2010: 10).

A central insight for this study is that lyrics which may appear banal when read as text can acquire significance through performance, as meaning emerges within sonic, social, bodily and medial contexts (Eckstein, 2010: 14). Eckstein critiques the marginalisation of lyrics within cultural studies, arguing that excluding song lyrics from literary and cultural histories produces a distorted account of modern verbal art (2010: 14). This functional perspective aligns closely with protest songs that rely on blunt, confrontational phrasing: what may seem simplistic textually becomes effective in performance. For Eckstein, interpretation must therefore encompass not just verbal content but also “questions of style and musical context,

of social embeddedness and cultural value” (2010: 38). Such an approach allows linguistic impoliteness in lyrics to be situated within the wider cultural rhetoric of dissent, where meaning is inseparable from performative and social contexts.

While Frith (1988) and Eckstein (2010) establish a general theoretical foundation, Dai Griffiths situates protest lyrics historically within the tension between lyric and anti-lyric. He defines the lyric as the traditional poetic form of the pop song, marked by rhyme, regularity and song-like qualities, in contrast to the anti-lyric, which embraces prose-like density, unexpected word choice and disruption of rhythmic or rhyming expectations (Griffiths, 2003: 42-43, 54-55). This polarisation is crucial for analysing the linguistic impoliteness of protest music: songs that avoided smooth rhyme and symmetry often did so to project abrasive, confrontational messages that paralleled their social critique. Griffiths highlights how Bob Dylan’s merging of protest song and beat poetry functioned as a turning point, with Simon Frith situating this moment within the “problematic of the ‘poetry of pop’” (Griffiths, 2003: 40-41). This development is central to the present study, given Dylan’s position as the earliest of the three songs analysed in Chapter 5.

This account underscores how the development of protest lyric involved a rejection of conventional forms associated with commercial pop and polite address, a shift that parallels the broader challenges to authority and normative expression outlined in Chapter 2. Griffiths also introduces the concept of “verbal space,” the compromise between musical phrasing and words, whereby lyrics can either fill or resist the “pillars” of musical structure (Griffiths, 2003: 42-43, 45-46). Within musicological accounts of performance and lyric construction, protest songs frequently stretched or overloaded this verbal space. By situating the protest lyric within the lyric/anti-lyric spectrum, Griffiths demonstrates how meaning arises not

only from what is said but from how words interact with musical form, an insight that dovetails with the analysis of impoliteness and prosody as strategies of resistance.

Together, these accounts show that linguistic impoliteness in protest song is produced not only by lexical choice but also by how phrasing, vocal delivery and musical form interact. A key implication for the analysis of protest songs is that linguistic impoliteness is not only a matter of taboo lexis or direct insult but is also produced by how abrasive, overloaded or anti-lyrical phrasing interacts with musical form and vocal delivery. How these interactions between lexical content, musical form and vocal delivery operate in specific recordings is examined in detail in Chapter 5.

Frith critiques content-analysis approaches for treating lyrics as transparent reflections of social reality, instead arguing that meaning is produced through performance and is shaped by ideological assumptions (1989: 78, 82-84). He further demonstrates that concepts of “authenticity” and “realism” are never neutral but deeply ideological (1989:82-84). Frith emphasises that the poetic force of song lies not in direct realism but in the transformation of language, a point that is pertinent to protest song, where exaggeration, confrontation and rhetorical excess often replace documentary realism. Paul Garon, for instance, argues that blues power derives from its “fantastic” rather than realistic elements (1989: 85), a tradition of expressive exaggeration that anticipates the rhetorical strategies of protest music outlined in Chapter 2.

For Frith, songs are “more like plays than poems... lyrics involve pleas, sneers and commands as well as statements and messages” (1989: 90) and their art emerges from reworking ordinary speech. As Clive James observed of The Beatles,

their genius was to “take a well-worn phrase and make it new again” (Frith, 1989: 92). These insights suggest that protest songs deploy linguistic impoliteness not only thematically but also performatively, transforming clichés and everyday language into weapons of critique, a pattern already evident in the protest traditions outlined in Chapter 2. Frith further develops this argument in *Performing Rites*, emphasising that meaning in song emerges from the interaction of words and music rather than from lyrics in isolation, foregrounding what he terms “words in performance” (1996: 159, 166). This helps explain how protest songs function as slogans, with their “political force... drift[ing] far from their intended meanings” (Frith, 1996: 164-165).

Trudgill (1983) similarly demonstrates that accent in song functions as a performative resource through which singers construct social and cultural identity. Accent in song thus operates as a performative resource, reinforcing Frith’s claim that meaning in popular music is produced through voice and delivery as much as through lexical content. For Frith, lyrics cannot be read as poetry, because “good song lyrics are not good poems” but are “scored” by music (1996: 181-82). This distinction resonates with protest music of the 1960s and 70s, where impolite, confrontational language gains its power not from literary polish but from its prosodic and performative setting

While Frith and Griffiths foreground interpretation and performance, Pete Astor and Keith Negus shift attention to songwriting practice. Astor and Negus (2014) emphasise that song lyrics are the product of deliberate creative labour, highlighting the role of songwriting practice in shaping how meaning is constructed and interpreted.

Approached as music, protest songs communicate meaning not only through words but through vocal timbre, instrumental texture, rhythmic density and spatial design. These musical features shape how confrontation is perceived by listeners, intensifying, softening or reframing the force of linguistic address. In songs such as “Masters of War”, meaning can emerge not solely from accusatory lyrics but also from musical setting and recording choices, including harmonic restraint and the placement of the voice within the mix. Analysing protest song as music therefore foregrounds how musical structure and sound design participate in the construction of stance, authority and affect, rather than serving as a neutral backdrop to verbal content.

Finally, in order to account explicitly for the spatial organisation of recorded sound, Allan F. Moore’s concept of the “soundbox” offers a vital framework for analysing how recorded songs produce meaning beyond their lyrical content. Moore defines the soundbox as “a heuristic model of the way sound-source location works in recordings, acting as a virtual spatial ‘enclosure’ for the mapping of sources” (2012: 31). Within this model, sound is arranged across three spatial planes: laterality (left-right), register (high-low) and perspective (front-back), providing a way of describing how recordings stage their sonic components (Moore, 2012: 31-32). Importantly, the soundbox is not a neutral container but a cultural construct, as mixing conventions establish norms that shape listeners’ expectations. From the late 1960s onwards, for example, producers commonly employed a “diagonal mix” in which “the lead voice, snare drum and bass are centrally located” to form a structural axis, with other instruments distributed to the sides (Moore, 2012: 34-35). In this study, departures from established recording conventions are treated as analytically salient insofar as they can be understood, within existing theoretical frameworks, to

interact with lyrical content and vocal delivery in ways that shape confrontational or face-threatening meanings.

Moore notes that off-centre vocal placement can unsettle conventional hierarchies of voice and accompaniment (2012: 35). Such deviations imbue recordings with distinctive affective and interpretive weight, as when the manipulation of perspective brings the voice into exaggerated intimacy or pushes it back into confrontational distance (Moore, 2012: 44). For protest music, this framework illuminates how impoliteness is staged not only through lyrics and delivery but also through recorded spatialisation. A vocal mixed harshly to the fore, for instance, might intensify the perception of aggression, while the crowding of instruments into the same register can create a sense of overwhelming force. Moore's soundbox thus provides a crucial tool for integrating the analysis of recorded sound into the study of impoliteness and prosody, showing how resistance is encoded in the very spatial design of protest songs.

Considered in isolation, linguistic analysis risks reducing protest songs to textual content, while musicological analysis risks treating confrontation as affect without address. Taken together, these approaches make it possible to analyse protest songs as performed acts of impoliteness, in which face-attack is simultaneously articulated through language and intensified through musical and recording practices. This study adopts an integrated analytical approach on the grounds that protest songs operate simultaneously as linguistic acts, performed vocal events and musical structures. For this reason, these approaches are brought together to examine how protest songs construct and perform linguistic impoliteness as face-threatening acts.

3.4 Protest music as a communicative and cultural practice

Building on the linguistic, prosodic and musicological frameworks outlined in Sections 3.1-3.3, this section establishes the conceptual basis for analysing protest songs as communicative events rather than as isolated texts or purely musical artefacts. Protest music is approached here as a form of mass-mediated address in which linguistic content, vocal delivery and musical structure interact to produce social and political meaning (Way and McKerrell 2017: 8-10; Street 2012: 46-55). This framing is necessary in order to justify an analytical approach that integrates linguistic impoliteness theory with prosodic and musicological analysis. Scholarship in the sociology of music and social movements emphasises that music does not simply reflect political positions but can operate as a resource for mobilisation, identity formation and the transmission of movement meanings across contexts (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 1, 41, 160; Denisoff 1973: x-xvi). Within this tradition, protest music can be understood as culturally situated communication that circulates through specific institutions, genres and listening publics rather than as a stable category with a single function (Lynskey 2011: 2-3; Weinstein, in Peddie 2006: 9-10). This matters for the present study because it foregrounds the role of circulation and reception in shaping what confrontational language and forceful delivery can do politically.

A multimodal perspective is essential to capturing this communicative complexity. Way and McKerrell conceptualise music as a multimodal semiotic system in which sound, lyrics, written text and other communicative modes interact to create meaning, while also insisting on the importance of context in how meanings are made (2017: 8-10). Protest songs, in particular, mobilise multiple semiotic resources simultaneously: lexical choices articulate critique, vocal delivery conveys

stance and affect and musical features such as tempo, rhythm, pitch range and dynamics shape how that critique is perceived and valued (Way and McKerrell 2017: 8-10). Analysing lyrics in isolation therefore risks overlooking how vocal and musical realisation intensifies, reframes or undercuts face-threatening meaning, understood in this study as communicative acts that deliberately attack or are perceived to attack the social value of individuals, groups or institutions (Culpeper 2005, 2011).

This study draws on linguistic theories of impoliteness to explain how protest songs can perform socially meaningful acts of confrontation. Impoliteness frameworks allow us to conceptualise certain utterances as attacks on face, social identity or moral standing, particularly when they are unmitigated, accusatory or contemptuous (see section 3.1). Read as speech, protest songs can therefore be analysed as acts of public address that perform accusation, condemnation and stance-taking, even in the absence of a present interlocutor. Street's distinction between writing political songs and participating politically is also relevant here, since it cautions against assuming a stable link between lyrical content, authorial intention and political uptake (2012: 46).

As discussed in Section 3.2, protest meaning is often realised through delivery and vocal character as much as through propositional content. Prosodic features such as emphasis, rhythm, intensity, pitch and timing can signal urgency, condemnation, irony or refusal. Because this study examines recorded performances, it treats vocal delivery as an analysable resource that is repeatable and open to close attention, rather than as an ephemeral feature of a single live moment (Way and McKerrell 2017: 8-10; Street 2012: 55). Focusing on recorded protest songs, rather than only participatory movement music, is a deliberate methodological choice. Sociological accounts show that protest music operates both inside movements and in broader

public culture, where it can travel across audiences, institutions and commercial channels (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 1, 160; Weinstein, in Peddie 2006: 9-10).

Rodnitsky's discussion of folk-protest music is useful here as it foregrounds how the genre's political functions and public credibility shift over time in relation to broader cultural conditions and infrastructures of circulation (in Peddie 2006: 17-29). In parallel, Denisoff's work treats protest songs as socially situated artefacts that connect musical production to political communication and public discourse (Denisoff 1973: x-xvi). Taken together, these perspectives support the decision to analyse recordings as mass-mediated communicative artefacts whose political force emerges through performance, distribution and reception as well as through lyrical content. This framing also clarifies why commercial circulation does not necessarily neutralise protest meaning, even if it can reshape or constrain it. Weinstein's account of protest music's entanglement with commercial systems highlights the risk of co-option and reframing, an issue that is directly relevant to how confrontational address and impolite stance can be absorbed into popular music markets or displaced into underground circuits, while remaining meaningful to listeners (in Peddie 2006: 9-10). More broadly, comparative work on protest music across contexts also reinforces the importance of situating protest communication within specific cultural and historical environments rather than treating it as a universal form, which aligns with this thesis's emphasis on contextualised interpretation (Kutschke and Norton 2013: 5-6).

Analysed linguistically, protest songs reveal how face-attack and stance are constructed through language (see Sections 3.1 and 3.2); analysed musically, they show how those same acts are intensified, reframed or redistributed through voice, rhythm and recording (see Section 3.3). Considered together, these approaches reveal forms of confrontational meaning that neither perspective can fully capture on

its own. Together, this scholarship justifies an integrated analytical approach in which linguistic impoliteness, prosodic delivery and musical structure are examined as interacting components of protest communication. Protest songs are treated as purposeful acts of public address whose political force emerges through the interaction of words, voice and sound, in relation to movement traditions, media infrastructures and interpretive uptake (Eyerman and Jamison 1998: 41, 160; Street 2012: 46-55; Way and McKerrell 2017: 8-10). The following chapter operationalises this framework by outlining the criteria for song selection, the coding of impoliteness strategies and the methods used for prosodic analysis.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the rationale for adopting a qualitative, interpretative approach to the analysis of linguistic impoliteness and prosodic delivery in 1960s and 70s protest songs. It addresses the research question, “How was linguistic impoliteness constructed and performed in 1960s and 70s protest music and what role did prosody play in this process?” Using the impoliteness, prosodic and musicological frameworks outlined in Chapter 3, this chapter sets out the qualitative procedures used to analyse both lyrics and vocal delivery. Unlike quantitative models, which might track the frequency of taboo words or listener demographics, this study relies on close analysis of specific lyrical and performative instances. A qualitative approach enables attention to context, delivery and nuance, all of which are critical for understanding the function of linguistic impoliteness, which is inherently dependent on social norms and speaker intention (see section 3.1). The analysis applies Culpeper’s linguistic impoliteness strategies (1996, 2005, 2011), alongside Spencer-Oatey’s (2002, 2007) theory of rapport management. These frameworks (see section 3.1) provide systematic tools for identifying and interpreting linguistic face-attacks and their socio-pragmatic significance. This chapter will outline the methodological framework employed to explore how linguistic impoliteness strategies are constructed and performed in protest songs of the 1960s and 70s, with attention to how prosodic features such as pitch, loudness and intonation amplify their potential impact (see section 3.2 on prosody). In addition, it will detail the criteria for selecting songs, how the linguistic frameworks were applied and also the tools used for data analysis. Employing theories from both linguistics and musicology, the methodology applies an interdisciplinary approach to studying how

language and vocal delivery combined, construct impoliteness in musical performances. Given the interpretative nature of this study, reflexivity and transparency were treated as integral to the analytical process throughout.

Protest music of the 1960s and 70s has been characterised by both its confrontational tone and its resistance to conventional politeness norms, reflecting a wider cultural rejection of social convention and authority (Hall 2012: 99). As demonstrated in Chapter 2, this resistance emerged from historically specific social movements that legitimised accusation, confrontation and the suspension of deference as forms of public political address. This study approaches such music with an understanding that both verbal and vocal elements may contribute to the perception of impoliteness. Furthermore, rather than placing focus solely on lyrical content, the methodology considers vocal performance; exploring how features such as, loudness, intonation and pitch may shape interpretation. Thus, a multimodal approach is employed to allow for a more holistic account of how impoliteness is realised in protest music, viewing vocal performance as a prosodic layer that interacts dynamically with the linguistic message. This chapter will also explain the rationale behind adopting a qualitative, interpretive approach, suited to the analysis of context dependent communicative strategies such as impoliteness.

This study employs acoustic analysis using Praat software to examine vocal features such as pitch contours, variation in volume and patterns of intonation (see Section 4.4.2 for a detailed description of the procedures used in Praat). The acoustic analysis of prosodic features using Praat provides empirical support for interpretive claims regarding how impoliteness is vocally realised. The inclusion of visual representations such as pitch graphs and waveform images reflects the multimodal nature of this research project. NVivo software is used to code and

categorise themes across the three songs, supporting structured analysis of impolite strategies across differing sociopolitical contexts and performance styles (see section 4.4.1). Although the dataset is small, using NVivo provides a transparent and systematic means of organising coding decisions and serves as a proof of concept for how the coding framework could be applied to a larger body of protest music in future research.

The chapter has been organised into six sections. Section 4.2 discusses the selection criteria for the three songs and provides justification for each of the case studies. Section 4.3 will describe how the analytical frameworks introduced in the literature review are applied to the data and explains how the songs were prepared for analysis. Section 4.4 focuses on prosodic analysis, introducing the acoustic features and the procedures used in the Praat software. Section 4.5 will describe how the multimodal findings will be visually presented. Section 4.6 addresses ethical considerations and reflexivity and finally, section 4.7 will offer a brief summary of the chapter and its role within the wider thesis.

4.2 Song Selection

4.2.1 Overview of Selection Criteria

This study focuses on three protest songs: Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" (1963), Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" (1964) and Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" (1972) (see Section 4.2.2 for detailed discussion). These songs were selected because they meet four interconnected criteria.

First, each song engages with a recognisable sociocultural movement of the period, namely anti-war protest, civil rights activism and second-wave feminism (see Chapter 2). This ensures that the linguistic impoliteness analysed is situated within

historically specific struggles over power, identity and representation. Second, the lyrics of each song exhibit identifiable instances of linguistic impoliteness as defined by Culpeper's framework (1996, 2005, 2011), including strategies such as bald on-record aggression, sarcasm and mock politeness. Third, the vocal delivery of each performance is prosodically distinctive, involving marked variation in pitch, loudness or intonation. This reflects the study's focus on impoliteness as a multimodal phenomenon realised through both linguistic content and vocal delivery. Finally, each song has demonstrable historical and cultural significance, evidenced by its circulation within protest contexts and continued reference in cultural and scholarly accounts. This allows the analysis to address not only linguistic form but also the broader rhetorical reach of protest song. Together, these criteria establish a focused set of case studies suitable for detailed qualitative analysis of linguistic impoliteness and prosodic performance.

4.2.2 The Three Songs

Three protest songs were chosen, each associated with a key sociopolitical movement of the period: civil rights, anti-war protest and second-wave feminism. The songs meet the criteria outlined in Section 4.2.1 and are treated as individual case studies, allowing for detailed qualitative analysis while enabling comparison across sociocultural contexts.

- **Song 1: "Masters of War" - Bob Dylan (1963)**

This song was written amid heightened Cold War anxieties (see section 2.4) and is one of Dylan's most unwavering early protest songs, delivering a direct and sustained critique of the military-industrial complex (Margotin, Guesdon, 2015: 114). The lyrics were first published in *Broadside* in 1963, a publication associated with the

folk music revival and known for promoting songs with political and social themes (*Sing Out!*, n.d). Fluxman situates the song within Dylan's broader "protest phase", describing its tone as one of "moral outrage" aimed at the "perpetrators of war who..."hide behind desks", reflecting a deep mistrust of Cold War militarism and elite authority (1991: 93). Furthermore, Dylan began "fraternizing with the student protest environment that fought for the rights of minorities" through connections with Broadside magazine and Suze Rotolo, who introduced Dylan to the politics of the radical left (Margotin, Guesdon, 2015: 91). This positioned him as not just a folk singer but a songwriter directly involved in the protest culture of the early 1960s. The song "Masters of War" runs for approximately 4 minutes and 34 seconds in its studio version and is structured as a sequence of eight stanzas with no recurring chorus (see appendix for full lyrics). This lack of refrain contributes to the song's relentless, linear progression, allowing Dylan's verbal attack to accumulate without the respite of repetition or melodic variation. The verses are delivered to the tune of the traditional ballad "Nottamun Town" (Sounes 2001: 132), but stripped of ornamentation, reinforcing the bluntness of the message. Repetition occurs at the phrase level rather than in large-scale choruses, for example through repeated direct address ("You that build the big guns", "You that hide behind walls") and imperative constructions such as "Let me ask you one question", which sustain the accusatory stance (Dylan, 1963).

For this study, the analysis involved close reading of the full song text and consideration of the recorded performance in order to identify lines that most clearly instantiate bald on record threats and intensified condemnation, where prosodic delivery aligns with semantic force. These lines were identified through application of Culpeper's impoliteness framework and were selected because their lexical

aggression is reinforced by Dylan's monotonic and unembellished vocal style, making them prime examples for examining the interaction of text and prosody (see Section 5.3). While Dylan has performed the song live in varying tempos and with occasional harmonic backing, these changes have minimal impact on the prosodic patterns significant for this analysis and the studio version is prioritised for its cultural and historical status as the definitive release. Given the song's sustained critique of militarism, its use of unmitigated accusation and its reliance on bald on record linguistic impoliteness strategies, "Masters of War" meets the inclusion criteria for this research project (see Section 5.1).

- **Song 2: "Mississippi Goddam" - Nina Simone (1964)**

Simone's song was written as a direct response to the murder of civil rights activist Medgar Evers in Mississippi and the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Alabama, which killed four girls, events discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the civil rights movement's moral urgency and confrontational public address (see Section 2.3) (Cohodas, 2010: 144-145). The events provoked what Simone described as an awakening driven by "a rush of fury, hatred and determination" (Cohodas, 2010: 144-145). Furthermore, Simone wrote the song in under an hour, following a moment of despair after her husband had urged her to express outrage through music as opposed to violence (ibid). Simone had previously expressed a reluctance to align herself with traditional protest music, which she felt was too simplistic and lacking imagination (Cohodas, 2010: 145). As Cohodas reports, Simone objected to protest songs that, in her view, reduced complex individuals and experiences to formulaic lyrics, arguing that figures such as Medgar Evers could not be adequately represented within conventional song forms (2010: 144-145).

Nevertheless, the immediate composition of “Mississippi Goddam”, sparked by the murder of Medgar Evers and the Alabama bombing, marked a significant escalation in her public political expression (Cohodas, 2010: 144-145). Moreover, as Sullivan notes, it was at this moment that Simone “uncovered the righteous fury that would signify the rest of her career” (2019: 62). The song’s position at an important point in Simone’s career is therefore important to this analysis, as it marks a shift in both lyrical stance and vocal delivery that informs how linguistic impoliteness is performed and sustained in her later work. Given its overt engagement with racially motivated violence and its role in transforming Simone’s public artistic identity, this song serves as a key example of protest music of the civil rights movement, thus meeting the criteria for inclusion as a case study for this research project (see section 5.2). The song lasts approximately 4 minutes and 55 seconds in the recorded version from the album *Nina Simone in Concert* (1964). Structurally, it alternates between strophic verses and a recurring refrain (“Alabama’s got me so upset / Tennessee made me lose my rest / And everybody knows about “Mississippi Goddam”), functioning as a chorus (see Appendix 1 for full, line-numbered lyrics). Between verses, Simone uses spoken asides and ironic commentary, creating a fluid alternation between sung and spoken delivery. Repetition is integral to its rhetorical force, with the title phrase repeated multiple times across the performance, building both familiarity and emphasis.

The chosen lines for analysis were identified through close reading of the full lyrics alongside repeated listening to the recorded performance, focusing on sections where prosodic features such as sharp increases in loudness, clipped articulation and changes in tempo intensify impolite or confrontational address. These were selected because they offer clear instances where vocal delivery

transforms potentially neutral phrasing into marked impoliteness. While Simone performed the song in multiple live contexts, the *In Concert* recording is used here because no studio version exists and because its spontaneous, audience-facing prosody is integral to the recorded performance.

Song 3: “You’re So Vain” - Carly Simon (1972)

Carly Simon’s song, released in 1972, became a significant cultural and commercial success, noted for its lyrical sharpness and confessional tone, qualities frequently highlighted by contemporary and later critics (Weller, 2008: 373). The song’s central theme is a critique of male self-importance, inspired by a man she had observed at a party (Weller, 2008: 366) and reflects the wider feminist challenge to gendered authority and entitlement discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.5). It reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100 and, as noted by Hoffmann, served as a springboard for Simon’s broader success (2004: 994). Furthermore, the song’s tone, sarcastic, assertive and candid, offered a departure from what Kutulas describes as a song of “wistful longing or passivity” typical of the traditional portrayal of women in pop music, instead modelling a “forceful and angry” response to romantic betrayal (2010: 699). Kutulas notes that the song “practically invited women to sing along, taunting a man with his own ego”, aligning it with the ethos of 1970s assertiveness training, which encouraged women to express dissatisfaction without shame (2010: 699). Weller similarly describes the song as “the anthem of a woman exerting power over the boyfriend who did her wrong”, framing its message as “real-life feminism” that resonated with middle-class women outside of academic discourse (2008: 368).

The song is approximately 4 minutes and 18 seconds long in its studio recording, following a verse-chorus form with three verses, each followed by the

refrain “You’re So Vain” / You probably think this song is about you.” The repeated chorus serves as a taunting refrain, creating a cumulative public shaming effect through its recurrence. The verses provide different narrative vignettes about the addressee’s vanity, while the chorus delivers the central accusation in a rhythmically and melodically heightened form. For this study, the focus is on selected lines from both verses and choruses where prosodic features, particularly rising pitch on direct address and stressed lexical items, amplify sarcasm and derision, understood here as forms of impoliteness as outlined in the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.2). These lines were chosen because they encapsulate the song’s linguistic impoliteness strategies most explicitly and their delivery provides measurable variation in pitch and intensity suitable for acoustic analysis. While Simon has performed the song live with slight rhythmic liberties, the studio version is analysed as it functions as the primary recorded reference for the song. Given the song’s engagement with gender politics, its popular circulation and its thematic focus on ridicule and self-assertion, “You’re So Vain” meets the inclusion criteria for this research project (see Section 5.3).

The recordings analysed were taken from the principal commercially released versions of each song. For Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” and Carly Simon’s “You’re So Vain”, this involved the canonical studio recordings. In the case of Nina Simone’s “Mississippi Goddam”, the version analysed was the recording released on *Nina Simone in Concert* (1964). This live recording is not treated simply as a substitute for a studio version. Rather, its audience-facing delivery, interactional context and performative qualities form an integral part of the song’s communicative force and are therefore directly relevant to the analysis of impoliteness and prosody presented in this study.

Alternative live performances were consulted as contextual reference points to assess whether salient features of vocal delivery, pacing and musical setting remained stable across performances. These reference performances were accessed via publicly available archival recordings hosted on YouTube and were used for comparative listening only. The live or alternative versions consulted were:

- Bob Dylan - “Masters of War”, Live at Town Hall, New York, 1963. (YouTube)
- Nina Simone - “Mississippi Goddam”, Live in Antibes, 1965. (YouTube)
- Carly Simon - “You’re So Vain”, Live at Martha’s Vineyard, 1987. (YouTube)

Lyric transcriptions were cross-checked using verified sources such as Genius.com, the lyric aggregator and aligned with vocal performance using the Praat software program.

4.2.3 Artist positioning within protest music

In addition to meeting the linguistic and prosodic selection criteria, each case study was chosen because the song’s protest function depends on the artist’s positioning within public culture and within the movement moment in which the recording circulates. This study therefore treats each song not only as a textual and vocal performance but as a historically situated act of public address. The broader sociocultural contexts are established in Chapter 2, while the following notes clarify the specific rationale for each artist and release date as part of the case study design.

“Masters of War” (1963) is analysed as a case of sustained accusatory address produced at an early point in Dylan’s public positioning as a protest songwriter. The song’s release context matters methodologically because it is analysed in relation to the early phase of anti-war mobilisation outlined in chapter 2,

rather than as a generalised statement about protest music across the decade. For this reason, the analysis treats the recording as a historically specific instance of confrontational address rather than as a generalised statement about protest music as a whole. The sociopolitical context of early 1960s anti-war mobilisation is discussed in chapter 2.4, while the present chapter uses this positioning to justify the song's inclusion as a case study of linguistic impoliteness in protest song.

"Mississippi Goddam" (1964) is analysed as a case of protest performance in which linguistic impoliteness is inseparable from vocal delivery, pacing and audience orientation. The song occupies a distinct position within Simone's career, marking a shift toward overt and sustained political address following her response to racially motivated violence in the United States, as documented by Cohodas (2010: 144-145). Methodologically, this positioning matters because the song's confrontational force emerges not only from its lexical content but from the interaction between sung material, spoken interjections, tempo changes and live audience address within the recorded performance. The civil rights movement context in which the song circulates is established in chapter 2.3, while the current chapter uses this positioning to justify the song's inclusion as a case study of linguistic impoliteness realised through vocal performance rather than through text alone.

"You're So Vain" (1972) is included as a case study positioned at the boundary between protest song and feminist popular address. Unlike the Dylan and Simone case studies, the song is not treated as movement music embedded within organised protest activity. Instead, it is analysed as a widely circulating pop recording that performs linguistic confrontation through ridicule, second-person address and repeated accusatory framing, aligning with the broader feminist challenge to gendered entitlement and authority discussed in chapter 2.5. Methodologically, this

positioning is important because it allows the study to test how frameworks of linguistic impoliteness and prosodic delivery operate in a commercially successful song that is not conventionally categorised as protest music. The song's sustained public circulation, as evidenced by its chart performance and archival documentation (Eisenhower Public Library 2023) and its reception as a feminist anthem support its inclusion as a case study of how confrontational address can function outside explicitly movement-labelled genres, while remaining grounded in historically situated gender politics of the early 1970s.

4.3 Analytical Framework

This study applies analytical frameworks introduced in the literature review (see Chapter 3) to examine how impoliteness functions in protest songs, both through linguistic content and through its realisation in vocal performance. The analytical approach integrates linguistic analysis with prosodic and musicological analysis, treating impoliteness as a communicative stance that is constructed verbally and intensified through delivery, pacing and sound design. This integration is guided by theories of linguistic impoliteness and supported by tools for acoustic analysis (see Section 4.4.2), allowing for systematic attention to both what is said and how it is performed within recorded protest songs.

The central model employed for identifying and categorising impoliteness is Jonathan Culpeper's framework (1996, 2005, 2011), as outlined in Chapter 3. This framework is used to identify impolite behaviour in relation to departures from expected politeness norms and their interactional consequences and provides the basis for the analytical categories applied in this study (see Section 3.2). These

theoretical definitions underpin the coding criteria applied in this study (see Section 4.4.1), where lyrics were analysed for instances of bald on record impoliteness, sarcasm, mock politeness and other face-threatening acts that target social identity or challenge social norms.

Building on the framework outlined in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1, 3.2), Table 4.1 presents the operational labels used in this study to identify and analyse impoliteness strategies across the three songs. These labels function as researcher-generated descriptors that translate theoretical categories into applied analytical tools for systematic comparison across the three songs.

Framework	Analytical category	Operational label used in analysis
Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011)	Bald on record impoliteness	Direct face-attack, unmitigated threat
Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011)	Positive impoliteness	Ridicule, derogatory nomination, exclusion
Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011)	Negative impoliteness	Contempt, scorn, collective accusation
Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011)	Mock politeness	Sarcasm, ironic praise, insincere mitigation
Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2007)	Quality face	Threats to competence, integrity or moral worth
Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2007)	Social identity face	Threats to social identity or group affiliation
Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2007)	Relational face	Disruption of rapport and performer-audience alignment
Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2007)	Equity rights	Denial of autonomy, coercive positioning, unfairness
Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2007)	Association rights	Exclusion cues, denial of solidarity
Bousfield (2008)	Cumulative impoliteness	Layered strategies, repetition, sequential escalation

Table 4.1: Analytical frameworks and operational labels used for identifying linguistic impoliteness in the study

The table shows how core theoretical constructs were translated into applied analytical categories used consistently across all three case studies in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the analysis employs Spencer-Oatey's Rapport Management framework (2002, 2007), as outlined in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.1). In this study, the framework is used to support analysis of how impoliteness functions relationally within protest music. In addition, Bousfield's work (2008) on complex and cumulative impoliteness informs this study, as outlined in Chapter 3. His account is drawn on where impoliteness strategies are layered or intensified across stretches of performance. These frameworks together form the analytical basis for identifying and categorising linguistic impoliteness in the selected songs. The following section outlines the procedures used for analysing prosodic delivery. Each case study in Chapter 5 applies this blended framework consistently, combining linguistic coding, prosodic analysis and attention to musical and performance context in order to examine how impoliteness is constructed, intensified and circulated in different protest settings.

4.4 Transcription and Annotation

As this research examines linguistic impoliteness both in what is said and in how it is delivered vocally, transcription needed to capture not only lyrical content but also the nuances of vocal performance. In particular, it was necessary to account for how prosodic features such as pitch, loudness and intonation contribute to the realisation of impolite utterances. Because protest song operates across verbal and vocal modes, transcription in this study integrates textual representation with attention to prosodic delivery.

Each song was transcribed textually using official and verified sources, including lyric booklets, official releases and the lyric aggregator site Genius.com. These transcriptions were then cross-checked against the recorded performances to identify any variation in phrasing, delivery or repetition. Where discrepancies occurred, for example where the sung performance diverged from the published lyric listing, the recorded version was prioritised as the primary data source. Full lyric transcriptions for all songs analysed are provided in the appendix.

4.4.1 Use of NVivo for Thematic Coding

To support the qualitative analysis of linguistic impoliteness strategies within song lyrics, this study employed NVivo (version 14), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International. NVivo was used to manage, code and visualise textual data, enabling systematic analysis of lyrical material across the three songs (QSR International, 2014: 5-7).

Song lyrics were imported into NVivo as source materials and organised into coded categories, or “nodes”. These nodes were developed on the basis of the linguistic impoliteness frameworks outlined in Chapter 3, with coding categories informed primarily by Culpeper’s typology of impoliteness strategies (1996, 2005, 2011) and supplemented by Spencer-Oatey’s rapport management model (2002, 2007) (see Section 3.1). Each lyric was then annotated using NVivo’s coding tools, enabling comparison both within individual songs and between the three songs.

NVivo’s text search and word frequency tools were used selectively to identify patterns in language use, such as repetition, intensification and recurrent lexical

markers associated with impoliteness (QSR International, 2014: 29). Where necessary, the memo function was used to record analytical reflections, supporting transparency in interpretive decision-making. The resulting node structure facilitated comparative analysis across the dataset, allowing patterns of impoliteness to be traced across different songs and sociopolitical contexts.

Although NVivo was not used for acoustic or prosodic analysis, it complemented the Praat software by supporting a structured examination of linguistic strategy. NVivo was used to analyse *what* was said and how impoliteness was linguistically constructed, while Praat was used to analyse *how* those utterances were delivered vocally (see Section 4.4.2).

To illustrate the coding framework developed for this study, Figure 4.1 presents the NVivo codebook. This figure shows the categories used to identify linguistic impoliteness and rapport management strategies across the three songs, derived from Culpeper's impoliteness framework (1996, 2005, 2011) and Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model (2002, 2007) (see Section 3.1). The figure is intended to demonstrate how theoretical constructs were operationalised into a structured coding scheme prior to analysis.

The coding framework was intentionally broad and designed to capture the full range of impoliteness and rapport-management categories identified in the literature. However, not all categories were realised within the three songs analysed in this study. Rather than presupposing which strategies would occur, the framework served as an initial coding scaffold through which patterns could emerge from the data. The analysis presented in Chapter 5 thus focuses on the smaller set of categories that returned substantive coded references, particularly those relating to Quality Face,

Social Identity Face and recurring impoliteness strategies such as ridicule, derogatory nomination and bald on record impoliteness.

Codes			Search Codes
⊕ Name	↑ Files	References	
⊖ Negative impoliteness	0	0	
○ Condescend, scorn, ridicul	1	1	
○ Explicitly associate the oth	0	0	
○ Frighten	0	0	
○ Invade the other's space	0	0	
○ Put the other's indebtedne	0	0	
⊖ Positive impoliteness	1	9	
○ Be disinterested, unconcer	0	0	
○ Call the other names	1	6	
○ Disassociate from the othe	1	1	
○ Exclude from activity	0	0	
○ Ignore, snub	0	0	
○ Make the other feel unco	0	0	
○ Seek disagreement	0	0	
○ Use inappropriate identity	0	0	
○ Use obscure or secretive la	0	0	
○ Use taboo words	0	0	
⊖ Rapport Management	1	7	
○ Association rights	0	0	
○ Equity rights	0	0	
○ Quality face	1	10	
○ Social identity face	1	8	

Figure 4.1: NVivo codebook showing categories used to identify impoliteness strategies and rapport management.

Figure 4.2 provides an illustrative example of a coded transcript from Carly Simon's "You're So Vain". In this figure, individual lyric lines are marked according to specific impoliteness strategies, such as mock politeness and face-attack. The extract is presented to demonstrate how the coding framework was applied In practice rather

than to represent all instances identified in the song.

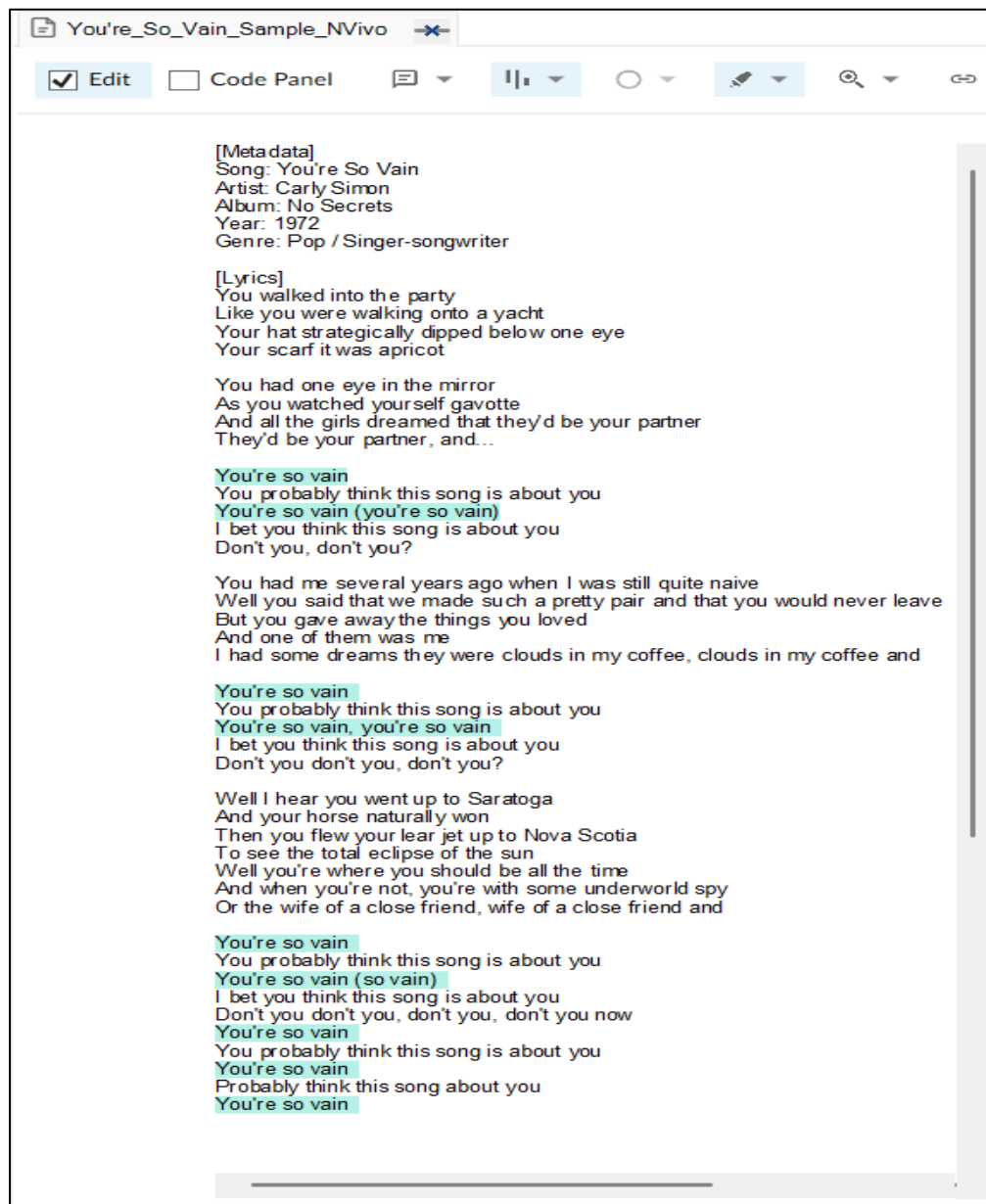


Figure 4.2: NVivo coded transcript of Carly Simon's "You're So Vain", showing instances of linguistic impoliteness marked within the lyrics.

Figure 4.3 shows the NVivo coding stripes visualisation for the same song, indicating where multiple impoliteness strategies co-occur and highlighting variation in coding density across different sections of the lyrics. The visualisation is read sequentially from left to right, corresponding to the progression of the text. Longer stripes indicate

sustained or repeated instances of impoliteness, while shorter stripes represent isolated occurrences.

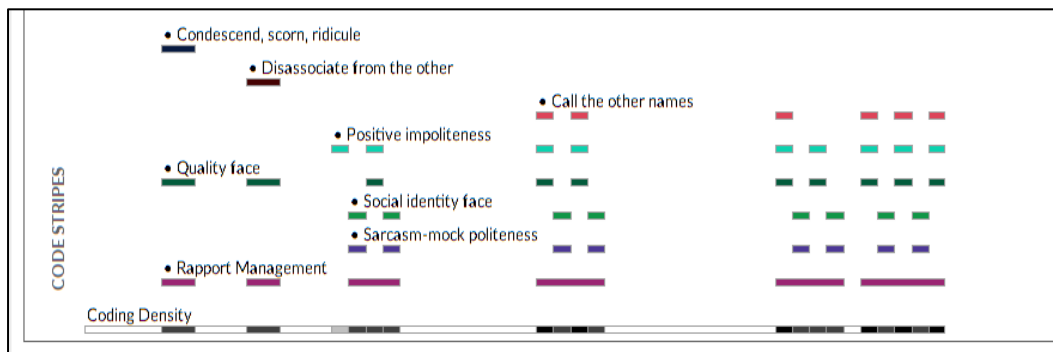


Figure 4.3: NVivo coding stripes visualisation for “You’re So Vain”, illustrating overlaps between impoliteness strategies and rapport management categories.

The coding framework was organised hierarchically using parent and child nodes. Parent nodes corresponded to broader theoretical categories drawn from Culpeper’s impoliteness strategies and Spencer-Oatey’s rapport management framework, while child nodes captured more fine-grained sub-strategies and relational dimensions. For example, “positive impoliteness” was established as a parent node, with child nodes such as “call the other names” and “disassociate from the other”. Similarly, “rapport management” functioned as a parent node with children corresponding to distinctions between quality face and social identity face.

This hierarchical structure supported both analytical depth and methodological transparency. Analytically, it enabled layered interpretation of impoliteness, showing how broader strategies were realised through specific linguistic choices. Methodologically, it allowed for systematic coding across the three songs while retaining flexibility for song-specific variation. In Chapter 5, these coded categories are used to structure the close analysis of each case study, supporting comparative

claims about how linguistic impoliteness is constructed and intensified in protest song performance.

4.4.2 Use of Praat for Prosodic Analysis

In order to undertake prosodic analysis in this study, the Praat software program (version 6453) was used to visualise, segment and measure relevant prosodic features such as pitch and intensity. The software, developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink at the University of Amsterdam, is a widely used open-source tool for phonetic and speech analysis (Styler, 2021:7). Its precision makes it well suited to analysing paralinguistic elements in texts that are sung or spoken (see Section 3.2 on prosody and Sections 5.1-5.3 for applied examples).

Audio files of the three selected songs were imported into Praat's Objects window and opened in the View and Edit (Editor) window, where the waveform, spectrogram, pitch contour and intensity curve can be displayed simultaneously (Figure 4.4).

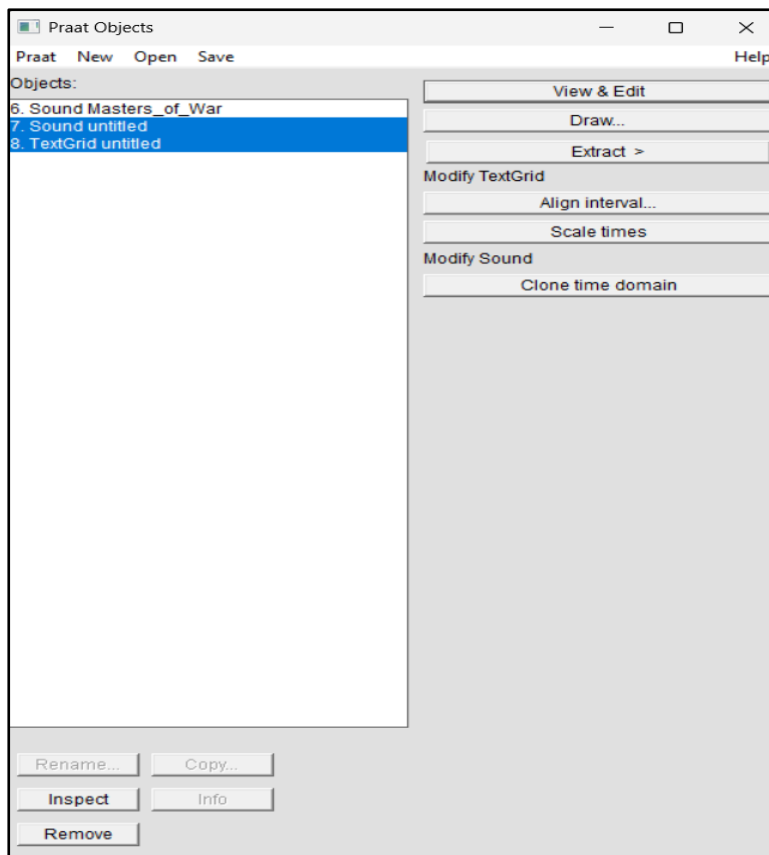


Figure 4.4: The Praat Object Window

Pitch is shown as a blue line and intensity as a separate contour, both of which can be toggled and adjusted depending on analytical focus (Figure 4.5).

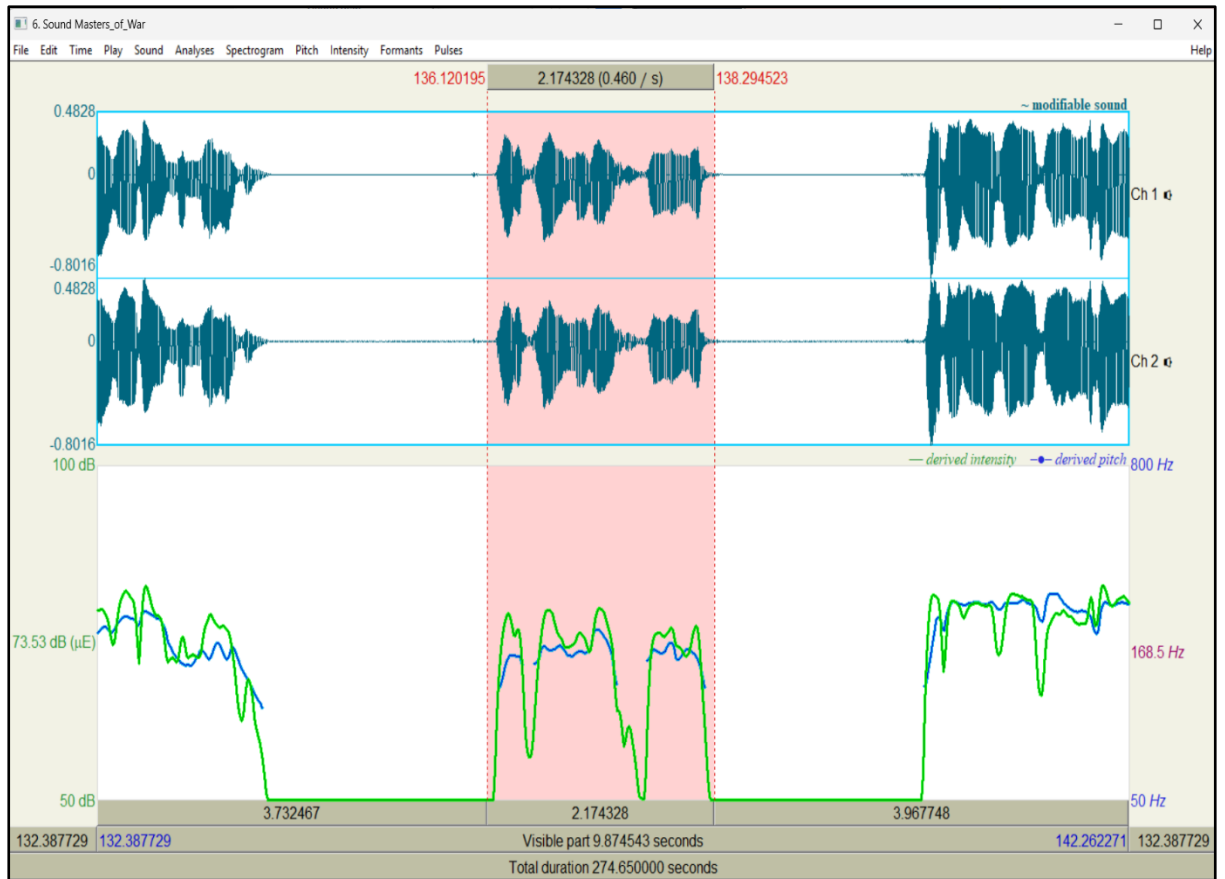


Figure 4.5: Praat Editor displaying waveform, spectrogram, pitch contour (blue) and intensity contour (green) for an excerpt of “Masters of War”

Acoustic analysis was conducted in Praat to extract pitch and intensity contours and to align these prosodic traces with linguistic annotations. For each song-based case study, the chosen phrase for analysis was first located within the full song file in the Editor window by listening and inspecting the waveform. The corresponding portion of the waveform was then selected and extracted as a new Sound object, anchored at time zero to maintain consistency across the dataset. Each extracted segment was renamed clearly (for example, “Simone_MG_line40”) so that sound files and figures could be tracked throughout the analysis.

Because the source material consisted of commercially recorded songs containing instrumental accompaniment, the selected passages were first processed

in VirtualDJ to isolate the vocal signal and remove the contribution of accompanying instruments as far as possible. The resulting vocal-only extracts were then imported into Praat for analysis. This procedure reduced the potential influence of instrumental sounds on pitch and intensity measurements and allowed the analysis to focus specifically on the prosodic features of the sung voice.

Once the segment had been created, it was checked by playback to ensure that it contained only the intended material. Within the Editor window the pitch and intensity displays were enabled so that Praat could calculate the contours for the selected phrase. To generate high-resolution data suitable for plotting and analysis, these visible contours were extracted as separate Pitch and Intensity objects in the Praat Objects window rather than relying solely on the lower-resolution traces displayed in the Editor window (Figure 4.6).

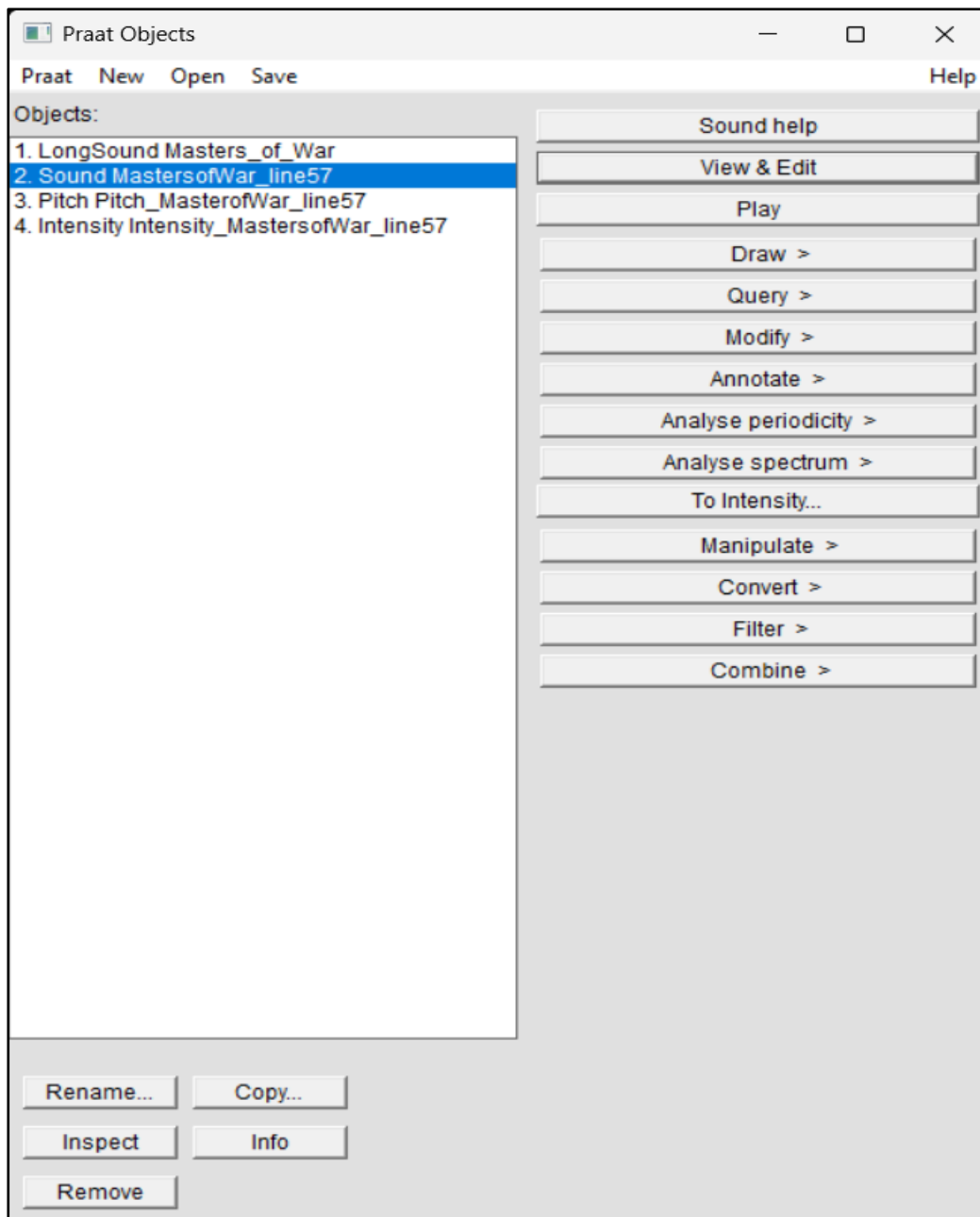


Figure 4.6: Praat Objects window showing extracted Pitch and Intensity objects

Following the creation of the acoustic objects, a TextGrid was generated to annotate the linguistic structure of the segment. For this study a single tier labelled “words” was used. With the TextGrid aligned to the sound file, boundaries were inserted at the onset and offset of each word and the corresponding label was added to the annotation tier (Figure 4.7).

Boundary placement was carried out by ear, with the waveform and spectrogram used as guides and was adjusted where necessary to ensure accurate alignment, as illustrated by the highlighted pink segment in Figure 4.7. Precise segmentation at this stage is essential because later interpretations of pitch and intensity patterns depend on their timing relative to specific words.

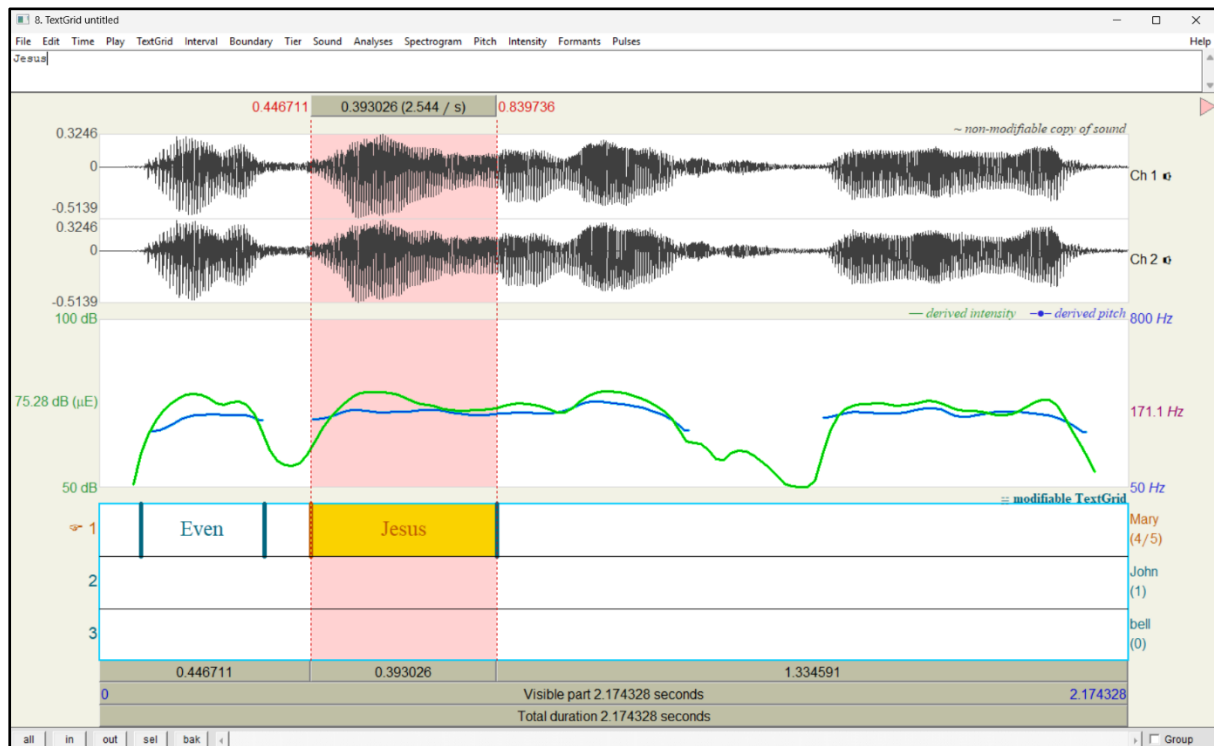


Figure 4.7: Praat Editor window showing boundary placement within a TextGrid,

A combined plot of the pitch contour and the TextGrid was then produced for each segment. Selecting the Pitch object and the TextGrid together and drawing them in Praat's drawing (Picture) window generated a figure showing the F0 contour across the duration of the phrase, where F0 refers to the fundamental frequency of the vocal signal, used here as an acoustic correlate of perceived pitch.

The annotated word boundaries were displayed along the time axis. This visualisation allowed direct comparison between segmental structure (individual

words) and suprasegmental movement (changes in pitch). The Intensity contour was subsequently added to the same figure. Because pitch (in Hertz) and intensity (in decibels) operate on different numerical scales, plotting them on a single panel can obscure detail. To improve readability, the Picture window was divided so that the pitch contour occupied the upper portion of the figure and the intensity contour the lower portion, both aligned to a shared time axis and the same word-level annotations. Contrasting line colours were used to distinguish pitch and intensity, providing clear visual separation while preserving temporal correspondence between the two dimensions (see figure 4.7).

The completed plots, showing pitch in Hertz and intensity in decibels with labelled axes and aligned annotations, were exported from the Picture window as PDF files for inclusion in Chapter 5, where they are presented alongside the corresponding song analyses.. These figures form the basis for subsequent interpretation of prosodic patterns in relation to linguistic impoliteness and the broader analytic framework used in the study. As Lieshout notes, Praat provides “a wide range of standard and non-standard procedures” for signal analysis, including detailed pitch, duration and intensity tools that can be adapted to musical as well as spoken data (2003:2), making it significantly appropriate for the present research.

4.4.3 Presentation of Multimodal Data

As this study involves both linguistic and prosodic elements, the presentation of data must convey the multimodal nature of protest song performance. In addition to textual excerpts taken from the lyrics, the analysis incorporates visual representations of prosodic features, including pitch and intensity. These are used to

illustrate how vocal delivery interacts with impolite language, offering insight into how tone and emphasis contribute to face-threatening acts.

Data visualisations were created using Praat's Picture window, which allows the user to extract and export annotated pitch contours, waveforms and intensity curves. These images are included in Chapter 5, where they are presented alongside the close analysis of each song to illustrate the alignment between word-level annotations and changes in pitch and intensity. Rather than being employed as standalone evidence, these visual elements are contextualised within broader lyrical, strategic and performative patterns.

This integrated approach is grounded in the understanding that songs of protest and dissent function as multimodal texts, where meaning is produced not only by what is said but also by how it is vocally delivered. The side-by-side presentation of lyrics and vocal delivery enables a clearer understanding of how semantic and paralinguistic elements operate together, allowing for a more comprehensive account of impoliteness in performance.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Although this research does not involve human participants and therefore does not require formal ethical approval from the university's ethics committee, a number of ethical considerations nevertheless apply to the collection, handling and presentation of data. These relate primarily to the use of copyrighted material, the representation of creative work and the role of the researcher in interpreting potentially sensitive content.

4.5.1 Copyright and Fair Use

The primary data for this research consists of commercially released protest songs and their associated lyrics. All quoted lyrics are taken from officially released recordings and verified sources, including album liner notes and established lyric aggregation sites such as Genius.com. These excerpts are used legally and ethically under UK fair dealing provisions, which permit the limited use of copyrighted material for the purposes of criticism, review and academic analysis (UKGOV 2014).

Visual material generated using the Praat software, including pitch contours, waveforms and annotated TextGrids, constitutes original analytical output produced by the researcher. These materials are included solely to illustrate analytical points relating to vocal delivery and prosodic structure and do not reproduce or distribute copyrighted sound recordings.

4.5.2 Representation of Sensitive Content

Throughout the research process, care has been taken to ensure accurate and responsible representation of both the artists' intended messages and the historical contexts in which the songs were produced. Protest songs frequently contain strong language, emotionally charged expression and explicit political critique, particularly in relation to issues such as war, racism and gender inequality (see Chapter 2, Sections 2.2-2.5, for historical context and Chapter 5 for detailed song analysis).

When addressing these themes, the analysis maintains an analytical and respectful tone, treating the material as meaningful political expression rather than as a source of shock or entertainment. Where potentially distressing material is discussed, such as references to violence or systemic oppression, it is presented with appropriate contextual framing to support critical understanding rather than sensationalism.

4.5.3 Researcher Positionality

The role of the researcher in interpreting linguistic impoliteness and protest performance warrants reflexive consideration. As Finlay argues, reflexivity is a core component of qualitative research, requiring researchers to examine how their positionality, assumptions and analytical decisions shape both the research process and its outcomes (2002). In this study, reflexive practice involved sustained attention to how theoretical commitments, historical knowledge and interpretive judgement informed the identification and categorisation of impoliteness strategies and prosodic features. Rather than seeking to eliminate subjectivity, reflexive awareness is treated here as a means of enhancing transparency and methodological rigour, making the analytic process open to scrutiny.

Because impoliteness is context dependent and often contested, it is important to acknowledge that the researcher's social, cultural and academic position may shape how particular lyrics and paralinguistic strategies are interpreted. This study approaches the material from a sociolinguistic and critical discourse analytic perspective, which brings specific interpretive sensitivities. These include the risk of over-interpreting vocal intensity or confrontational language as deliberate impoliteness where such features may also reflect genre conventions, performance context or emotional expression typical of protest music. Conversely, there is a risk of under-interpreting historically situated forms of linguistic aggression by evaluating them through contemporary norms of offence or politeness. Awareness of these tensions informed a cautious analytic stance, with interpretive claims grounded in

close attention to historical context, theoretical criteria and corroboration across lyrical, prosodic and performative evidence.

In addition, what constitutes protest is not universally agreed upon and political orientation may shape how songs are received or categorised. A song that critiques patriarchy, militarism or racial inequality may be interpreted as resistance by some listeners while being dismissed as offensive or irrelevant by others. Several impoliteness strategies examined in this study, including bald on record aggression and sarcasm, are inherently polarising. This research treats such strategies as central resources within protest performance while recognising that their meaning and perceived legitimacy are mediated through cultural and ideological frameworks. Accordingly, the analysis adopts an understanding of protest as an oppositional and socially embedded form of communication rather than as a neutral or universally accepted genre.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological foundations of the study, explaining how a qualitative approach was employed to examine linguistic impoliteness in protest songs of the 1960s and 70s. The rationale for this approach was grounded in the need to account for the interaction between lyrical content and prosodic delivery in the performance of face-threatening acts. Analytical frameworks developed by Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011), Spencer-Oatey (2002, 2007) and Bousfield (2008) were adopted to provide systematic tools for identifying and interpreting impoliteness strategies as forms of social critique and resistance.

The three songs were selected according to four criteria: engagement with contemporaneous protest movements, the presence of identifiable impoliteness

strategies, prosodic distinctiveness and lasting cultural visibility. These criteria ensured that each case study offered both analytical depth and sociopolitical relevance. The combined use of NVivo for thematic coding and Praat for acoustic analysis enabled a structured and transparent examination of both textual and vocal dimensions of protest performance. Transcription procedures were designed to capture verbal and prosodic detail, allowing analysis of how vocal delivery reinforces, intensifies or reshapes the communicative force of impolite lyrics. Visual representations of pitch, intensity and phrasing were incorporated to support interpretive claims and to reflect the multimodal nature of the data. Ethical considerations, including copyright compliance and the responsible handling of politically sensitive material, were addressed, alongside reflexive discussion of researcher positionality.

Collectively, the methodological strategies outlined in this chapter support a detailed and context-sensitive analysis of protest songs as multimodal communicative acts. This framework provides the foundation for Chapter 5, which presents close analyses of the selected songs as individual case studies. Each analysis attends to the interaction between linguistic strategies, vocal delivery and historical context, examining how impoliteness is constructed, performed and made socially meaningful within specific moments of political dissent.

Chapter 5. Linguistic Impoliteness in Three Protest Songs: Case Studies

This chapter applies the theoretical and methodological framework developed in Chapters 3 and 4 to the three selected case studies: Bob Dylan's "Masters of War", Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" and Carly Simon's "You're So Vain". Each song is examined in turn in order to address the research question of how linguistic impoliteness is constructed and performed in 1960s and 70s protest music and what role prosody plays in this process. Each case study examines the construction of linguistic impoliteness at the textual level alongside its prosodic realisation in performance, supported by detailed Praat analysis of selected lines. The full lyrics for each song are provided in the Appendix, with line numbering used throughout this chapter for ease of reference.

5.1 Analysis of Bob Dylan's "Masters of War"

This section begins with Bob Dylan's "Masters of War", situating the analysis in the post-war youth context and early anti-war mobilisation discussed in Sections 2.2 and 2.4. Dylan's condemnation of militarism provides a basis for examining how linguistic impoliteness operates in relation to institutional and state power, further developing the analysis of impoliteness and prosodic strategies in 1960s protest music. The song's sparse folk setting and limited harmonic movement foreground Dylan's vocal delivery, shaping how its confrontational lyrics are realised in performance. This positioning establishes a basis for comparison with the subsequent analyses of Nina Simone's civil rights indictment and Carly Simon's gendered interpersonal critique.

Maintaining the analytical approach established in Chapter 4, this section examines how Dylan's lyrics and vocal delivery construct direct confrontation and sustained face-threats. This situates "Masters of War" within the broader continuum

of protest music that harnessed linguistic impoliteness as a means of resistance during the 1960s and 1970s. In doing so, this case study applies the integrated framework outlined in Chapter 3, treating “Masters of War” as a mass-mediated face-attack in which linguistic impoliteness strategies, prosodic realisation and folk-song performance conventions combine to shape its confrontational force.

5.1.1 Musical Setting

While “Masters of War” is driven primarily by its lyrical rhetoric, its musical setting plays an important role in sustaining the song’s confrontational tone. The recording is characterised by a sparse and minimally changing accompaniment that avoids strong cadential resolution, producing a sense of stasis that mirrors the persistence and relentlessness of the critique. A constant repetitive picking pattern reinforces this effect, while the bright timbre of the capoed guitar, slightly flat in tuning on the recording, creates a piercing sonic quality that complements Dylan’s austere vocal delivery. Small shifts in accompaniment occur across the song but do not disrupt its overall static quality, ensuring that musical change does not detract from the force of the verbal address (Dylan 1963).

This restrained musical environment aligns with Frith’s (1988: 120) argument that in many protest songs, musical structure functions primarily to support vocal performance rather than to foreground harmonic development. It also resonates with Griffiths’ (2003: 42-43, 54-55) account of anti-lyrical density, in which musical repetition creates what he terms “verbal space” for an intensified flow of words (see section 3.3). Read through Moore’s (2012) notion of the soundbox (see section 3.3), the close and centrally positioned voice, accompanied only by guitar, places Dylan’s vocal delivery at the perceptual centre of the recording. This spatial and textural

focus ensures that linguistic impoliteness is not softened or displaced by musical interest but instead emerges as the primary site of confrontation (see section 3.3).

5.1.2 Lyrical Analysis

Because “Masters of War” is densely structured around repeated and cumulative linguistic impoliteness strategies, the analysis here proceeds in a more line-by-line manner than in the case studies that follow, where instances of overt linguistic impoliteness are fewer and more selectively distributed.

From the beginning, “Masters of War” delivers a relentless sequence of face-threatening acts (FTAs) without mitigation or opportunity for repair. The vocative “Come you Masters of War” (line 1; see Appendix 1) immediately confronts the addressee. The noun phrase “Masters of War” largely removes any individual identity, recategorising the addressees solely through their association with organised violence. Culpeper identifies calling the other names and using derogatory nominations as positive impoliteness strategies (1996: 357-358). In Spencer-Oatey’s terms, this targets Social Identity Face by forcing the hearer into an unwanted and morally discredited group, infringing the expectation of being acknowledged as a legitimate, multifaceted social actor (2002: 540). Rather than simply attaching a negative label, the phrase seeks to redefine the social identity through which the addressees are understood. In Spencer-Oatey’s terms, the attack challenges the legitimacy of the identity claims associated with military and political authority, replacing them with an identity grounded exclusively in violence and destruction (2005: 106-107). The attack is sustained in lines 2-4: “You that build the big guns / You that build the death planes / You that build all the bombs.” The parallel syntactic structure foregrounding “you that build” intensifies the accusation by repeatedly

attributing the same destructive agency to the addressees. This collective targeting effect erodes Quality Face, defined by Spencer-Oatey as the desire to be positively evaluated in terms of personal qualities (2002: 540), by framing the targets' primary competency as the creation of tools for mass harm.

Lines 5-6 ("You that hide behind walls / You that hide behind desks") add an accusation of cowardice. Culpeper lists derogatory nominations, i.e., naming the addressee in a negatively evaluative way, as a positive impoliteness strategy (1996: 358). Here, the metaphor of 'hiding' parallels this, signalling physical and moral withdrawal from accountability. The imagery undermines Equity Rights by implying that the addressees protect themselves while exposing others to danger, violating norms of fairness and reciprocity (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). Taken together, these opening lines illustrate the pattern identified in Chapter 3 (see section 3.1): face-attacks are constructed not through isolated insults but through cumulative infringements of Quality Face, Social Identity Face and Equity Rights, framing the addressees as both morally corrupt and structurally protected.

In lines 7-8 ("I just want you to know / I can see through your masks"), the perspective shifts from accusation to exposure. To "see through" someone's "masks" implies the revelation of hidden motives, casting the addressees as deceptive and morally corrupt. Culpeper lists the use of obscure or secretive language as a positive impoliteness strategy (1996: 357), which the "mask" metaphor echoes in implying deliberate concealment. In Spencer-Oatey's terms, such concealment undermines Quality Face by framing the addressees as morally untrustworthy and excluding them from the moral in-group (2002: 540). The depiction of moral bankruptcy continues in lines 9-10 ("You that never done nothin' / But build to destroy"), which

presents an absolute characterisation of the addressees' life's work as destructive. The hyperbolic "never done nothin" leaves no space for redeeming qualities, functioning as what Culpeper terms a derogatory nomination, recasting the addressees' identity solely in terms of destructive behaviour (1996: 358). This exclusion from any positive social role removes nuance and intensifies the face-threat.

Lines 11-14 ("You play with my world / Like it's your little toy / You put a gun in my hand / And you hide from my eyes") combine accusation with infantilisation. The simile "like it's your little toy" trivialises catastrophic consequences by likening them to a child's plaything, undermining Quality Face (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540) by portraying the addressees as reckless and immature, an example of what Culpeper (1996: 358) lists as "making the other feel uncomfortable" through belittlement. The subsequent "you put a gun in my hand" presupposes coercion into violence, a denial of Equity Rights (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540) by forcing the speaker into morally compromising action. The moral condemnation deepens in lines 17-18 ("Like Judas of old / You lie and deceive"). The Judas reference invokes one of the most recognisable archetypes of treachery in Christian tradition, functioning as positive impoliteness by aligning the addressees with a universally despised betrayer (Culpeper 1996: 357). Spencer-Oatey (2007: 641) would categorise this as a dual attack on Social Identity Face, by association with an archetypal out-group and Quality Face; through the explicit charge of deception.

Lines 19-20 ("A world war can be won / You want me to believe") frame the addressees as actively propagating dangerous falsehoods. Culpeper includes the deliberate imposition of false beliefs as a form of impoliteness when it undermines

the hearer's autonomy and judgement (1996: 357), here violating Equity Rights by attempting to manipulate the speaker's worldview. This ideological manipulation reflects the wider concerns discussed in Chapter 3, where protest lyrics are treated not simply as expressions of personal anger but as interventions in public discourse that contest dominant narratives of war, security and sacrifice. In lines 25-28 ("You fasten all the triggers / For the others to fire / Then you sit back and watch / When the death count gets higher"), Dylan constructs a vivid image of indirect culpability. By asserting that the addressees initiate but do not execute violence, they are framed as morally complicit yet physically absent, a combination of positive impoliteness (assigning cowardice) and negative impoliteness (presupposing unethical motives) (Culpeper 1996: 356-357).

Lines 29-32 ("You hide in your mansion / While the young people's blood / Flows out of their bodies / And is buried in the mud") heighten this contrast between safety and suffering. The juxtaposition between "mansion" and "blood" enacts what Culpeper calls the withholding of expected empathy (1996: 357), an extreme aggravation that infringes both Quality Face and Equity Rights (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). Furthermore, Spencer-Oatey (2005) argues that rapport is shaped through ongoing evaluations of fairness, respect and social obligation. By contrasting elite security with the physical suffering of others, Dylan presents the addressees as fundamentally violating these expectations, encouraging listeners to view them as undeserving of social trust and moral legitimacy. In lines 33-36 ("You've thrown the worst fear / That can ever be hurled / Fear to bring children / Into the world"), the accusation expands to societal scale. The metaphor of "throwing" fear equates the act with a physical assault, increasing the perceived intentionality of harm (Culpeper 1996: 356). This is a direct Quality Face attack, attributing to the addressees

responsibility for a fear so profound it undermines the continuation of life and a breach of Sociality Rights, eroding the mutual expectation of safety in society (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540).

Lines 39-40 (“You ain’t worth the blood / That runs in your veins”) represent the song’s most severe instance of bald on record impoliteness (Culpeper 1996: 356). The utterance is entirely unmitigated, collapsing the distinction between the addressees’ actions and their existence and denying them both Quality Face (by devaluing their life) and Social Identity Face (by excluding them from the moral community). In Spencer-Oatey’s framework, Sociality Rights are described as basic personal and social entitlements (2002: 540); Dylan’s wording can be interpreted as symbolically denying even the most fundamental of these, namely the right to life.

In lines 47-48 (“That even Jesus would never / Forgive what you do”), Dylan invokes the ultimate Christian model of forgiveness only to claim that the addressees are beyond even divine pardon. Culpeper identifies moral exclusion from the highest standard as positive impoliteness (1996: 357), while Spencer-Oatey would categorise this as an infringement of Equity Rights, denying the addressees the possibility of moral redemption (2007: 641). The economic critique appears in lines 49-50 (“Let me ask you one question / Is your money that good?”). While superficially a question, it is rhetorical and presupposes a negative answer, a recognised impoliteness strategy when the proposition entails a negative evaluation of the addressee (Culpeper 1996: 356). This continues through lines 55-56 (“All the money you made / Will never buy back your soul”), where material wealth is positioned as spiritually bankrupt, a moral ledger framing in which the debt is unpayable.

Lines 57-58 ("And I hope that you die / And your death will come soon") function as the song's most explicit and aggravated FTA. As bald on record impoliteness, it directly denies the right to life (Quality Face) and expresses personal satisfaction in that denial, which breaches Equity Rights (Culpeper 1996: 356; Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540). Finally, lines 63-64 ("Til I'm sure that you're dead") extend the hostility beyond death itself. By refusing to release the addressees from scrutiny even in burial, Dylan sustains the face-threat, using thematic and sequential reinforcement to magnify the offence, much like the way repetition and parallelism can intensify verbal messages (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1570-71).

This analysis shows that "Masters of War" constructs impoliteness through a systematic layering of positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness and bald on record strategies (Culpeper 1996), consistently targeting both Quality Face and Social Identity Face (Spencer-Oatey 2007). The song also demonstrates repeated infringements of Equity Rights and Sociality Rights, framing the addressees as morally bankrupt, socially illegitimate and undeserving of life itself. Viewed through Spencer-Oatey's work, these attacks do more than threaten face. They seek to challenge the legitimacy of the identities and social positions occupied by the targets while simultaneously inviting audiences to re-evaluate their moral standing (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 106-107).

In relation to the research question: "How was linguistic impoliteness constructed and performed in 1960s and 70s protest music and what role did prosody play in this process?", this section addresses the first part: the construction of impoliteness in the lyrics. The sequential, unmitigated nature of Dylan's attacks lays the groundwork for performance analysis, where prosody will be examined as

the mechanism that intensifies these verbal strategies in delivery. Having established how impoliteness is constructed through lexical choice and sequential face-attack in the lyrics, the analysis now turns to prosodic delivery, examining how pitch, intensity and phrasing intensify these threats in performance.

5.1.3 Praat Analysis: “You ain’t worth the blood that runs in your veins” (Lines 39-40)

The Praat visualisation of the pitch line shows a sustained high-to-mid pitch level for much of the phrase, with intensity remaining consistently high except for slight dips on unstressed function words. The horizontal axis represents time in seconds and the vertical axes display pitch in semitones relative to 100 Hz and intensity in decibels. Read through Moore’s (2012) *soundbox* (see section 3.3), the close, centrally staged vocal track and sparse guitar accompaniment minimise competing musical interest, so the prosodic contour functions as the primary carrier of confrontational stance in the recording.

The opening “you” is delivered with a sharp rise into a high pitch plateau, accompanied by a marked intensity peak. Wennerstrom states that “the L+H* pitch accent... can be used to single out a specific lexical item for contrast or emphasis within discourse” (2001: 36). While no overt lexical contrast is made here, the prominence on “you” isolates the addressee as the exclusive focus of the evaluative act. This strategy is consistent with the prominence assigned to second-person pronouns elsewhere in the song, suggesting repeated prosodic targeting of pronouns to personalise the attack.

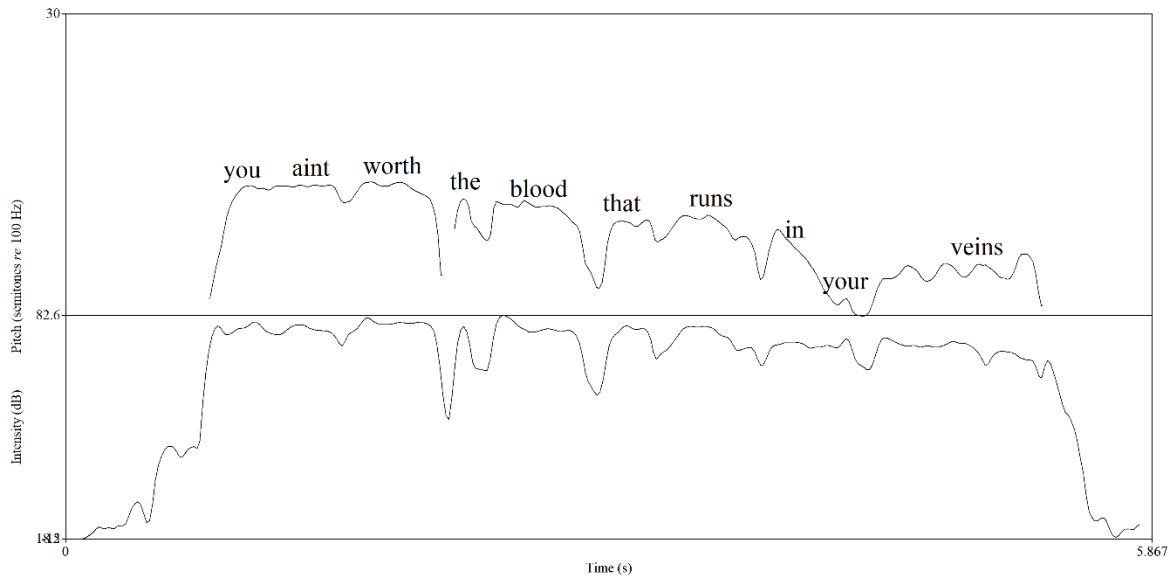


Figure 5.1: Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for “You ain’t worth the blood that runs in your veins” from “Masters of War”

Across “ain’t worth the”, pitch remains in the higher register with only minor undulations, while intensity stays near its maximum. Wichmann, building on Brazil’s concept of pitch concord, notes that high and mid terminations tend to project similar pitch keys in subsequent speech and deviations from this pattern can sound non-supportive (2004: 141-143). This stable prosodic profile reinforces the speaker’s stance, sustaining control over the floor without signalling openness to negotiation. On “blood”, the pitch lowers briefly before recovering, while loudness remains high. Culpeper et al. note that prosodic features such as marked downstepped falls and intonational parallelism can reinforce the force of an utterance, thereby intensifying its impoliteness (2003: 1570). Here, the acoustic prominence foregrounds “blood” as a visceral and symbolic core of the insult. The phrase “that runs” contains a small pitch rise on “runs”, supported by a stable intensity contour. Wennerstrom explains that pitch accents can signal a speaker’s assumptions about the accessibility, contrast, or re-emphasis of information in discourse, thereby influencing how that information is integrated into the listener’s mental representation. (2001: 94). This

movement enlivens the imagery and maintains rhythmic drive through the line. In, “in your veins”, the pitch dips slightly on “your” before rising onto “veins”, accompanied by a subtle increase in loudness. Wichmann notes that final pitch movements often serve to signal closure in discourse (2000: 69-71).

Fónagy and Magdics note that scorn can be conveyed through a narrow pitch range and compressed voice quality (1963: 304); while Dylan’s delivery is not flat throughout, the relatively constrained range across the phrase, combined with its terminal movement, aligns with these prosodic cues to produce a sense of irreversible condemnation.

The sustained pitch-intensity contour across this utterance is central to how its impoliteness is realised in performance. Rather than allowing space for reinterpretation as hyperbole or banter, the consistent high intensity and falling terminal movement produce a sense of controlled, deliberate hostility. This aligns with Caballero et al.’s experimental findings that utterances perceived as rude often exhibit longer durations and stronger falling contours (2018: 48). The correspondence between Dylan’s delivery and this acoustic profile reinforces the claim in Chapter 3 that experimental phonetic findings can be productively applied to the analysis of protest song performance. From an interactional perspective, this prosodic force compounds the verbal rejection of Quality Face, defined by Spencer-Oatey as “the desire to be positively evaluated in terms of personal qualities” (2002: 540).

Dylan’s steady pacing and decisive terminal fall on “veins” align with these prosodic features, reinforcing its perception as calculated rudeness. The waveform indicates that the line is executed in one continuous prosodic unit with minimal

internal pausing with Culpeper et al. observing that the repetition or parallelism of linguistic impoliteness strategies can increase imposition on the target and emphasise the speaker's negative stance (2003: 1561). In this case, delivering multiple face-threatening propositions within a single prosodic contour creates a similar cumulative effect, as they are processed as part of a sustained verbal attack. Arvaniti notes that tonal specification over phrases is used to mark phrasal boundaries (2020: 2); here, the final pitch movement on "veins" functions as such a boundary marker while also serving as the insult's emphatic conclusion.

Overall, the prosodic delivery of this line integrates several elements observed elsewhere in the song: targeted prominence on pronouns, sustained high-register pitch for assertiveness and terminal movements signalling finality, with additional features that align with cross-modal and empirical research on the sound of hostility. The final pitch rise-fall and slight lengthening resonate with Fónagy & Magdics's findings on the acoustic coding of contempt, while the delivery's pacing and terminal shape reflect Caballero et al.'s profile of rudeness cues. These combined effects demonstrate how Dylan's performance style uses prosody as an active resource for intensifying and framing the insult beyond its lexical meaning.

5.1.4 Praat Analysis: "I hope that you die" (Lines 57-58)

Figure 5.1 presents the Praat visualisation for lines 57-58 from "Masters of War", displaying the waveform alongside pitch and intensity contours for Dylan's delivery of "I hope that you die / And your death will come soon". The visualisation shown in Figure 5.1 contains two distinct utterances separated by a short pause: "I hope that you die" and "And your death will come soon". As in previous examples, the horizontal axis represents time in seconds, while the vertical axes display pitch in

Hertz and intensity in decibels. Read through Moore's (2012) *soundbox*, the close-miked, centrally positioned vocal and absence of harmonic distraction place the listener in an intimate auditory proximity to the threat, intensifying the immediacy and force of the prosodic attack.

The first clause opens at a mid-range pitch on “I hope”, before rising sharply on “you” and then dropping decisively onto “die.” Intensity follows this contour closely, peaking on “you.” Wennerstrom states that “the L+H* pitch accent... can be used to single out a specific lexical item for contrast or emphasis within discourse” (2001: 36). While no explicit lexical contrast is present here, the prominence of “you” isolates the addressee as the sole target. This targeting similarly directs attention towards the intended object of hostility, using pitch prominence to personalise and intensify the face-attack. Taken together with the analyses presented elsewhere in Chapter 5, this suggests a recurring pattern across the three songs whereby heightened pitch on second-person pronouns becomes a prosodic resource for personalising impoliteness in recorded performance.

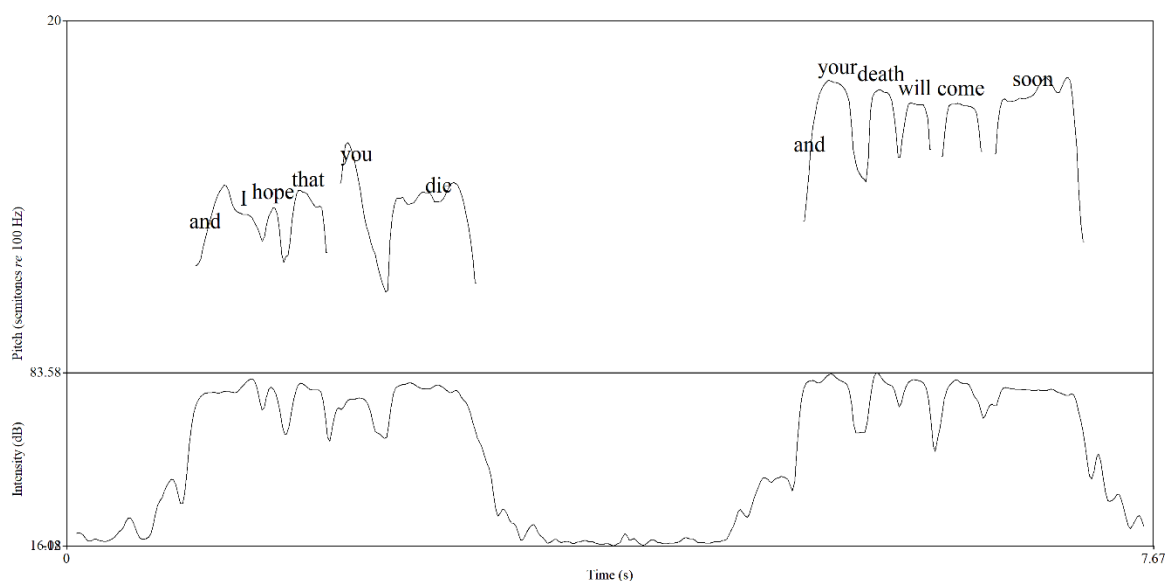


Figure 5.2: Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for lines 57-58 from “Masters of War”

Following the stressed “you”, the fall onto “die” is delivered with sustained loudness, giving the closing word a clipped and conclusive quality. Wichmann notes that final pitch falls “often signal closure and finality” in interaction (2000: 69-71). This fall reinforces the bald-on-record nature of the threat. Culpeper describes the bald-on-record strategy as one where face threats are made directly without redressive action (1996: 356), which fits the delivery here.

The second clause, “And your death will come soon,” begins at a lower pitch baseline but builds steadily towards the final word “soon.” Pitch height and intensity rise in tandem. Wennerstrom discusses how pitch accents such as L+H* are associated with contrast in discourse and can signal a speaker’s assumptions about information accessibility (2001: 94). The placement of this pitch prominence at the clause end coincides with the utterance’s final lexical item, which increases its perceived salience for the listener. This effect reduces the imagined distance between the wish and its fulfilment, heightening the immediacy of the threat.

From a pragmatic perspective, the prosody compounds the verbal offence. Spencer-Oatey defines Quality Face as “the desire to be positively evaluated in terms of personal qualities” (2002: 540). The temporal framing of the threat, emphasising its imminent fulfilment through stress on “soon”, intensifies the damage to Quality Face. As Culpeper et al. note, prosody can intensify the force of an utterance (2003: 1570-1571), with pitch and loudness peaks aligning here with key semantic items (“you” and “soon”). The short pause between clauses, visible in the waveform, produces a momentary drop in intensity before the attack is renewed. Culpeper et al. observe that repetition, whether lexical, structural, or intonational, can

have an intensifying function (ibid). In Dylan's delivery, this structure functions as successive strikes: first the wish for death, second the assertion of its imminent arrival. Taken together, the acoustic evidence reinforces patterns already established in the chapter and operationalised through the procedures in section 4.4.2: targeted pitch peaks on pronouns, final falling contours signalling closure and clause-final prominence that heightens immediacy. These prosodic resources operate not merely as carriers of lexical meaning but as active tools in constructing the severity of the offence.

A comparison between this line and the earlier analysis of "You ain't worth the blood that runs in your veins" reveals a recurrent set of prosodic strategies in "Masters of War". In both cases, Dylan assigns marked pitch prominence to the pronoun "*you*", uses sustained high or mid-high pitch to maintain assertiveness and closes with a terminal pitch movement that, following Wichmann, signals finality (2004: 151). The repetition of these patterns across multiple threats suggests a deliberate performance style in which prosody is consistently mobilised to personalise, sustain and conclusively frame acts of impoliteness. By using the same acoustic devices in separate lines, Dylan constructs a coherent sonic identity for the song's hostile stance, reinforcing the increasing force of its face attacks.

It is important to consider who functions as the hearer in this song. Although Dylan repeatedly employs direct second-person address, the addressee is not a single identifiable individual but a constructed collective comprising military planners, weapons manufacturers and political elites associated with war-making. The repeated pronoun "you" personalises the attack, yet the target remains institutional rather than interpersonal. At the same time, the song is addressed to a wider listening public, inviting audiences to witness and align themselves with its

condemnation. In this sense, "Masters of War" exemplifies the process of mass-mediated face negotiation outlined in Chapter 3, directing face-attacks towards collective actors while simultaneously organising audience uptake and moral alignment.

"Masters of War" establishes that linguistic impoliteness in 1960s protest music could be realised through sustained, unmitigated verbal attack rather than irony or humour. Dylan's song constructs a coherent hostile stance by repeatedly targeting Quality Face, Social Identity Face and core sociality rights, while his relatively narrow melodic range, repeated prominence on "you" and decisive terminal contours turn these textual threats into an insistent prosodic performance. In relation to the research question, this case demonstrates that prosody does not merely accompany impolite lyrics but is central to how protest songs perform mass-mediated face-attacks on institutional and collective identities.

5.2 Impoliteness and Prosody in Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam"

Following on from the analysis of Bob Dylan's "Masters of War", this section examines Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam", further developing the exploration of linguistic impoliteness and prosodic strategies within protest music. Where Dylan's approach is characterised by sustained, unmitigated verbal attack directed at institutional power, Simone's performance shifts towards a collective political indictment, reflecting the heightened urgency of the civil rights era.

The song, written in response to events such as the murder of Medgar Evers and the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church (see Section 2.3 and Section 4.2.2), stands as one of the most direct statements of protest in 20th century music. Simone's language is notably blunt and confrontational, as demonstrated in the

analyses of the refrain and subsequent lyrical sequences below (see Sections 5.2.1-5.2.2). Maintaining the analytical approach established in the previous case study, this section examines how Simone's lyrics and vocal delivery disrupt audience expectations, unsettle conventional power dynamics and provoke reflection or discomfort. This case study treats Simone's performance as a recorded event in which face-attack, vocal realisation and popular music conventions intersect.

5.2.1 Direct Condemnation and Collective Accusation: "Mississippi Goddam!" and "Everybody knows about Mississippi, Goddam!"

In "Mississippi Goddam", Simone's creativity is evident as she places deeply emotional and angry lyrics within the framework of an upbeat popular song (Kernodle, 2008: 304). She introduces the song directly, stating, "the name of this song is "Mississippi Goddam"" and I mean every word of it" (Simone 1964), immediately setting a confrontational tone and signalling her intent. This statement provides rare, explicit insight into the artist's own framing of the song as intentional, unmitigated and confrontational, a level of performer self-positioning that is not equally accessible in the other case studies. The initial laughter from audiences fades as the seriousness and anger of the performance became apparent (Kernodle, 2008: 304).

The refrain "Mississippi Goddam!" is an example of bald on record impoliteness, using direct, unmitigated language that disregards the hearer's face needs (Culpeper, 1996: 356). Simone's use of a curse word in a public context not only broke social taboos but also directly attacked the quality face of those associated with, or invested in, the social and political structures under criticism, challenging claims to moral legitimacy and respectability. Rather than merely

damaging quality face, the accusation seeks to undermine the moral legitimacy on which those identities depend. In Spencer-Oatey's terms, the attack challenges the positive social value attached to those identities and encourages audiences to reassess the ethical standing of the institutions and social structures being condemned (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 106-107).

In threatening quality face, Simone challenges the audience's desire to be seen as morally upright and honourable; her accusation undermines the positive personal qualities that individuals or groups wish to project (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540). Each repetition of the phrase functions as a public accusation, denying the comfort of polite boundaries and positioning the listener as complicit in the injustices she names. Moreover, Simone's attack does not remain individual. When she moves to "Cause everybody knows about Mississippi, goddam!" the focus shifts to collective accusation, broadening the face-threat. Here, Simone employs negative impoliteness, as Culpeper includes strategies such as "frighten, instil a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur, condescend, scorn or ridicule and be contemptuous" (1996: 358). By stating that "everybody knows," Simone implicates an entire social group, thus threatening the social identity face of the audience, she damages the positive value individuals place on their group memberships and roles, undermining the collective esteem of those associated with Mississippi, the South, or by extension, a complicit society (see section 2.3) (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540).

This universal accusation erodes the group's ability to maintain a respected collective identity. Viewed through Spencer-Oatey's work, the significance of the attack lies not simply in the threat to face itself but in its attempt to reshape how that collective identity is publicly understood and evaluated (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 106-107). The performance therefore functions as a challenge to the legitimacy of the

social identities associated with segregation and racial injustice. Furthermore, this collective indictment also strips the audience of their equity rights by denying them the expectation of fair and unbiased treatment (Spencer-Oatey, 2005: 100). Simone's sweeping accusation means no one can claim exemption or ignorance; all are positioned as both accused and accountable, regardless of their individual beliefs or actions. This blanket approach creates discomfort and a sense of injustice among listeners who may feel unfairly implicated.

The impact of these lines is inseparable from the musical performance. The refrain is framed by Simone's distinctive use of C major and a strong, driving 4/4 rhythm, established by her vamping piano, steady drums and a supportive bass line (Kernodle, 2008: 303). The instruments typically recede when Simone delivers "goddam", leaving her voice exposed, sharply punctuated by emphatic piano chords (Kernodle, 2008: 303). Applying Moore's (2012) concept of the soundbox this withdrawal of accompaniment collapses the auditory field around Simone's voice, positioning the listener in close proximity to the utterance and intensifying the force of the face-attack. This musical isolation magnifies the offence, focusing all attention on the linguistic face-attack. The refrain structures the song, reappearing at key moments to remind the audience that the accusation is ongoing and unmitigated. As Simone moves from general condemnation to the specifics of racial injustice, she modulates to A minor, musically signalling a shift in the subject matter (Kernodle, 2008: 303). This change mirrors the escalation of impoliteness in the lyrics, intensifying both the musical and emotional tension.

Moreover, the live performance context is important. Simone's delivery and tone allowed her to respond to the audience in real time, heightening the face-threats and making each repetition of "Mississippi Goddam"!" a shared, uncomfortable

experience (Kernodle, 2008: 302). This real-time dynamic disrupts relational face (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 647), as the expectation of rapport, equality and mutual understanding between performer and audience is unsettled. Instead of providing comfort or reassurance, Simone's performance generates discomfort, division and a rupture in the social contract of the live setting. By structuring her performance in this way, Simone transforms bald on record and negative impoliteness into a collective act of resistance, attacking quality face through explicit moral condemnation and social identity face through group-based accusation.

At the same time, the live performance context disrupts relational face and equity rights, as the audience is denied rapport, exemption and fair positioning within the interaction.

The song's refrain, reinforced by deliberate musical choices and intensified through live delivery, becomes both a linguistic and sonic indictment, a point examined in greater detail through the Praat analysis in Section 5.2.3. Simone's use of repetition, modulation and dynamic shifts ensures that her challenge to social norms and audience expectations is relentless, making "Mississippi Goddam!" not just a protest song but a performative, destabilising force within the civil rights movement. In doing so, the song exemplifies the argument in popular music studies that songs function less as static texts than as performed arguments and collective events, in which vocal delivery, genre conventions and audience address together produce meaning (Frith 1988, 1996; Way & McKerrell 2017).

5.2.2 Sarcasm, Ridicule and Collective Face-attack: "Too slow"

During the sequence of lines 30-35, Simone combines the language of everyday labour with a torrent of direct insults, all underscored by the biting refrain "Too slow."

Musically and textually, this passage demonstrates how Simone layers lexical ridicule with prosodic repetition to produce a sustained act of negative impoliteness and collective face-attack. Simone parodies the language of white moderates and segregationists, whose calls to “go slow” were used to justify delaying civil rights and equality (see chapter 2.3), employing negative impoliteness strategies such as ridicule and contempt (Culpeper, 1996: 358). The band’s exaggerated and repetitive delivery of ‘Too slow’ amplifies this ridicule, making the underlying contempt for calls to moderation unmistakable. As Bousfield notes, citing Labov and Fanshel (1977:95), “repeated requests of this nature are considered an aggravated form of criticism” (2008:134) and Holmes observes that “repetition itself serves as a rhetorical device to increase the force of the repeated speech act” (1984:355, cited in Bousfield, 2008:134), making Simone’s persistent accusations all the more threatening. Moreover, the ridicule becomes especially pointed as Simone moves from descriptions of menial tasks to explicit character attacks: “you’re just plain rotten,” “you’re too damn lazy,” “the thinking’s crazy”, which escalate the intensity of the face-threat and strip away any pretence of civility. Through these lines, Simone targets the quality face of her audience, undermining the desire to be perceived as moral, competent and reasonable (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540). By attributing laziness, rottenness and irrationality to the targets of her ridicule, she challenges their positive self-image and calls into question their ethical standing.

Furthermore, this passage attacks social identity face by constructing a sharp boundary between Simone’s in-group (‘me and my people’) and those positioned as complicit in delay and injustice. The mocking refrain and repeated accusations deny the audience any comfort of solidarity or shared values, leaving them isolated and implicated. In addition, Simone also disrupts relational face by denying the

expectation of rapport, mutual understanding, or equality between performer and audience (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 647). Instead, her performance generates discomfort, division and a break in the usual social contract of the live setting. By refusing to mitigate her accusations, Simone removes any ambiguity, compelling listeners to confront the collective responsibility for racial injustice.

Musically, the sequence's effect is amplified by the band's prosodic and performative choices. Rather than slowing the tempo, the band intensifies the delivery of "Too slow" with each repetition, building volume and force over time. This progressive amplification creates increasing pressure, allowing each insult that follows to land with heightened emotional intensity. The call-and-response structure, driven by the band, magnifies the sense of collective mockery and ensures that the ridicule is not merely personal, but a coordinated group indictment. This dynamic, as Bousfield demonstrates, is central to the public, performative nature of aggravated impoliteness, where repetition and collective participation exacerbate the threat to face (2008: 134, 156).

In structuring this passage, Simone transforms negative impoliteness, sarcasm and ridicule into a performative act of resistance, enacted through repetition, prosodic exaggeration and collective delivery. The "Too slow" sequence, driven by deliberate musical and linguistic choices, relentlessly attacks quality face, social identity face and relational face, forcing the audience into an uncomfortable reckoning with complicity and delay. This passage also demonstrates what Antonio Gramsci refers to as a challenge to cultural hegemony, which he defines as the balance of "force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent" (Gramsci, 1971: 80). As discussed in Chapter 2, the civil rights context exposed tensions between dominant ideological

narratives and lived experience, creating conditions in which such challenges to hegemonic “consent” could be articulated through cultural forms like protest music. The band’s prosodic delivery, particularly the sarcastic repetition of “do it slow,” disrupts the norms of civility and deference that contribute to this consent. Through exaggerated intonation, manipulated tempo and abrupt pauses, the backing performers parody the rhetoric of moderation, destabilising the communicative conventions that ordinarily mask structural violence. The performance resists not only political moderation but also the emotional and stylistic expectations that help reproduce hegemonic control. In this way, the band’s prosody contributes to a broader performative resistance, reinforcing the song’s ideological challenge to dominant cultural norms.

5.2.3 Praat Analysis of Line 39

In order to examine how impoliteness is realised through sound as well as language, this section presents a detailed prosodic analysis of selected lyrical passages using Praat, building on the prosodic framework outlined in Chapter 3 and the analytical procedures established in Chapter 4. By measuring pitch and intensity, the analysis demonstrates how vocal features contribute to the construction of face-threats, sarcasm and accusation. These prosodic cues offer insight into how impoliteness is sonically intensified in performance contexts.

The Praat analysis of Simone’s delivery of “Cause everybody knows about “Mississippi Goddam”!” illustrates how these prosodic features reinforce the perception and impact of impoliteness. In the graph, the pitch contour shows a steep downward movement and intensity peaks that are especially pronounced on the word “Goddam”, marking heightened loudness at the point of most explicit offence.

The use of pitch and intensity measurements follows the methodological procedures set out in Chapter 4, while the interpretation of contour shape, range and loudness is informed by the prosodic framework outlined in Chapter 3 for analysing how impoliteness is realised in performance.

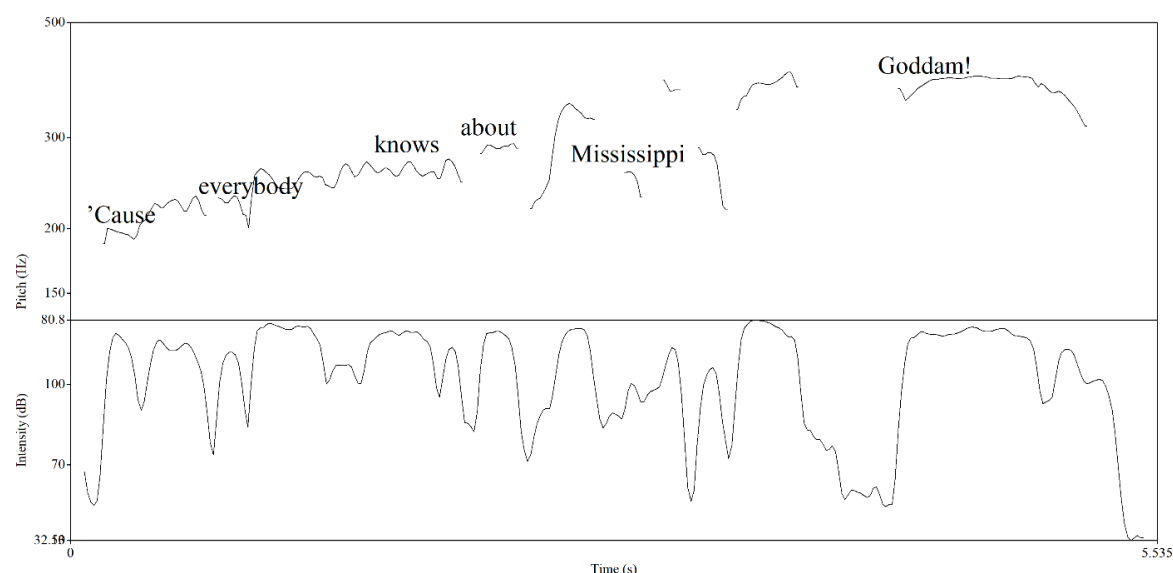


Figure 5.3: Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for line 39 from “Mississippi Goddam”

In addition, as Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003: 1546) emphasise, “the prosodic realisation of an utterance can crucially mark it as face-damaging.” This is echoed by experimental research from Caballero et al., who found that “rude requests displayed a slower speech rate, lower pitch and tended to fall in pitch” (2018: 39). Simone’s delivery on “Goddam” uses a falling contour, which “conveys a sense of extreme finality or closure” and “intensifies the force of the words” (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1570), matching Caballero et al.’s observation that “falling contours convey impoliteness” (Caballero et al., 2018: 40). The Praat graph also

demonstrates a clear spike in intensity at “Goddam,” a strategy described by Caballero et al. as “higher intensity in combination with increased pitch seems to be a prosodic strategy for transmitting impoliteness” (ibid). Such loud, assertive delivery is not just a musical effect but “an invasion of our auditory space” that is “perceived negatively” (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1573), turning the utterance into a sonic as well as a social affront.

Furthermore, pitch movement and intensity work together here to project an impoliteness stance that is recognisable even beyond the propositional content. As Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann emphasise, “the meanings expressed through prosody are not propositional but very general” (2003: 1568). In this performance, those general meanings are legible as condemnation and refusal of affiliation. The steep terminal fall on “Goddam”, combined with the marked intensity peak, cues a stance of emphatic closure rather than openness to response, strengthening the utterance’s function as a public accusation. In Culpeper’s later account, prosody is central to how listeners arrive at an impoliteness evaluation, since hearers routinely treat tone of voice as a primary trigger for judging an utterance as face-attacking (2011: 1-2). Simone’s repeated realisation of the line with the same contour and loudness profile therefore operates as intonational parallelism, reinforcing the emotional and pragmatic force of the face-threat and making each iteration progressively harder to neutralise as merely expressive singing (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1570). This repeated prosodic pattern serves to reinforce the emotional and pragmatic force of the face-threat, making each iteration more pointed and difficult for the audience to ignore.

Furthermore, Caballero et al. confirm that “requests that create a Polite versus Rude impression on listeners were differentiated by several continuous

measures of the whole utterance”, including mean pitch, pitch range and speech rate (2018: 45). The Praat graph confirms that Simone’s performance falls squarely within the “rude”/impolite end of this spectrum, with a strong, falling contour and pronounced intensity at the primary point of face-threat. In combination, these findings demonstrate how the prosodic patterns identified in experimental and discourse-based studies of impoliteness map onto the sonic design of protest performance, linking the general claims made in Chapter 3 to the specific case of “Mississippi Goddam”.

Both the theoretical insights of Culpeper et al. (2003, 2011) and the experimental results of Caballero et al. (2018) support the claim that Simone’s use of prosody in this moment is a calculated act of impoliteness, exploiting pitch and intensity not just to heighten the expressive power of her words but to mark her utterance as deliberately face-damaging.

5.2.4 Praat Analysis of Lines 32-33

The force of the song’s “Too slow!” refrain is grounded as much in its prosodic organisation as in its lexical content. As established earlier in this chapter, the band’s delivery exploits what Culpeper et al. describe as the “attitudinal” function of intonation, charging the utterance with defiance and accusation (2003: 1568). This section focuses specifically on how rhythmic patterning, pitch movement and timing interact to intensify the social force of Simone’s mockery.

Auer et al. argue that rhythmic organisation structures attention and enhances memorability, making repeated and sharply articulated utterances especially salient for listeners (1999: 16-17). In this context, the repeated delivery of “Too slow!” functions as a deliberate communicative strategy rather than a decorative musical

device. Its rhythmic regularity ensures that the accusation is not only perceived but retained, embedding critique and discomfort in the audience’s memory.

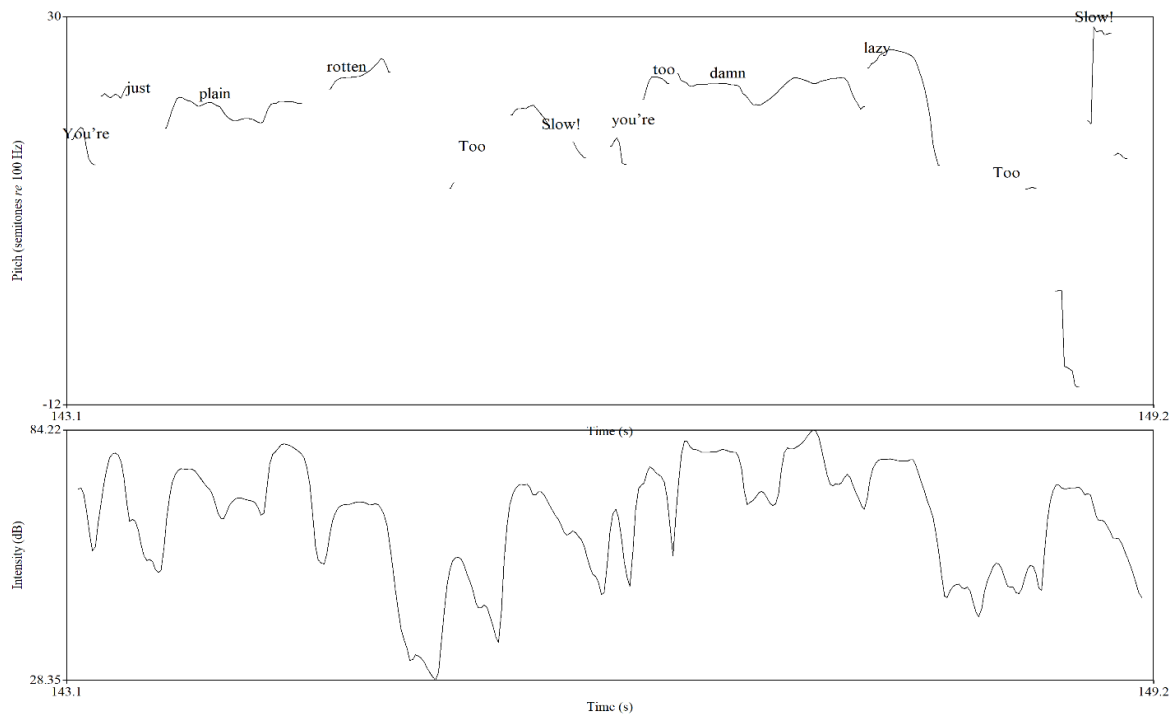


Figure 5.4: Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for lines 32-33 of “Mississippi Goddam”

Rhythm also plays a crucial role in organising interaction. As Auer et al. note, rhythmic patterning provides listeners with temporal expectations about when actions and responses should occur, allowing them to orient themselves within an unfolding interaction (1999: 18). Simone’s performance works against this interactional stability. The syncopated insertions of “Too slow!” disrupt rhythmic continuity, producing what Auer et al. describe as a breakdown in expected rhythmic

organisation, a recognised marker of interactional disturbance (1999: 21). Because rhythmic regularity typically supports predictable cycles of perception and processing, violations of these patterns become especially prominent and difficult to ignore.

Simone's manipulation of rhythm therefore ensures that the refrain functions as a socially consequential interruption rather than a stylistic flourish. Once a rhythmic pattern is established, listeners become attuned to anticipating subsequent events (Auer et al., 1999: 24). By alternately satisfying and frustrating these expectations, Simone sustains musical and social tension, making each iteration of "Too slow!" both recognisable and newly disruptive. This effect is further intensified by prosodic features such as pitch and intensity. As demonstrated in earlier sections, falling contours and heightened loudness are associated with impoliteness evaluations (Caballero et al., 2018). Here, those cues are amplified through abrupt dynamic shifts and collective band participation.

Through this shared, performative delivery, Simone's mockery becomes not merely an individual affront but a collective face-threat. The ensemble's coordinated ridicule targets not only those implicated in the injustices being condemned but also the wider listening public, reinforcing the oppositional stance of the performance. The collective nature of this delivery also raises a challenge for conventional impoliteness theory, which typically assumes a single speaker directing a face-threat towards a hearer. In "Mississippi Goddam", however, the face-attack is distributed across multiple performers who participate in the repeated accusation. The band therefore functions not merely as accompaniment but as a collective voice that reinforces and legitimises the act of condemnation. This collaborative performance extends the concept of mass-mediated face negotiation developed in Chapter 3, demonstrating

how face-attacks can be jointly enacted through musical participation rather than produced by a single speaker alone. This supports the broader claim developed in Chapter 3 that rhythmic and prosodic patterning function as central semiotic resources through which protest songs construct collective stance, memory and face-attack, rather than as purely musical embellishments (Auer et al., 1999; Wennerstrom, 2001; Way & McKerrell, 2017).

The question of who functions as the hearer in "Mississippi Goddam" is more complex than in conventional interpersonal impoliteness. Simone's accusations move beyond specific perpetrators to encompass segregationist institutions, political authorities and wider publics who remained passive in the face of racial injustice. The song thus addresses multiple audiences, including those directly implicated in the injustices it condemns and those invited to witness and evaluate that condemnation. Rather than functioning as a face-attack against a single recipient, the performance transforms accusation into a public act of moral accountability that requires audiences to position themselves in relation to the social realities the song exposes. In this respect, "Mississippi Goddam" exemplifies mass-mediated face negotiation through its simultaneous orientation towards institutional targets and diverse listening publics.

This analysis of Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" demonstrates how linguistic impoliteness in 1960s protest music was not simply a matter of provocative lyrics but was constructed and intensified through deliberate prosodic choices. Simone's use of direct accusations, sarcasm and ridicule typifies the construction of impoliteness, while her manipulation of pitch, rhythm and intensity shows how performance elevates these face-threats from text to lived experience. Through repeated refrains, dynamic shifts and strategic use of musical accompaniment,

Simone transforms her message into a collective and affective act of resistance. This case study illustrates that prosody played a crucial role in the performance of impoliteness during this era, acting as both a sonic weapon and a means of mobilising social critique. Simone's approach demonstrates how the force of protest music during this period relied on the dynamic combination of lyrical directness and expressive vocal techniques, with prosody intensifying both the emotional impact and the song's capacity to challenge established social norms. Taken together, the analysis of "Mississippi Goddam" illustrates the value of combining impoliteness theory, prosodic analysis and popular music studies in order to account for how 1960s protest songs operated as mass-mediated face-attacks within specific sociopolitical struggles.

5.3 Prosody and impoliteness in Carly Simon's "You're So Vain"

"You're So Vain" is widely recognised as a sharp, lyrical attack on male vanity and entitlement (Kutulas, 2010: 682). Beneath its surface wit, however, the song exhibits a highly strategic deployment of prosody that intensifies and structures its linguistic impoliteness. The polished pop arrangement and controlled melodic delivery create a productive tension between musical smoothness and verbal aggression, shaping how impoliteness is performed rather than merely articulated.

While the lyrics contain both direct and indirect insults, it is Simon's vocal performance, particularly her manipulation of pitch, volume and intonation, that transforms the song into a sustained prosodic face-threatening act. Subtle shifts in delivery allow apparently conversational or ironic lines to function as pointed evaluations, making the offence recognisable without reliance on overtly aggressive

language. In this way, prosody operates as a central resource for constructing interpersonal damage within a musically restrained setting.

Adopting Culpeper's impoliteness framework (1996, 2005, 2011), the prosodic extensions developed by Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003) and Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model (2002, 2007), this section examines how Simon's delivery performs layered and dynamic impoliteness. Each phrase, pause and melodic contour contributes to the song's evaluative stance, amplifying its social critique and positioning the addressee as an object of ridicule, exposure and dismissal.

Through this coordination of linguistic and prosodic strategies, the performance challenges relational face, understood by Spencer-Oatey as the negotiation of roles, rights and power within interaction (2007: 647). Rather than presenting impoliteness as explosive or overtly confrontational, *"You're So Vain"* demonstrates how controlled vocal delivery and pop conventions can be mobilised to sustain face-attack over time. Accordingly, this case study applies the combined linguistic, prosodic and musicological frameworks outlined in Chapter 3, treating Simon's recorded vocal performance as a site where impoliteness strategies, prosodic choices and popular music practices intersect.

5.3.1 Impolite openings

From the beginning line 1, the whispered "Son of a gun" opening "You're So Vain" introduces a subtle but consequential act of impoliteness. Although brief and easily overlooked, the utterance carries significant pragmatic weight. The phrase has layered historical associations: in British naval slang it referred to a child born aboard ship, often under socially questionable circumstances and thus carried connotations

of illegitimacy and low status (Smyth 2008: 638). Other accounts trace the expression to aristocratic disdain for early firearms and their users, framing it as a term of contempt (Downing 1992: xi). In either case, the expression functions evaluatively, positioning the song's subject as undeserving of respect and foreshadowing the song's broader dismantling of his self-importance.

Importantly, Simon's decision to whisper the phrase intensifies its impolite force. Delivered in a hushed voice, the utterance creates an impression of confidentiality, as though the speaker is sharing an unspoken judgement with the listener while deliberately excluding the addressee. This paralinguistic choice aligns the speaker and audience in a moment of shared mockery and renders the insult more cutting precisely because it is not fully voiced. The effect can be understood as an instance of mock impoliteness. Culpeper defines mock impoliteness as the use of superficially mild or polite forms that are recognisably insincere and therefore face-threatening (1996: 356). Here, the whisper mimics discretion or restraint, but the phrase's cultural connotations undermine any surface politeness.

As a voice-quality choice, whispering operates as a paralinguistic resource rather than a neutral absence of voice. As Laver notes, whispering in English is conventionally associated with secrecy, restricted access and exclusion (1980: 122). In this context, it functions to destabilise the subject's Social Identity Face, understood as the desire for one's public persona and social standing to be recognised and respected (Spencer-Oatey 2007: 641). By insinuating inferiority at the very opening of the song, Simon positions the addressee as unworthy of the attention he appears to seek, establishing an asymmetrical power relation that persists throughout the performance.

Although Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann do not treat whispering as a discrete prosodic category, they emphasise that voice quality and volume form part of paralinguistic prosody and play a central role in signalling evaluative stance (2003: 1568). In this case, Simon's soft vocal delivery cues a reading of quiet disdain, allowing the utterance to be heard as socially aggressive despite its subdued form. This supports the argument, developed in popular music studies, that vocal delivery itself operates as a meaning-making device (Frith 1988; Eckstein 2010). The whispered opening thus establishes impoliteness not through overt insult, but through a calculated manipulation of voice quality that frames the addressee as an object of ridicule before the song's more explicit face-threatening acts unfold.

5.3.2 Positive Impoliteness: Identity-Based Ridicule and Distancing

Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" employs a range of positive impoliteness strategies, aimed specifically at damaging the subject's positive face; their desire to be liked, admired and socially approved. This is primarily achieved through ridicule, distancing and mockery, all of which work to undermine the subject's projected self-image. One particularly illustrative example is in line 4, "You had one eye in the mirror as you watched yourself gavotte." The verb "gavotte," a dated reference to an eighteenth-century French court dance, functions ironically to caricature the subject's movements as excessively refined or pretentious (Little, Jenne 2001:47). This use of archaism serves to ridicule the subject's self-conscious performance of sophistication, suggesting that his gestures are not only contrived but laughably outdated. Culpeper (1996) identifies ridicule as a key sub-strategy of positive impoliteness, especially when it exaggerates or distorts a person's behaviour in order to attack their self-conception (1996: 357).

In addition, other lyrics in the song further reinforce this strategy by creating social distance. In line 5 “All the girls dreamed that they’d be your partner” appears, on the surface, to recognise the subject’s desirability. However, the speaker’s tone and framing recontextualise this admiration as sarcasm, implying it is a fantasy of the subject’s own making. This aligns with what Culpeper terms mock politeness, where politeness strategies are “obviously insincere” and are intended to perform a face-threatening act while retaining a surface form of politeness (1996: 356). The speaker dissociates herself from the group of admiring onlookers, positioning the subject as deluded in his perception of social desirability. This positioning reflects the broader shifts in norms of public address outlined in Chapter 2, in which more direct and evaluative forms of social judgement became culturally legible within popular music. Additionally, Simon’s description of the subject’s outward appearance in lines 2-3, targets the subject’s aesthetic self-presentation. The specificity of “apricot” in this context enhances the satirical tone, critiquing what appears to be an effort at performative elegance. The underlying face threat here extends to what Spencer-Oatey terms Quality Face, the desire to be positively evaluated for one’s traits and competencies (2002:540). By undermining both behaviour and appearance, Simon systematically dismantles the subject’s positive face.

The repeated line “You probably think this song is about you” functions as a model case of mock politeness, as the linguistic surface suggests empathy or reflection, however, the context and delivery make the sarcasm unmistakable. Furthermore, according to Culpeper et al., mock politeness involves “politeness strategies that are obviously insincere” (2003: 1555) and Simon’s delivery, with its rhythmic and tonal cues, invites the listener to recognise the gap between surface and intent. This performance undermines the subject’s Quality Face, as it implicitly

devalues their self-presentation and emotional integrity, aligning with Spencer-Oatey's concept of the desire to be positively appraised (2002: 540). The utterance "You're So Vain" is unambiguous and emotionally charged and functions as bald on record impoliteness, involving a direct face-attack with no attempt at mitigation (1996: 356). In addition, this strategy damages positive face, the subject's desire to be liked and approved of (Brown & Levinson, 1987:13). Moreover, this attack is reinforced by Simon's choice to use it as the chorus hook, thus ensuring its repetition becomes a structural and rhetorical feature. Culpeper et al., stress that repetition of face-threatening acts reinforces the unmitigated nature of the attack boosting its effect (2003:1561). By placing this line at the heart of the chorus, Simon elevates the insult from being a fleeting remark to a refrain of judgement, which echoes throughout the song, thus it becomes the centre of the composition, repeatedly performing FTAs without apology.

Furthermore, focusing on the chorus, the line "You probably think this song is about you" is a great example of the use of mock politeness in popular music. On the surface, it appears to offer an insight into the subject's thoughts. However, its placement within the larger lyrical context reveals it to be sarcastic. Culpeper defines mock politeness as the use of polite language forms that are obviously insincere, with the aim of undermining the hearer (1996: 356). Moreover, the contradiction between the phrase's structure and its intent is the essence of this strategy as the speaker knows the subject will hear the song and believe it is about him, making the line both accurate and sarcastic. This is a particularly effective form of impoliteness because it entraps the subject: if he believes the song is about him, he confirms the accusation; if he does not, he ignores a direct address. It is a self-fulfilling accusation, reinforced by its mocking tone and position within the chorus. From a

recording perspective, this identity-based ridicule is reinforced by the spatial organisation of Simon's voice in the mix. Interpreted through Moore's (2012) concept of the soundbox, Simon's vocal is placed prominently and with close perspective at the centre of the recording, producing an effect of intimacy rather than public address. This spatial closeness frames the insults as conversational and personal, intensifying their impact by denying the target distance or anonymity. Unlike Dylan's confrontational austerity or Simone's collective indictment, Simon's impoliteness operates through controlled proximity, using vocal intimacy and production polish to sustain evaluative pressure while maintaining musical smoothness. In this way, recording perspective becomes an additional resource for face-attack, aligning ridicule with intimacy rather than overt aggression.

5.3.3 Praat Analysis

Figure 5.5 presents a Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for a repeated "don't you" phrase in "You're So Vain". The contour shows a consistent pattern of high pitch onset followed by a sharp fall, accompanied by corresponding intensity modulation. This recurring rise-fall configuration coincides with moments of direct address and evaluative judgement, marking the phrase as prosodically salient. As established in Chapter 3, such pitch movement and contour shape function as resources for expressing stance and intensifying interpersonal meaning. Here, they

visually substantiate the confrontational force of Simon's delivery..

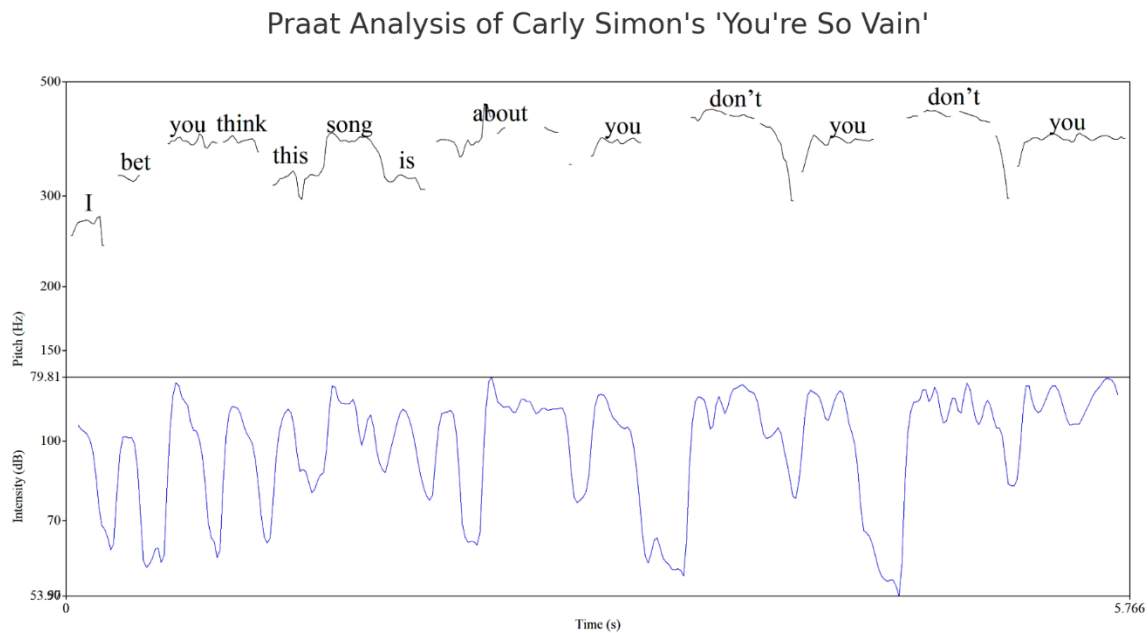


Figure 5.5: Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours for a line from “You’re So Vain”

The Praat analysis of this particular line of the song reveals a recurring pattern of high onset followed by pitch drop-offs during the repeated phrase “don’t you”. This intonation contour is notable for its interactional effect: the initial rise attracts attention and creates anticipation, but the sharp descent signals a form of closure or judgement (Wichmann 2000: 69-71). Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann observe a similar pattern in their study on impoliteness in entertainment, noting that “the intonation contour is that of a fall with a very high starting point - a pattern that is likely to suggest finality to the hearer” (2003: 1569-1570). In Simon’s performance, this falling contour has a comparable effect: it functions not as an open-ended interrogative, but as a rhetorical mechanism that simultaneously accuses and forecloses further interaction. The drop in pitch at the end of each “don’t you”

contributes to an auditory impression of verbal shutting down, which Culpeper et al. argue attacks both the addressee's Equity Rights and their Quality Face, implying inadequacy and moral failure (2003: 1569-1570). The prosodic design here intensifies the impoliteness of the utterance through intonational structure, rather than lexical aggression alone.

The repetition of the 'don't you' phrase contributes to the cumulative force of the utterance, functioning as a heightened form of verbal aggression. Delivered with increasing rhythmic intensity and marked pitch shifts, the phrase moves from rhetorical questioning into a prosodic performance of accusation. Bousfield highlights that such repetition can "hog the conversational floor," thus limiting the interlocutor's ability to respond or defend themselves. He argues that the parallelism of repeated impoliteness strategies "increases the imposition upon the addressee" and "emphasises the negative attitude of the speaker towards the hearer," ultimately enhancing the impoliteness of the exchange (2008:156-157). In Simon's performance, the echoing of "don't you" operates as a prosodic trap: the addressee is verbally cornered, subjected to the speaker's relentless evaluation.

This use of repetition does not merely sustain attention - it functions to escalate the face-threat by reducing ambiguity and intensifying speaker commitment to the critique. Each recurrence underscores the speaker's disdain, turning what could be dismissed as ironic into a deliberately confrontational stance. In this way, repetition when embedded within a prosodically aggressive frame serves not only as a stylistic device but as a strategic amplifier of impoliteness. This interaction between prosodic prominence, rhythmic placement and evaluative stance aligns with the account in Chapter 3 of how discourse prosody (Wennerstrom 2001; Culpeper et al.

2003) shapes interpersonal meaning, demonstrating that confrontational force arises from the coordination of musical and linguistic structures.

The use of a conditional clause “I bet you think” contributes to the façade of mildness by framing the accusation as speculative rather than assertive. This grammatical construction implies detachment or uncertainty, which might initially lessen the confrontational impact. However, in performance, Simon’s voice sharpens the line into a direct confrontation. Her rising intonation on “you”, visible in the Praat pitch analysis, reflects what Culpeper et al. describe as the attitudinal function of intonation: the use of rising contours and stress patterns to signal affective stance not directly encoded in the lexical content. While such attitudinal meanings are “notoriously hard to pin down”, they appear through interpretive inferences based on context and delivery, guiding listeners toward pragmatic readings such as mockery or sarcasm (2003:1568-1570). This intonational misalignment triggers the perception of mockery, positioning the target not as a misunderstood lover but as a laughingstock. While earlier discussion established “gavotte” as a lexical marker of ridicule through cultural incongruity, the following analysis demonstrates how this mockery is intensified and reconfigured through Simon’s vocal delivery.

5.3.4 Analysis of Line 5

This line was selected for closer inspection because it condenses verbal mockery, prosodic prominence and rhythmic emphasis into a single, compact utterance, making it particularly revealing of how Simon coordinates lyrical insult with vocal delivery. The Praat visualisation of this lyric shows two prosodic units separated by a brief pause: “You had one eye in the mirror” and “as you watched yourself gavotte.” As in previous examples, the horizontal axis represents time in seconds, with pitch

(in semitones relative to 100 Hz) displayed in the upper panel and intensity (in decibels) in the lower panel. The first phrase begins with “you had,” delivered in a mid-low pitch range with small, level oscillations and moderate intensity. This unmarked onset contrasts sharply with the following “one eye,” where the pitch rises steeply on “one” into a high plateau across “eye,” accompanied by sustained high intensity. Wennerstrom notes that such L+H* pitch accents can single out a lexical item for emphasis or contrast in discourse (2001: 36), which foregrounds “one” and the addressee’s singular, self-absorbed focus. The following “in the” shows a slight descent before climbing again on “mirror,” which is delivered in a relatively high register before a decisive drop, signalling closure to the first prosodic unit. Wichmann observes that final pitch falls often mark completion and assertiveness in interaction (2000: 69-71), a cue reinforced here by the matching decrease in intensity at the phrase boundary.

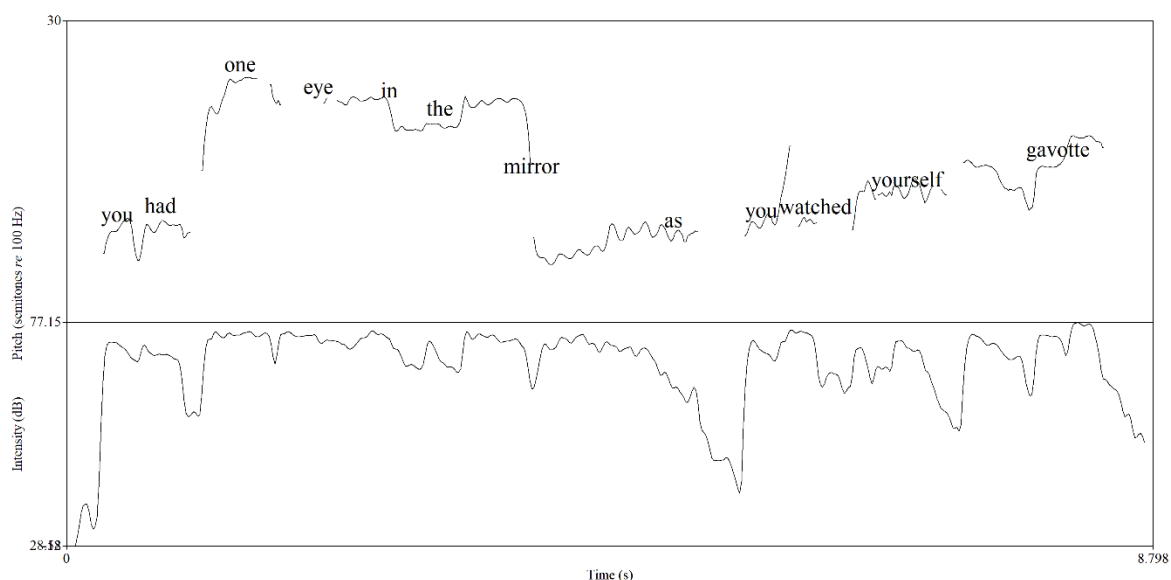


Figure 5.6: Praat visualisation of pitch and intensity contours of line 5 from “You’re So Vain”

The second phrase opens with “as,” a low-pitched, low-intensity syllable that functions as a prosodic reset. “You watched” initiates a climb in both pitch and intensity, peaking on “yourself,” where Simon delivers the pronoun with notable prominence. This mirrors a strategy seen in Dylan’s “I hope that you die” (see section 5.1.4), where heightened pitch on second-person pronouns personalises the face-threat. Culpeper categorises such targeting as positive impoliteness when it isolates and evaluates the hearer negatively (1996: 357). The final lexical item, “gavotte,” receives a marked pitch rise before a slight downturn, accompanied by one of the highest intensity peaks in the excerpt. This terminal movement, while not a sharp fall, creates a sense of emphatic finality and ridicule. From a pragmatic perspective, the prosody compounds the lyric’s verbal mockery.

As established in section 5.3.2, the lexical choice of “gavotte,” a formal and somewhat archaic dance, already frames the addressee as affected and self-absorbed, inviting ridicule through cultural incongruity. What becomes visible here, however, is how Simon’s vocal delivery intensifies this mockery at the level of performance. Spencer-Oatey’s notion of Quality Face (2002: 540) is undercut by Simon’s delivery, which frames the addressee’s behaviour as absurdly self-conscious. The sustained high pitch across “one eye in the mirror” evokes a theatricalised observation, while the climactic treatment of “gavotte” caricatures the addressee’s elegance as pretentious display. Culpeper et al. note that prosodic features such as pitch prominence and final boundary tones can intensify the force of an utterance, particularly when aligned with semantically loaded items (2003: 1570-71). Here, the co-occurrence of intensity peaks with “one,” “yourself,” and “gavotte” concentrates the listener’s attention on the elements most central to the insult. The

brief pause between phrases creates a momentary drop in intensity before the second phrase renews the attack, functioning as sequential reinforcement of the ridicule.

These features show how Simon's performance style mobilises prosody to frame the addressee's self-regard as both excessive and mockable. The high, sustained pitch across descriptive imagery, targeted pronoun prominence and emphatic terminal movement form a coherent set of strategies that elevate the lyric from mere observation to pointed, performative face-threat.

The question of who functions as the hearer in "You're So Vain" differs from the previous case studies. On the surface, the song appears to address a single individual through sustained second-person reference. However, the identity of that individual remains deliberately unspecified, allowing the addressee to function simultaneously as a particular person and as a broader social type characterised by vanity, entitlement and self-absorption. This ambiguity extends the song's face-threat beyond interpersonal criticism, inviting listeners to recognise and evaluate behaviours that exceed any single target. The song therefore operates through a form of mass-mediated face negotiation in which a seemingly personal attack acquires wider social significance. Rather than addressing a clearly defined hearer, Simon constructs a recipient position that can be occupied by multiple listeners, while simultaneously encouraging audience alignment through shared ridicule and evaluation.

5.3.5 Conclusion

Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" provides a clear answer to both the "how" and the "why" of linguistic impoliteness in protest-era popular music. Linguistically, the

song demonstrates how the impoliteness strategies identified by Culpeper (1996, 2002, 2011) are deployed not merely to voice personal grievance, but to perform a stylised and public form of social critique. Through ridicule, mock politeness and direct accusation, Simon constructs a sustained, multilayered face-attack on an unnamed subject. These strategies are deliberate rather than incidental and their rhetorical force is amplified through repetition, irony and intertextual ambiguity. The refusal to name the addressee, in particular, strengthens the operation of mock politeness by inviting audience speculation and participation, transforming the insult into a shared evaluative act.

In terms of “why”, Simon’s use of impoliteness reflects both personal positioning and wider cultural conditions. Emerging in the early 1970s, in the aftermath of the social upheavals of the 1960s, the song participates in a broader renegotiation of gender roles, emotional expression and authority (see Chapter 2). Within this context, impoliteness functions not simply as rebellion, but as a means of asserting agency. As a woman artist confronting male entitlement and romantic betrayal, Simon uses linguistic and prosodic impoliteness to reclaim narrative control. Her lyrics do more than chastise an individual figure; they expose and ridicule cultural archetypes of male vanity and power. Impoliteness here operates as a form of feminist self-positioning, disrupting expectations that women remain polite, accommodating or discreet in the articulation of emotional harm. Viewed through Spencer-Oatey’s rapport management framework, the significance of these attacks extends beyond the threat to face itself. Rather than simply undermining the addressee’s Quality Face, the song challenges the legitimacy of the social identities and relational expectations that underpin the interaction. The repeated ridicule of vanity and self-importance encourages listeners to reassess the values associated

with masculine authority and entitlement, transforming a seemingly personal dispute into a broader negotiation of social identity and public evaluation (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 106-107).

The song also exemplifies a broader shift in popular music towards confrontation, confessionalism and the politicisation of personal experience. As Kutulas argues, Simon's work resonates with feminist consciousness emerging in the early 1970s and with growing disillusionment toward patriarchal romantic norms (2010: 682-702). In this climate, impoliteness offered a resource for articulating discomfort, disillusionment and critique. Crucially, in "You're So Vain", this work is not carried by lyrics alone. Simon's controlled melodic delivery, strategic use of pitch movement, repetition and rhythmic emphasis transform verbal mockery into a sustained prosodic performance of judgement. The personal becomes political not only through what is said, but through how it is voiced.

This case study demonstrates that linguistic impoliteness in 1960s and 70s popular music functioned as a rhetorical and ideological strategy rather than gratuitous offence. In "You're So Vain", impoliteness operates simultaneously as interpersonal attack, cultural critique and performative resistance, reinforcing the argument that protest-era songs enacted mass-mediated face-threats through the coordinated interaction of language, prosody and musical form.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how linguistic impoliteness was constructed and performed in American protest music of the 1960s and 1970s and what role prosody played in this process. Using three case studies, Bob Dylan's "Masters of War", Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" and Carly Simon's "You're So Vain", the analysis combined theories of linguistic impoliteness, rapport management and popular music performance with close prosodic analysis using Praat. By integrating textual, vocal and musical perspectives, the study has demonstrated that impoliteness in protest music operates not only at the level of lyrics, but as a multimodal, performative resource through which artists challenge power, disrupt norms and negotiate social meaning.

Across all three case studies, linguistic impoliteness was shown to be deliberately and systematically constructed. Dylan's "Masters of War" exemplifies sustained bald on record impoliteness, characterised by unmitigated threats, moral condemnation and the repeated denial of Quality Face, Social Identity Face and core sociality rights. Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" combines bald on record and negative impoliteness with sarcasm and ridicule, transforming public address into a collective accusation that implicates audiences as moral participants. Simon's "You're So Vain" illustrates how mock politeness, ridicule and strategic ambiguity can be used to perform interpersonal face-attacks within a popular music framework, aligning personal grievance with broader feminist critique. In each case, impoliteness is not incidental or expressive excess, but a calculated communicative strategy shaped by sociopolitical context.

A central contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the role of prosody in intensifying and framing linguistic impoliteness. Through detailed acoustic analysis of pitch, intensity, rhythm and timing, the thesis has shown that prosody functions as an active resource for marking utterances as hostile, final, sarcastic or contemptuous. Across the three songs, recurring patterns were identified, including targeted pitch prominence on second-person pronouns, sustained high or compressed pitch ranges to signal assertiveness or scorn, falling terminal contours that convey finality and rhythmic repetition that reinforces memorability and cumulative force. These prosodic features consistently aligned with moments of heightened face-threat, supporting the claim that impoliteness in protest music is realised through the coordination of verbal and vocal design.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of combining qualitative linguistic analysis with acoustic tools such as Praat. While impoliteness theory has traditionally focused on spoken interaction, the use of pitch and intensity measurements provided empirical grounding for interpretive claims about performance. By operationalising impoliteness strategies through NVivo coding and linking these to prosodic evidence, the research maintained transparency and analytical rigour while remaining sensitive to context and genre. This integrated approach shows how frameworks developed for conversational discourse can be productively adapted to the analysis of recorded musical performance.

The analysis presented in this thesis suggests a further question that is not fully captured by conventional models of facework in dyadic interaction: who is the *hearer* when a recorded song insults an institution, a government, a social class or a gendered social type? Put differently, can protest music be treated as a form of

mass-mediated face negotiation, in which face-threatening acts are performed for an audience while simultaneously targeting collective or institutional identities?

The term face negotiation is used here in a different sense from Ting-Toomey's Face-Negotiation Theory (1988, 2005), which examines the management of face in cross-cultural interpersonal conflict. The concern of the present study is not with conflict management between co-present interlocutors but with the public negotiation of legitimacy, moral standing and social identity through mass-mediated performance. Mass-mediated face negotiation thus refers to the ways in which protest songs challenge, affirm and redistribute evaluations of individuals, groups and institutions across dispersed audiences.

Classic politeness models typically treat face as an interactional property negotiated between participants in situated encounters, often with a default assumption of a speaker and a hearer engaged in reciprocal exchange (Goffman 1967; Brown and Levinson 1987). Impoliteness research complicates this by foregrounding aggression and by emphasising that impoliteness is not reducible to linguistic form but depends on contextual expectations and evaluations of intention (Culpeper 2005, 2011). However, even in impoliteness scholarship the “hearer” is often treated as a recognisable recipient within an interactional event. Protest songs unsettle this assumption because they are performed in a context where the target may not be present, response cannot be produced within the same interactional frame and uptake is distributed across heterogeneous listeners. In this thesis, “mass-mediated” refers to communication distributed through recorded performance, in which utterances are addressed to dispersed and heterogeneous audiences rather than co-present interlocutors, and where uptake is indirect, delayed and not subject to immediate interactional negotiation.

The analysis in this chapter suggests that the *hearer* in protest song is best treated as a layered set of recipients rather than a single addressee. Goffman's participation framework is useful here because it distinguishes between the production roles of animator, author and principal and between different recipient roles (Goffman 1981: 124-159). In a protest song, the singer is the animator of the utterance, but the principal stance may be constructed as a collective voice, a movement voice, or a moral voice that exceeds the singer as an individual (Goffman 1981: 144). Likewise, recipients are not limited to a single addressee. At minimum, protest song constructs three recipient positions.

First, there is the targeted addressee, which may be an institution, a class, an ideological group, or a gendered social type. Dylan's "Masters of War", for example, addresses "Masters of War" as a collective category and sustains a sequence of unmitigated face-attacks which deny not only individual worth but moral legitimacy. The target, in this sense, is not a conversational participant but an invoked social actor. Second, there is the ratified audience, the listeners for whom the performance is produced. Simone's audience in "Mississippi Goddam" is explicitly present in the live recording and the performance repeatedly recalibrates their role from entertained listeners to implicated witnesses. Third, there are implicated publics, listeners who are not directly addressed but who may be positioned as aligned with, complicit in, or resistant to the criticised social order. These publics may experience the song as an attack on their own identities, or as a validation of their own grievances, depending on alignment.

Once recipients are conceptualised in this layered way, "face negotiation" can be extended beyond interpersonal delicacy to the management of legitimacy, moral standing and social identity at scale. Spencer-Oatey's rapport management

framework is productive here because it explicitly extends face beyond personal autonomy to include quality face, social identity face and relational face, as well as equity rights and association rights (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2007). These components are readily applicable to institutions and groups because they capture evaluative concerns tied to competence, moral worth, group membership and expectations of fair treatment. When a protest song attacks a government or an institution, the face at stake is not simply an individual's desire to be approved of but the institution's claim to legitimacy, moral authority and proper conduct. In this thesis's terms, protest songs can therefore be understood as mass-mediated face-attacks that challenge collective quality face and social identity face, while simultaneously renegotiating association rights within a public. The point is not that institutions have "feelings" but that institutions and groups depend on publicly circulating evaluations, including evaluations of competence, morality and entitlement.

This reconceptualisation also clarifies the function of prosody in mass-mediated impoliteness. In dyadic interaction, prosody can cue stance, affect and escalation, shaping whether an utterance is interpreted as face-threatening or affiliative (Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003; Culpeper 2011). In recorded protest song, prosody performs a comparable evaluative role, but its function shifts from managing interpersonal exchange to shaping how an audience understands, aligns with, or feels implicated in the face-attack. Pitch prominence, intensity peaks, timing and rhythmic emphasis are not only cues to hostility but cues to how listeners should locate themselves in relation to the target and the moral stance of the song.

In Simone's performance, prosodic intensification functions as a repeated public warrant for condemnation, narrowing interpretive space and inviting listeners

to treat the denunciation as non-negotiable. In Simon's "You're So Vain", prosodic contouring and timing shape mock politeness and ridicule, encouraging the listener's alignment with the singer's stance and positioning the target as an object of shared evaluation. In Dylan's case, the controlled, insistent delivery sustains a posture of moral finality, reinforcing the denial of redemption built into the lyrics. Across the three songs, prosody thus helps to manage the double orientation of protest song: it targets an absent or abstracted addressee while simultaneously organising the audience's uptake.

Treating protest music as mass-mediated face negotiation has two implications for impoliteness theory. The first is analytic: impoliteness strategies can be mapped not only onto interpersonal harm but onto public reclassification, where targets are categorised into morally discredited groups and denied legitimate social identities. This is visible when a song's address works by naming, grouping and morally sorting, rather than by contesting a single interlocutor. The second is theoretical: impoliteness in this genre can be conceptualised as a form of public stance-taking that negotiates alignment and affiliation within an audience, not only offence toward a target. In this sense, the "success" of impoliteness is not measured by the addressee's response but by the audience's uptake, including recognition, solidarity, discomfort, or debate.

With this view, protest song is neither simply monologic nor merely expressive. It is a communicative act that operates across scales, performing face-attack, identity work and alignment work through words and through sound. The hearer is therefore plural: protest songs address targets, organise audiences and circulate evaluations through wider publics. The findings of this study support the claim that facework, often treated as interpersonal, can be extended to collective and

institutional domains when face is understood as publicly negotiated social value and when recipient roles are treated as layered rather than singular (Goffman 1967, 1981; Spencer-Oatey 2002, 2005, 2007; Culpeper 2005, 2011). This provides a conceptual basis for treating protest music as a form of mass-mediated face negotiation, in which prosody is central to how impoliteness is framed, intensified and made socially consequential.

Bell's model of audience design provides a further refinement of this account by foregrounding how speakers actively orient their speech towards multiple audience roles, including addressees, auditors, overhearers and eavesdroppers (Bell 1984: 158-160). Building on Goffman's (1981) participation framework, Bell (1984) argues that speakers design their linguistic choices in anticipation of who is listening and how those listeners are positioned socially, even when the primary addressee is absent. This is particularly relevant to protest song, where the nominal target of face-attack may be an abstracted institution or social category, while the ratified audience consists of listeners whose uptake determines the song's social force. In this sense, protest songs are not merely expressive performances but instances of strategic audience design in a mass-mediated context, in which linguistic and prosodic choices are calibrated to align some listeners while distancing or implicating others. Bell's framework thus supports the claim that protest music operates as mass-mediated face negotiation, since face-attacks are designed not only to target an absent other but to organise audience alignment, recognition and moral positioning across a dispersed public.

The study is not without limitations. The analysis was necessarily limited to three English-language protest songs from a specific historical, social and geographical context. While this allowed for detailed analysis, future research could

extend the framework to other genres, languages or contemporary musical contexts, including hip-hop, punk or digital protest cultures. In addition, while acoustic analysis provided valuable insight into prosodic design, listener reception was not empirically tested. Further work could incorporate perception studies to explore how different audiences interpret prosodic impoliteness across sociocultural backgrounds.

In conclusion, this thesis has shown that linguistic impoliteness in 1960s and 1970s protest music was not a stylistic flourish or incidental provocation, but a central communicative mechanism through which artists confronted authority, articulated dissent and reshaped norms of public address. By demonstrating how prosody amplifies, frames and stabilises these face-attacks in performance, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of protest music as a multimodal form of social action. Attention to sound, voice and performance alongside language reveals how impoliteness is not merely expressed, but enacted and made socially consequential. Protest song thus emerges as a powerful site of mass-mediated face negotiation, in which linguistic and vocal strategies are mobilised to challenge legitimacy, organise audience alignment and perform resistance within specific sociopolitical struggles.

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Appendix.1

Bob Dylan – “Masters of War” (1963)

Verse 1

- 1.Come you Masters of War
- 2.You that build the big guns
- 3.You that build the death planes
- 4.You that build all the bombs
- 5.You that hide behind walls
- 6.You that hide behind desks
- 7.I just want you to know
- 8.I can see through your masks

Verse 2

- 9.You that never done nothin'
- 10.But build to destroy
- 11.You play with my world
- 12.Like it's your little toy
- 13.You put a gun in my hand
- 14.And you hide from my eyes
- 15.And you turn and run farther
- 16.When the fast bullets fly

Verse 3

- 17.Like Judas of old
- 18.You lie and deceive
- 19.A world war can be won
- 20.You want me to believe
- 21.But I see through your eyes
- 22.And I see through your brain
- 23.Like I see through the water

24. That runs down my drain
25. You fasten all the triggers
26. For the others to fire
27. Then you sit back and watch
28. When the death count gets higher

Verse 4

29. You hide in your mansion
30. While the young people's blood
31. Flows out of their bodies
32. And is buried in the mud
33. You've thrown the worst fear
34. That can ever be hurled
35. Fear to bring children
36. Into the world
37. For threatening my baby
38. Unborn and unnamed
39. You ain't worth the blood
40. That runs in your veins

Verse 5

41. How much do I know
42. To talk out of turn
43. You might say that I'm young
44. You might say I'm unlearned
45. But there's one thing I know
46. Though I'm younger than you
47. That even Jesus would never
48. Forgive what you do

Verse 6

49. Let me ask you one question
50. Is your money that good?

51. Will it buy you forgiveness
52. Do you think that it could?
53. I think you will find
54. When your death takes its toll
55. All the money you made
56. Will never buy back your soul

Verse 7

57. And I hope that you die
58. And your death will come soon
59. I'll follow your casket
60. By the pale afternoon
61. And I'll watch while you're lowered
62. Down to your deathbed
63. And I'll stand over your grave
64. 'Til I'm sure that you're dead

Nina Simone – “Mississippi Goddam” (1964)

[Intro]

1.The name of this tune is Mississippi Goddam

2.And I mean every word of it

[Verse 1]

3.Alabama's gotten me so upset

4.Tennessee made me lose my rest

5.And everybody knows about Mississippi, goddamn

6.Alabama's gotten me so upset

7.Tennessee made me lose my rest

8.And everybody knows about Mississippi, goddamn

9.Can't you see it, can't you feel it

10.It's all in the air

11.I can't stand the pressure much longer

12.Somebody say a prayer

[Chorus]

13.Alabama's gotten me so upset

14.Tennessee made me lose my rest

15.And everybody knows about Mississippi, goddamn

16.(This is a show tune, but the show hasn't been written for it, yet)

[Verse 2]

17.Hound dogs on my trail

18.School children sitting in jail

19.Black cat cross my path

20.I think every day's gonna be my last
21.Lord have mercy on this land of mine
22.We all gonna get it in due time
23.I don't belong here, I don't belong there
24.I've even stopped believing in prayer

25.Don't tell me, I'll tell you
26.Me and my people just about due
27.I've been there so I know
28.They keep on saying "Go slow!"

[Refrain]

29.But that's just the trouble (Too slow)
30.Washing the windows (Too slow)
31.Picking the cotton (Too slow)
32.You're just plain rotten (Too slow)
33.You're too damn lazy (Too slow)
34.The thinking's crazy (Too slow)
35.Where am I going, what am I doing
36.I don't know, I don't know

37.Just try to do your very best
38.Stand up, be counted with all the rest
39.'Cause everybody knows about Mississippi, goddamn
40.(I bet you thought I was kidding, didn't you)

[Verse 3]

41.Picket lines, school boycotts
42.They try to say it's a communist plot
43.All I want is equality
44.For my sister, my brother, my people, and me

45. Yes, you lied to me all these years
46. You told me to wash and clean my ears
47. And talk real fine just like a lady
48. And you'd stop calling me Sister Sadie

49. Oh but this whole country is full of lies
50. You're all gonna die and die like flies
51. I don't trust you any more
52. You keep on saying "Go slow!"
53. "Go slow!"

[Refrain]

54. But that's just the trouble (Too slow)
55. Desegregation (Too slow)
56. Mass participation (Too slow)
57. Reunification (Too slow)
58. Do things gradually (Too slow)
59. But bring more tragedy (Too slow)
60. Why don't you see it, why don't you feel it
61. I don't know, I don't know

[Chorus]

62. You don't have to live next to me
63. Just give me my equality
64. Everybody knows about Mississippi
65. Everybody knows about Alabama
66. Everybody knows about Mississippi, goddamn

[Spoken Outro]

67. That's it!

Carly Simon – “You’re So Vain” (1972)

[Intro]

1.Son of a gun

[Verse 1]

2.You walked into the party like you were walking onto a yacht

3>Your hat strategically dipped below one eye

4>Your scarf it was apricot

5.You had one eye in the mirror, as you watched yourself gavotte

[Pre-Chorus]

6.And all the girls dreamed that they'd be your partner

7.They'd be your partner and

[Chorus]

8.You're so vain

9.You probably think this song is about you

10.You're so vain (you're so vain)

11.I'll bet you think this song is about you

12.Don't you? Don't you?

[Verse 2]

13.You had me several years ago when I was still quite naive

14.Well, you said that we made such a pretty pair and that you would never
leave

15.But you gave away the things you loved

16.And one of them was me

[Pre-Chorus]

17.I had some dreams, they were clouds in my coffee

18.Clouds in my coffee and

[Chorus]

19.You're so vain

20.You probably think this song is about you

21.You're so vain (you're so vain)

22.I'll bet you think this song is about you

23.Don't you? Don't you? Don't you?

[Pre-Chorus]

24.I had some dreams, they were clouds in my coffee

25.Clouds in my coffee and

[Chorus]

26.You're so vain

27.You probably think this song is about you

28.You're so vain (you're so vain)

29.I'll bet you think this song is about you

30.Don't you? Don't you?

[Verse 3]

31.Well, I hear you went up to Saratoga

32.And your horse naturally won

33.Then you flew your Learjet up to Nova Scotia

34.To see the total eclipse of the sun

35.Well, you're where you should be all the time

36.And when you're not

[Pre-Chorus]

37.You're with some underworld spy or the wife of a close friend

38.Wife of a close friend and

[Chorus]

39.You're so vain

40.You probably think this song is about you

41.You're so vain (so vain)

42.I'll bet you think this song is about you

43.Don't you? Don't you? Don't you now?

[Outro]

44.You're so vain

45.You probably think this song is about you

46.You're so vain

47.You probably think this song is about you

48.You're so vain

49.You probably think this song is about you