The aims of this Factsheet are to demonstrate the way the theoretical framework can be applied to the television CSP, *No Offence* including the industrial context of *No Offence* and the way the programme uses media language:

- To position the programme as part of a genre.
- To create narrative.
- To construct representations.
- To appeal to audiences.

*No Offence* is one of the options available for the study of television products for AQA’s AS and A Level qualifications.

- For AS Media Studies, it is a targeted CSP and should be studied considering *Audience and Industry* ideas.
- For A Level Media Studies, it is an in-depth CSP and should be studied considering all areas of the framework – Media Language, Representation, Audience and Industry.

The CSP is identified as being the first episode of series one of the programme. For the purposes of this Factsheet, it will be assumed that you have watched this first episode and you may be familiar with the rest of series one.

This analysis identifies ideas and theories from the theoretical framework and demonstrates how they can be applied to the analysis of the episode/programme.

**The Industrial Context of No Offence**

*No Offence* is produced by Abbottvision and broadcast on Channel 4. Abbottvision is a production company created by the writer and producer Paul Abbott. Abbott has made many successful television programmes that are renowned for breaking conventions in terms of their approaches to genre, representation and story-telling. Prior to *No Offence*, Abbott’s most successful programme had been *Shameless*. *Shameless* was praised for bringing a realistic representation of the lives of people at the lowest end of the socio-economic scale to a television audience and the writing was praised for giving a voice to a group that is usually under represented. The show was a success with audiences and critics and has been remade for American television. Abbott has a reputation of making programmes that have a realism whilst using high drama and comedy to entertain the audiences.

Abbot has a long relationship with Channel 4. Channel 4 are a commercial broadcaster but they also receive some government funding. To receive the public money, Channel 4 has to ensure that (amongst other things) its programming is innovative, offers alternative points of view and reflects the cultural diversity of the country.

Channel 4 buys programming from production companies and, when doing so, will consider how the programme will help support its remit. Programmes which fit into Channel 4’s brand identity are more likely to be bought by the broadcaster.

Having a distinctive production background and being a ‘Channel 4 programme’ adds to the branding of *No Offence* itself and helps audiences know what to expect from the programme. With no other information about the show, audiences would assume it would have an irreverent approach to storytelling and may provide representations and storylines that are unconventional. Being broadcast on Channel 4 (and then accessible via the streaming service, All 4) may lead audiences to expect the use of adult language and the programme to deal with adult themes. As we will see, choices in the construction of the programme make it ideal for Channel 4 as the programme gives a voice to several under-represented groups.

**Expectations of Abbottvision programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unconventional representations</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Diverse representations</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic representations – especially of class</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>‘Edgy’ comedy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High comedy, sometimes farce</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Liberal social values</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expectations of Channel 4 programmes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Offence Yes/No</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Activity:** Go online and research other programmes produced by Abbottvision. If you are not familiar with these programmes, read about them on Wikipedia or on the Abbottvision website (http://www.abbottvision.com).

Make a list of 6 or 7 Channel 4 British crime dramas broadcast by channel 4. Again, if you are unfamiliar with the programmes, read the summaries provided on the Channel 4 website or search for them on Wikipedia.

Use your knowledge of these programmes to recreate a table similar to the one below:
Media Language, Genre and Narrative

No Offence is a crime drama that follows a group of police investigating a specific crime, the abduction and murder of young women. Crime dramas are a long-established and popular genre. The ‘shared characteristics’ of the genre are based around the type of story being told. Crime dramas are based on quest narratives where the protagonist or protagonists (the police or private detectives) seek to solve the mystery of ‘whodunnit’. The aim is to find the criminal and bring them to justice. How this story is told can vary enormously within the genre. The settings and the characters can be changed to provide variety within the genre. There are many sub genres of crime drama and it is often used within other genres creating hybrids with, for example, science fictions (e.g. The Expanse), teen drama (e.g. Riverside) and comedy (e.g. A Touch of Cloth).

The genre is based on enigmas with the narrative structure being based on the discovery of the initial crime, complications in the investigation (including complex clues, mistakes and misdirections, false villains and further crimes) until the mystery is resolved and the criminal punished. Sometimes the genre is part of the genre of order with a lone-wolf protagonist and at other times it is part of the genre of integration where a team of protagonists (a collective) work together to achieve their goals.

No Offence is part of the crime drama sub-genre of ‘police procedural’. Police procedurals are usually focused on a team of detectives who work together to find and interpret clues and solve the case. Iconographies that are familiar in this genre include:

- A police station setting.
- Police officers (some in uniform).
- Police cars.
- An investigation board.

Activity: Using the first episode only, identify how the programme’s narrative creates and then builds an enigma. If you have watched the whole of series one, repeat the exercise identifying the way the story develops through the complication of enigmas.

Police procedurals also use similar set pieces - scenes or actions that are specific to the genre. At the start of the episode there is a chase scene. A woman on her way home from a night out dashes from a taxi to pursue someone. The scene is shot from multiple angles using tracking shots and with fast paced editing that creates an exciting and dynamic atmosphere. The music parallels the action adding to the overall effect for the audience. The action scene and the way it is shot and constructed follows conventions that audiences of the genre will recognise but there are some aspects of the scene that break with convention.

Not only is it unusual for a woman to be active in a chase scene, but the audience are not told what her role in the narrative is as first as none of the character or role markers of ‘hero’ or ‘police’ are present. As she begins the chase she shows the taxi driver her police identification and there is a close-up showing her kicking off her high heels. At this part of the scene we learn she is an off-duty police officer who has recognised a wanted man.

The end of the chase is also unconventional as the character does not ‘get her man’ and the scene ends with a juxtaposition of quite shocking violence and comedy. The wanted man trips and falls under a bus giving the audience an early indication that the programme will not shy away from graphic gore and violence. Comedy is created by the fact that the occupants of the bus are singing (‘Too Shy’ by Kajagoogoo) as the accident happens. The contrapuntal nature of the diegetic music adds an element of the absurd to the violent death being shown.

Activity: Look at another two set pieces from the first episode – the investigation room (approximately minute 28) and the search for Cathy (approximately minute 33). Break down the use of media language for each scene and identify how the scene is constructed.
Representations
In many ways, *No Offence* is typical of the crime drama genre and the police procedural sub-genre but where it is less conventional is in the representations chosen to tell the story.

*Neal* says that *genres have to alter* to keep audiences interested and one of the ways they can do this is by subverting audience expectations in terms of the representations used.

Gender
The genre will traditionally *represent* male police officers with the main protagonists often being a male dominated team. Often a female member of the team will be depicted as being extremely attractive or as having a specific specialisation.

*No Offence* breaks this convention by having three female lead characters. These females are in charge of the investigation, Viv is the superintendent in charge of the team, Joy is recently promoted sergeant and Dinah is shown to be dedicated and determined police officer from the very first scene. None of the women play the *stereotypical* female roles that are conventional in this genre. Viv is a large woman who swears and is often inappropriate in what she says whilst Joy lacks self-confidence and often seeks reassurance from her colleagues. Dinah is perhaps the most *conventional crime drama character* as she is a good police officer who tends to act first and think afterwards as she is driven by compassion and a strong sense of right and wrong.

This is a familiar *character trope* within the genre but the slightly maverick police officer is conventionally male. More traditionally, Viv’s boss is male and she finds herself in *conflict* with him as he acts to slow down the investigation. Viv herself breaks convention as she is not a boss who provides conflict for her team. Instead she is shown to be loyal and supportive and, despite her unusual manner, is admired by those who work for her. The representation of Viv foregrounds the *ideologies* that are part of the *genre of integration* as she heads a team that works best together by *communicating* and using the individual strengths of the members of the *collective*.

Everyone in the team has something to offer and they all contribute to the investigation. Viv’s role is to support and encourage each team member to ensure that the collective works well. This is demonstrated when Viv encourages Joy to tell the team what her thoughts are for taking the investigation forward. Joy lacked the confidence to even recognise her own thoughts as a valid plan but with Viv’s encouragement was able to speak with authority to the rest of the team.

Within these gender representations there is a mix of conventional and unconventional ideas. *Audiences* need to recognise familiar approaches to the genre in order to interpret what is going on. However, the unusual representations allow the audience to be taken by surprise by offering something new and unexpected. In this way, the programme will appear fresh and is more likely to *appeal to an audience*.

The Police
As crime dramas tend to deal with serious topics, they often have a serious tone. In *No Offence*, the storyline about abducted girls is treated very seriously but the characters in the investigative team are often shown in a more comedic way.

Our first introduction to the investigation team shows them making light of a criminal’s gory death and Viv’s swearing and crude mannerisms and Joy’s nervousness and lack of self-esteem are also presented in a comic way. This is highlighted in the scene where the team have a meeting in the ladies’ toilet. The camera presents the discussion in a toilet stall using *unconventional camera angles* and sound. The *overhead shots* and high and low cameras angles showing the toilet stall seem out of place in a serious crime drama. The sound of Viv’s singing on the toilet alongside the editing to show her team’s desperate attempts not to laugh, provide a moment of farce within the serious and tragic storyline.

This representation of police officers as humans with flaws and strange idiosyncrasies is not totally new, but this creates a realism in the characters that helps to *enhance audience engagement* with the story. Where audiences can *identify* with characters they are more likely to create emotional *attachments*. This can be done with humour but this leads to more *emotional investment* in the characters which pays off in the tense and dramatic moments. The tension of the search scene towards the end of the episode is heightened because the audience have been encouraged to care for the characters earlier in the episode.

Disability
Many of the representations are set up to create a specific expectation in the audience but then, as they develop, this is subverted. Viv appears to be a ‘bad boss’ at the start of the episode but by the end of the episode this idea about her has to be changed as she is quite the opposite. At the heart of the story is the disappearance and murder of young women with Down’s Syndrome. At first, they are set up as simple victims and this replicates the *stereotypes* of characters with disabilities are often replicated in media representations.

Some girls with Down’s Syndrome have been attacked but when we meet other people with the same condition they are shown not to be simple victims. Jocelyn (one of the victims) and her husband Mikey are autonomous individuals and are active rather than dependent and passive. The police officers register surprise as they learn that Jocelyn ran a prostitution business and this reflects the way the audience’s expectations about these characters may well be subverted by these representations again creating a complex and realistic representation of people with disabilities rather than the simplistic *stereotypes* that are often used.

Activity: In what ways do the two scenes discussed:
• Follow conventions in the way the scene is presented?
• Subvert conventions in the way the scene is presented?
Audience

All television programmes are created in the hope that they will reach and appeal to a target audience. To a certain extent, the audience can be identified in terms of demographics. The content of No Offence identifies it as being an adult programme. It contains adult language and themes and depicts violence making it a post-watershed programme. Some might argue that having three female protagonists makes the programme more appealing to women. This is a problematic argument as it implies that men may find it difficult to identify with female protagonists.

Given the dominance of male protagonists in many genres of drama including crime drama, it is clearly not difficult for women to identify with the opposite sex so this argument could be seen to underestimate the male audience. Of course, having women protagonists, especially more than one, is unconventional so the audience for No Offence would need to be one that was happy moving away from convention. The target audience for No Offence are likely to be fans of the crime genre/police procedural who are open to alternative takes on the codes and conventions. They may also be fans of Paul Abbott or people who appreciate Channel 4’s approach to programming. Fundamentally the target audience would be anyone who enjoys murder mysteries and investigation narratives and programmes with some broad comedic elements.

The show itself provides a range of gratifications. The genre’s narrative offers enigma, tension and the delayed gratification of waiting to find out who is responsible for the crimes. Conventionally, the genre offers a gratification that comes from the resolution where criminals are captured and the values of law and order are reinforced with the police being victorious and the criminal being punished. Being a hybrid example of the genre, No Offence also offers relief from the tension with humour and the realistic characters and situations allow the audience to identify with the people and events.

Activity: Find examples from episode one for the audience gratifications given in the table below, and explain how they work. Create a similar table and try to add new gratifications, as well as offer further examples and explanations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gratification</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification with events</td>
<td>Plot focuses on the abduction of girls</td>
<td>This ties in with contemporary fears about violence – specifically about violence against women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with characters</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery/Enigma</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity (expectations met)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surprise (the unexpected)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reassurance</td>
<td>The team are determined to capture the murderer</td>
<td>Shows the police to be focused on protecting and serving the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>?</td>
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Conclusion

The discussion here shows several ways that the theoretical framework can be applied to No Offence. There are many other ideas that can also be applied and you should try to apply other ideas for yourself. The most important thing to remember is that for each idea you explore, you should be able to offer examples from the episode to show how your ideas work. Your examples should be detailed and include the use of specific media language choices made in the construction of the programme.