

Governing Women's Sexuality in *Sex and the City*: Pleasure, Relationships and
Reproduction

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the governance of women's sexuality in *Sex and the City*. It examines the negotiation of women's sexualized identities by examining sexual pleasure, relationships and reproduction. The friendship network is represented as the most important mechanism through which women's sexuality is regulated. The friendship network often replaces formal expertise and serves as a form of self-help. Women's sexual identities are formed through being self-reflective individuals by continuously creating their personal biographies. This thesis examines the processes and techniques the characters use in making decisions about the plurality of lifestyle choices available to them.

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Introduction

The women who wrote that book [*The Rules*], they wrote it because they couldn't get laid, so they constructed this whole bullshit theory to make women who can get laid feel bad.

- Samantha Jones (1/6: Secret Sex)

Sex and the City is a television show about four female friends who share their experiences of dating in New York City. Carrie Bradshaw is a journalist who writes a weekly column "Sex and the City" for the *New York Star*. She reflects on women's roles in the context of sexual affairs in the 'big city'. Her inspiration stems from her personal experience and that of her friends. Miranda Hobbes is a headstrong lawyer who is cynical about relationships and men. Charlotte York is a hopeless romantic that works for an art gallery and is the most traditional in the group. Samantha Jones is a public relations executive and the most liberal in her sexuality. *Sex and the City* explicitly discusses norms surrounding women's sexuality and sexual identity. Each woman represents a different perspective about women's sexual identity on a spectrum ranging from progressive to traditional. This eclectic mix of characters is what makes the show's approach to sexuality diverse, and in turn, allows an examination about negotiating what the current norms of women's sexuality are in relation to past perceptions of norms of sexualized identity.

Is it appropriate to have sex on the first date? This is the big question of the night when Miranda, Charlotte, and Samantha are having drinks at Carrie's apartment as she prepares for her first date with Mr. Big. Mr. Big is Carrie's main love interest throughout the series. They are discussing whether or not Carrie should have sex with him right away. Charlotte gives her advice based on the popular best seller, *The Rules: Time-tested Secrets for Capturing the Heart of Mr. Right*. She believes it is best to wait to have sex if Carrie is looking for something substantial with Mr. Big. She believes that if a

relationship begins with sex, it will be nothing more than just sex. Miranda states that true romance cannot exist without good sex. Samantha mocks *The Rules*, believes that men can dump women after the first date as easily as after ten, and leaves the final decision up to Carrie.

“Secret Sex” is a significant episode because it provides an example of how women’s sexuality is regulated. Furthermore it engages in discussion about relationships. Analyzing this episode reveals that the friendship network is the main site where norms about women’s sexuality are discussed and renegotiated. When examining this scene one can tease out the different opinions that exist when all of the characters engage with self-help literature. It becomes evident that instead of taking the advice of experts, they instead discuss whether or not such norms continue to apply in today’s society. Furthermore, being a part of a relationship involves the self-reflexive individual to constantly evaluate themselves, their role and the role of their partner within the relationship. In today’s society individuals stay in relationships, as long as their needs are met. Following the advice in “*The Rules*” is supposed help women capture a man to marry. This is thought to eventually lead to the possibility of having children. In this episode, Carrie goes against “*The Rules*” and sleeps with Mr. Big on their first date. Carrie, in her voiceover, states that she cannot be hounded by rules. Despite the bold statement of throwing the rules out the window, the rest of the episode explores Carrie’s insecurity about her decision. Norms in *Sex and the City* are reworked and renegotiated through the personal experiences of its characters. Even when breaking the rules, or challenging norms, the characters cannot escape current forms of the sexual regulation of women.

When Mr. Big asks Carrie to go out for dinner after sex, she begins to contemplate his intentions. The next day she talks over her doubts with Miranda. She confesses to her friend that she had sex with Mr. Big on the first date. Miranda supports her decision and asserts her approval of breaking the rules if it felt right. Later that day Big calls Carrie and suggests going out on a real first date. Her voiceover confidently claims she has escaped 'the having sex on the first date curse'. However, she once again doubts her decision when Big fails to introduce her to his friends, and later tells her that he cannot make it to meet her friends to toast a billboard advertising her column. When toasting the billboard, Charlotte expressly tells Carrie that Big did not come because she had sex with him on the first date. At that point, Carrie's voiceover suggests that she cannot help but think that Charlotte is right. By the end of the episode, Carrie comes to the resolution that it was fine to have sex on the first date. She confronts Big and he gives her a rational explanation for everything she has been paranoid about. The episode ends when Carrie asks Big if this could be "for real", and he says it could be.

This thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of popular culture as a site where moral regulation occurs. More specifically it will analyze the moral regulation of women's sexuality in the television show, *Sex and the City*. This is an interesting topic to explore for two reasons. First, popular culture and the media as sites where moral regulation occurs have been largely ignored by moral regulation scholars. Second, women's sexuality has always been subject to being morally regulated and as a result women's sexuality is continuously renegotiated in the context of everyday life. It can be argued that there is a shift occurring in the way women who are no longer in their twenties are portrayed by *Sex and the City*. The series re-writes popular representations

of women's sexualized identity. This thesis examines the negotiation of women's sexualized identities through analyzing how women assert their agency over making choices about sexuality, relationships and reproduction.

Sex and the City is a series on HBO that ran from 1998 to 2004. The series was six seasons long and had ninety-four episodes. Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Cynthia Nixon and Kristin Davis were the lead actresses playing the roles of Carrie Bradshaw, Samantha Jones, Miranda Hobbes and Charlotte York, respectively. The show was a cultural phenomena that was nominated for fifty Emmy Awards, winning seven times and nominated for twenty-four Golden Globes winning eight times. The series was interactive with its audience through the HBO website which consisted of fan forums, surveys, and style sections. After the series was over, it was released on DVD in the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, East Korea, Oceania and South America. The show was also played in syndication on networks such as TBS, WGN and CW. A *Sex and the City* movie was released in 2008.

Sex and the City is also structured in a way that is significant for my analysis. Every episode has a central issue that is explored by Carrie for her newspaper column. The issue is usually raised at the beginning of the episode through Carrie's voiceover. Then the issue is overtly discussed by her group of friends over lunch, dinner, coffee or cocktails. After each of the characters asserts her respective opinion about the norms surrounding the issue at hand, they themselves engage in regulating and renegotiating the issue through their personal experiences that follow. By the end of each episode a resolution of sorts is usually reached and final comments on the issue are made by Carrie's concluding voiceover.

This thesis will examine how sexual norms regarding women are articulated within and negotiated by this friendship network. I will do this by examining episodes exploring three key sexual issues within the narrative: sexual pleasure, relationships and reproduction. My thesis will focus on how the characters regulate each other and themselves. I will argue that the friendship network is represented as the most important mechanism through which women's sexuality is regulated often replacing the advice of experts. It is especially significant that sexual norms are articulated expressly and consciously through talk. Talking about norms becomes essential to the regulation and renegotiation of women's sexuality. I will argue that the friendship network, in urban society replaces the formal experts and serves as a form of self help. The series raises interesting points about love and social identity, the renegotiation of ideal types, femininity in relation to masculinity, sites of self-fulfilment, and the construction of biography through consumption. These are the recurring themes that occur in examining all facets of regulating women's sexuality.

Literature Review

This thesis draws upon literature specifically about *Sex and the City*, cultural studies and law, and television studies in order to situate its analysis. *Sex and the City* literature can be divided into two streams: the first where *Sex and the City* is analyzed as a media product and the second where the content of the show is the topic of intellectual discussion.

Sex and the City Literature

When examining *Sex and the City* as a media product some scholars have focused on how *Sex and the City* was different than other shows about single women because it was broadcast on HBO which was a subscription channel. This enabled the show to explore women's sexuality more freely since it was not subject to the limitations of regular cable television. Expressly discussing how women could achieve sexual satisfaction was, until recently, a taboo topic on television (Arthurs 2004:129). The availability of subscription cable channels makes this discussion on television possible. Scholars have also explored how the *Sex and the City* narrative resembles consumer-oriented advice traditionally established by women's magazines. Jane Arthurs finds *Sex and the City* significant because it re-mediate familiar forms of television sitcom and the glossy women's magazine (Arthurs 2003: 83; Bignell 2004: 163). Jonathan Bignell takes it one step further, claiming that *Sex and the City* also has elements of a talk show confessional (Bignell 2004: 161). These claims contribute to my thesis, since women's magazines and talk show confessionals have always been recognized as meaning-making sites where moral regulation takes place. *Sex and the City's* narrative style positions it as an ideal show to examine how popular culture operates as a site where moral regulation occurs. Arthurs' recognition of this format provides me with a model to use when analyzing how the characters are governed in *Sex and the City*.

When examining the content of the series, scholars have focused on questions of whether or not the show is actually radical in its representation of women's sexuality. They have found that the novelty of *Sex and the City* lies within its explicit sexual discourse that is woman-centered (Arthurs 2003: 83; Gerhard 2005: 43). This

perspective is concerned about taboos that are discussed, the boundaries that are crossed, and the limitations that still exist (Creed 2003: 44). Astrid Henry specifically situates *Sex and the City* within third wave feminism when exploring how women's sexuality is renegotiated (Henry 2004: 71). Third wave feminism moves away from a prescribed collective agenda. Instead it focuses on feminism at the individual level through the concept of choice. The strengths of these studies are that they recognize that women's sexuality is political and they relate it to women's status in society. These studies are limited however as they locate *Sex and the City* as either being progressive or regressive. These types of binary studies can be futile and suggest a limited understanding of pleasure and experience viewers take from consuming popular culture. Examining the ways in which women are represented in *Sex and the City* as "good" or "bad" is not the most significant factor in the show. I suggest the issues that are being negotiated surrounding women's roles in society have always been represented in the media. How these issues are renegotiated and regulated in everyday life need to be explored further. The majority of these studies focus on questions about individual representations of femininity. Few of these studies connect the representation of sexuality in the show to broader discourses of self-governance and moral regulation.

Some scholars focus on the soul mate ideal, being single and the changing nature of women's sexuality in their relationships (Di Mattia 2004: 18). When examining how women's sexuality is represented differently than in the past, some scholars focus on the shift of the gaze onto men and the changes that are taking place in how *Sex and the City* represents masculinity and femininity (Greven 2004:39). The strength of recognizing this shift is important for television studies since shifts in the representation of sex roles can

offer a new perspective from which to examine the other side of the issues. These subtle shifts in style could also offer insight into how certain genres are being redefined.

Another approach taken when examining the content of *Sex and the City* has been to explore how women's sexuality is represented through contextual analysis. Jane Gerhard situates singleness, liberation and sexuality within post-feminist and queer frameworks. She finds one novel factor in depicting women's sexuality in the show; the liberated female has a tight knit group of friends for support and this friendship is a stronger relationship than what either of the females get out of their relationships with men. This friendship network is further recognized as being an alternative family (Gerhard 2005: 43; Henry 2004: 67). Similarly other scholars have focused on the friendships between the characters and have found it is significant that the friendship network is the space where debates over women's experiences take place and where individual characters come to resolutions about their problems (Kim 2001: 328). One of the strengths of these studies is recognizing the role that friendship can play in single women's lives. These studies have also shown the shift that is taking place in urban society, where friendship networks play the role that the family traditionally has. This is significant for this analysis since I suggest a shift is taking place in urban society where the friendship network is becoming the main site where norms about women's sexuality are being discussed, regulated and renegotiated. The significance of the friendship network is being taken one step further by suggesting the friendship network takes over the role of experts in the moral regulation of women's sexuality.

This thesis will be adding to the existing studies conducted on *Sex and the City*. I will examine how women's sexuality is governed, taking into account the way the show

is structured, especially its similarity to women's magazines. The friendship network will be used as a focal point for examining how sexual norms are discussed and renegotiated. I will examine how the characters interact with expert knowledge. I will suggest that in a pluralistic society where many expert positions exist, the site where the many choices are discussed is the friendship network and that the friendship network has taken over the role of experts and has itself become a self-help network. More specifically my thesis will analyze how women emerge as sexualized social subjects, how norms and ideals of identity are renegotiated and how consumption is linked to questions of identity.

Cultural Studies of Law

A second field in which I situate this thesis is within the cultural studies of law. Rosemary Coombe has suggested that a cultural studies of law emerges only when scholars stop reifying the law and start analyzing it as culture (Coombe 2001: 36). Legal studies scholarship has noted that the logics of governance are shifting away from society in the late modern era and are beginning to focus on culture. As a response to the death of the social, Austin Sarat and Jonathan Simon argue that legal scholarship should head towards analyzing the cultural (Simon and Sarat 2003: 4). They claim it is a corrective approach and encompasses a wider knowledge base. So far the emergent field of the cultural studies of law has focused on examining how ordinary people construct law in their narratives about themselves and moreover how they read norms that govern choices (Simon and Sarat: 5). The characters in *Sex and the City* do precisely this, in each episode norms that govern choices about female sexuality are discussed within the

friendship network. Through this self-governance talk, I intend to study how the characters construct norms in their everyday lives.

The cultural study of law connects the symbolic and material. Law is part of the cultural process since it actively contributes to forming social relations. In other words law is part of everyday life (Silbey 1992: 41). Accepting that law is part of the cultural process is necessary for this thesis since studying the media as a site where moral regulation occurs has to resist dichotomizing the material and the symbolic, the representation and the real. In cultural studies, the dichotomy between agency and structure is rejected (Simon and Sarat 2003: 13). Peter Fitzpatrick finds that social-constructionist and identity-based scholarship does not problematize the claim that law permeates and is inseparable from everyday living (Fitzpatrick 1998: 188). He asserts a need for a dynamic understanding of legal consciousness, a way to address how ordinary citizens become knowing and effective agents that challenge and transform aspects of particular forms of structural domination (Fitzpatrick 1998: 193-194). The examination of how the characters renegotiate norms in *Sex and the City* will take into account Fitzpatrick's concerns for the role played by structure and agency. My analysis will also be aligned with the cultural studies of law by refusing to dichotomize structure and agency and taking into account how both are reflective of one another.

Michael Asimow and Shannon Mader give two definitions of popular culture. They first state that popular culture refers to the universe of knowledge, behaviours and beliefs. Their more narrow definition of popular culture refers to all commercial texts or media (Asimow and Mader 2004: 4). Law and popular culture have interacted with each other, predominantly in the exploration of how law is represented in popular culture. A

lot of popular cultural studies on law have studied film, television, literature and focused on lawyers or crime stories. These studies take a textual approach to explore how legal reality is reflected in media products and how consumers construct reality based on these depictions (Asimow and Mader 2004: 7) I suggest that legal studies scholars have headed in the right direction in studying law in popular culture. Popular culture is inextricably a part of our lived experiences. The field however has thus far failed to study how popular culture interacts with other knowledge that exists and how these interactions shape the consumer's understanding of reality. Legal studies scholars have been overly concerned with questions of accuracy, asking questions about whether the representations being made are true and accurate portrayals of "real life." They make hard delineations between "reality" and "representation" without fully understanding that these "representations" become part of the audience's "reality".

Some studies focus on how legal practices are represented in popular culture and the effects that these depictions have on legal practice (Robson 2005: 24) These studies may be helpful for actors in the legal system and law enforcement agencies since it gives them an additional means to be reflective of their jobs. This area of interest is not pertinent to this thesis and further makes problematic assumptions about the direct causal effects of popular culture or media texts.

Most of the studies conducted in the area of law and culture focus on the institutional norms of the legal system. When scholars engage in this type of research there is a tendency to focus on high, rather than low, culture. When they do focus on low culture they predominantly examine television shows about the law. I am suggesting that there is a need for the field to focus on a wider array of television shows and examine not

just how law is represented but how broader issues of legal studies are negotiated therein. I will be looking at low culture and examining regulation in everyday life in a regular television show, *Sex and the City*.

One study that expressly addresses the governance of sexuality in mainstream, network television is conducted by Didi Herman (2005). "Juliet and Juliet Would be More my Cup of Tea: Sexuality, Law and Popular Culture" analyzes *Bad Girls*, a women's prison drama. This study focuses on popular television's role in constructing and reproducing regulatory norms around sexuality, and the extent to which it was possible to represent non-normative sexualities in prime-time (Herman 2005: 470). This study narrows its focus on how lesbianism was represented in the 'women in prison' genre and postulates that *Bad Girls* disrupts how lesbians have traditionally been portrayed. This is done by examining various themes that occur in the show (Herman 2005: 472). Herman analyzes *Bad Girls* as a media product, concludes that it is genreless, and finds that this makes it possible to convey non-dominant and positive images of homosexuality (Herman 2005: 484). This study is useful since it discusses regulatory norms and governance in the context of a popular television show. A strength of this study is that it focuses on the representation of women's sexuality and explores how representation of lesbianism differs from other shows. One weakness of Herman's analysis is that there needs to be a stronger connection between analyzing representation and the normalization of lesbianism. My thesis will take a similar approach by analyzing representation through predominant themes such as sexual pleasure, relationships and reproduction. It differs because there will be a stronger theoretical focus when teasing out governmental techniques. I will focus on questions about how women's sexuality is

governed rather than strictly focusing on questions about how women's sexuality is being represented positively or negatively.

Television Studies

The third field in which I situate this thesis is within television studies. A definition of what television is understood as and the roles it plays in society is important to develop before engaging in a thesis that is analyzing a television show. Julie D'Acci suggests that television is a technology since it produces electronic images and sounds. It is a social institution since it produces viewers and citizens. It is an economic institution since it produces consumers. It is a cultural institution since it produces programs and schedules. It is an ideological institution since it produces norms and rules that tell viewers what is okay and what is not in any given society (D'Acci 2004: 373).

There are numerous approaches within television studies. I will focus on qualitative approaches. All approaches to television studies regard television as consisting of complex sign systems through which we experience and know the world (Allen 1987: 2). Contemporary criticism of television, studies texts as the site of intersection for a complex web of codes and conventions, it analyzes and evaluates worlds constructed within these texts (Allen 1987: 7).

In his discussion about social representation on television, Robert Allen suggests that we should accept that the process by which we attach meanings, norms and values to our social worlds have been influenced by our experiences as television viewers (Allen 2004: 367). This thesis will accept this contention since it views the media as part of our everyday lives. Allen contends that it is important to study social representation in the

context of television's role as a modernizing force. He states that studying social representations means examining representations of femininity and masculinity, constructions of racial otherness, and how sexuality and desire are manifested (Allen 2004: 368). Studying representation is crucial for this thesis, because I focus on questions of how the characters in *Sex and the City* are being governed. Studying how femininity is represented and talked about is crucial in answering questions about how moral regulatory techniques are changing and how the show represents the characters governing each other and themselves. Representation is also important for assessing how the characters are interacting with existing knowledge in the form of self-help literature.

Reflexivity is the process by which the modern self is formed and reformed. It is the process of self construction that occurs as we respond to the social world around us. This reflexive project is often carried on through reflexive resources: therapy, self help manuals, television programs and magazine articles (Giddens in Allen 2004: 369). This suggests that the media should be studied as a site where moral regulation takes place. It is difficult to comment on the direct impact and effect of these representations, but it remains important to recognize the media as a site where debates about women's sexuality occur. Anthony Giddens' concept of reflexivity will be used to analyze growth that occurs for all the characters in the show, since a lot of the regulation of women's sexuality fosters the formation and reformation of the characters' identities.

Theoretical Framework

Moral regulation scholars do not accept that morality and politics should be separated, rather, they argue that political developments are always conjoined with moral

imperatives (Glasbeek 2006: 3). This fits well with this thesis since feminist critics have broadened the meaning of the term ‘political’ to include what takes place in everyday life (D’Acci 1997: 5). The analysis of the representation of moral regulation in this thesis mainly focuses on what takes place in everyday life of the main characters in a popular culture text.

The term moral regulation was originally coined by Phillip Corrigan and later elaborated upon by Corrigan and Derek Slayer (Glasbeek 2006). Corrigan defined moral regulation as:

A project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word “obvious” what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order. Moral regulation is coextensive with state formation, and state forms are always animated and legitimized by a particular moral ethos. Centrally, state agencies attempt to give unitary and unifying expression to what are in reality multifaceted and differential historical experiences to groups within society, denying their particularity (Glasbeek 2006: 4).

Mitchell Dean criticizes Corrigan’s work for its “state-centredness” and the absence of a domain in which self-formation can operate at a distance from the state (Dean 2006).

Moral regulation scholars are divided between socialist and poststructuralist scholars. Socialist scholars focus on the role of the state, control, repression and coercion whereas poststructuralist scholars examine the roles of community, knowledge, constitutive powers and discipline (Glasbeek 2006: 5). This thesis will take a post-structuralist approach and will evaluate how power operates from a plurality of sites in the regulation of women’s sexuality.

Feminist moral regulation studies emphasize that sexuality is essential to the development of moral subjects. In this view, regulation is seen to occur beyond the state (Glasbeek 2006: 4). Some feminist scholars are influenced heavily by Foucauldian

theory which stipulates that we should extend our gaze beyond the state, and understand power as being a multi-dimensional complex process (Sangster 2006: 37). Power being understood as being dispersed enables an in-depth analysis of interacting with a variety of discourses and institutions that exist about women's sexuality.

Moral regulatory techniques are often employed differently in different contexts. Moral regulatory studies have examined the regulation of spaces and the regulation of individuals. Moral regulatory techniques also shift depending on who is being regulated and when they are being regulated. The Foucauldian influence within moral regulation illuminated how medical, social science, and legal discourses defined normality and abnormality. The operation of power was analyzed through family, school, church, philanthropy, professions, sciences and community. Power was seen as productive, not repressive (Sangster 2006: 38).

One area that moral regulation scholars have largely ignored however is the media. This thesis suggests that the media is a powerful site of our lived realities that deserves more attention. The concept of moral regulation will be applied when performing a qualitative textual analysis on *Sex and the City*. First, I will explore how conceptualizations of moral regulation as defined by Alan Hunt and Mariana Valverde are understood in my project and further how they will be applied to *Sex and the City*. Moral regulation as a theoretical framework is important for this project since it offers insight into how women's sexuality is governed in society. In addition, it enables an examination of how women resist governance and define their sexuality in society's existing structure. Second, I will incorporate the work of Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller in examining how agency and choice is expressed in *Sex and the City*. Third, I will

accept Heidi Rimke's claim of self-help literature as a mode of governance and use this to examine how the characters on *Sex and the City* are governed by or resist sexual norms presented within self-help literature.

Hunt finds that governing stems from various social positions and that regulation is not simply a top down activity (Hunt 1999: 5). This means that there are multiple agents involved in governing and that it is an interactive process. It is interactive in two ways: first, that individuals are autonomous and reflexive, which makes their reaction to being governed unpredictable, and second, that governance may stem from a variety of different locations and therefore these messages are constantly interacting with each other. When this concept is applied to *Sex and the City* it fosters a better understanding of tensions that exist within different representations of women's sexuality. Moreover accepting that moral regulation occurs from a variety of different positions enables a more comprehensive understanding of how moral regulation operates in a pluralistic society and the implications this has on what is considered normal sexual behavior for today's woman.

Hunt's contention that moral regulation often involves governance of others and governance of the self is critical to my analysis of women's sexuality in *Sex and the City*. Once one accepts that moral regulation occurs in everyday life, one can more specifically study moral regulation in the context of how Carrie Bradshaw and her eclectic group of friends interact with each other, and in turn, govern themselves and each other. It is my contention that individuals that are closer to us and within our social networks have more of an impact on the 'ways of being' that we choose. This rings true in *Sex and the City* since the characters constantly discuss sexual experiences, seeking advice, negotiating,

internalizing and resisting broader social norms. Hunt further contends that self-governance occurs in terms of 'self formation' to achieve an individual distinct identity. One can examine how the characters govern themselves and what that means for their 'self formation' in the context of character growth and maturation as the seasons progress.

Subjects of moral regulation are understood to be autonomous actors rather than passive beings. Hunt finds that subjects of moralization do not have to internalize definitions that are ascribed to them and that often they may come to resist being morally regulated (Hunt 1999: 8). Similarly, Nikolas Rose finds that moral regulatory subjects are reflexive and evaluate messages they are sent on a daily basis (Rose 1996: 343). This approach is critical to my examination of women's sexuality in *Sex and the City* since analyzing how modes of resistance to traditional sexual norms, self help literature, or forms of expert knowledge are represented offers insight into how women interact with tensions that exist in society and further reveals how women shape their sexuality within society's existing structures, as active agents engaged in a process of writing their own biographies.

The current transition to a neo-liberal society in part produces the increasing distrust of a regulatory society. Governmentality theorists convincingly argue that we are presently witnessing a heightened "de-governmentalization of the state" because individuals are increasingly becoming privatized, self-regulating, experts of themselves (Sangster 2006: 40). It is suggested that social life is governed through the concept of 'governing at a distance' (Miller and Rose 1990: 1). Many extra-state agencies of moral regulation are composed of licensed professionals (doctors, clergymen, social workers)

and it becomes crucial to take note of how each group of experts has internal contradictions and how they interact with different state agencies. Taking this approach avoids reductionist or abstract accounts of regulation (Valverde and Weir 2006: 82). Subjects are encouraged to govern themselves as guided through principles set out by experts (Miller and Rose 1990: 1). Yet Miller and Rose fail to take account of other entities that 'govern at a distance' that are not extensions of institutions and are not designated experts. Individuals consume and interpellate different messages in society since contemporary society consists of a plurality of messages and not all of them are extensions of institutions or the state. Both messages by others and experts and will be considered when examining how moral regulation occurs within *Sex and the City*.

Concepts such as expertise and being the subject/object of moral regulation are going to be applied to narratives that occur within *Sex and the City*. In the show Carrie Bradshaw's position as a sex columnist puts her in the role of an 'expert' for her readers. This is displayed on her billboard which reads "Carrie Bradshaw knows good sex." Her role as expert is explored further when she publishes her own book. Exploring Carrie's position as an expert enables one to question the sources of expertise and knowledge to which people adhere. Carrie's source of expertise is the friendship network since the material for her column is continually derived from the experiences of herself and her friends.

The role that self-help literature plays in the governance of individuals will be explored in *Sex and the City*. All of the characters have interacted with *The Rules* which is a book about the rules to successful dating and finding the right man, they have attended self-affirmation workshops and have used self-help literature to recover from

relationship breakups. Historically, moral regulation projects, such as the purity movement or the movement against venereal disease, were dedicated to the production of books, pamphlets, and lectures with which people could probe their own and other people's sexual habits in order to re-moralize the individual and the nation (Mawani 2006: 146). This thesis will suggest that the contemporary version of this regulatory technique can be found in self-help literature and magazines that are directed towards women. Heidi Rimke (2000) claims that self-help literature is a contemporary tool used to govern individuals. She contends that self-help literature is utilized in governing the self by the self. Further, that self help texts provide individuals with instructions on the best way to live and that popular psychology plays a key role in constituting oneself since it provides subjects with technologies of the self (Rimke 2000: 63). In a liberal democratic society individuals are often held responsible for regulating themselves (Rose 1996: 340, Rimke 2000: 72). Self-help is a voluntary process which is based on choice and the autonomy of the individual. It exposes readers to governmental techniques, powers and practices of normalization (Rimke 2000: 62). Choice is the key to the examination of governmental techniques in *Sex and the City*. The characters offer four different viewpoints on the same issues, and when dealing with an issue about women's sexuality, choice is used as a mechanism with which decisions are made and those sexual choices lend to each woman's sexual identity and help create her own biography. Assessing the role of self-help literature as a moral regulatory tool in *Sex and the City* enables a solid analysis of how the characters interact with traditional norms and enables an exploration of resistance to or limitations of these norms. Furthermore, since *Sex and the City* has itself been recognized as resembling women's magazines (Arthurs 2003: 83,

Bignell 2004: 163), it becomes easy to suggest that the media do act as a site where moral regulation takes place. Further the discourses of individual autonomy through choice in general, consumer choice in particular, shapes the specific mode of self-regulation within *Sex and the City*.

Methodology

Television studies offer numerous approaches to studying television. This thesis will incorporate various approaches in its analysis, specifically borrowing from narrative theory, feminist discourses, and discourse analysis. In narrative theory, scholars analyze television texts as they would analyze stories. Narrative theory establishes that there can be a narrative structure, where there is a beginning, middle and an end. Sarah Kozloff states that to be a narrative, a tale itself is not enough, there has to be a teller and listener (Kozloff 1987: 55). The major criticisms of this approach are that they are too content focused. This means that using this approach fails to take into account the media product itself: the channel it is broadcast on, the limitations of the genre, the creators and producers. This approach also ignores the effects that the media product has on an audience (Kozloff 1987: 43).

Feminist approaches to television criticism developed into two streams, the first focusing on the medium itself and the other on existing critical scholarship about television (D'Acci 1997: 4). First, feminists conducted research in the context of political movements where feminists took issue with how women were depicted in the media (D'Acci 1997: 4). Second, feminists took issue with existing critical work on television that they claimed largely ignored femininity, gender and sexuality in

discussions of the 'political' (D'Acci 1997: 5). Feminist approaches that view sexuality as political, fit well with moral regulation scholarship that views the political and morality as inseparable. We see the residues of some of this early work in the analysis of *Sex and the City* that seeks to demonstrate it as progressive or regressive.

In the 1980's and 1990's, feminist scholars shifted their focus to intertextuality, production conditions and the social history of texts. Texts needed to be understood within wider debates. Through this approach television scholars demonstrated how television produced meanings that coincided with or contradicted a broader area of women's culture and demonstrated how audiences were positioned to interpret television programs in the context of their interaction with other forms of media and aspects of material culture (D'Acci 1997: 11). Since, it is beyond the scope of this project to study the audience, I am assuming a necessarily existing but undetermined relationship between the television narrative and the broader social context of women's sexuality.

Another way of analyzing television texts is by taking a discursive approach. Discursive formations, as set out by Foucault, are historically specific systems of thought. They are conceptual categories that work to define cultural experiences within larger systems of power. Discursive formations are built bottom up from disparate micro-instances. Jason Mittell finds that texts should be viewed as sites of discursive practices (Mittell 2004: 174). This enables an examination of the ways in which forms of communication operate to constitute meaning (Mittell 2004: 173). This approach is useful for the analysis of moral regulation of women's sexuality in *Sex and the City*, since there are numerous knowledges and many truths about women's sexuality. Furthermore, *Sex and the City* knowingly talks about sexual norms. Analyzing and evaluating the different

discourses with which the women interact is essential to the thesis and its findings, especially when answering questions about how moral regulation takes place and in evaluating the changing nature of the governance of women's sexuality.

Drawing on the assumptions of narrative theory, feminist scholarship, and discourse analysis, this thesis performs a qualitative textual analysis of the seasons in the series *Sex and the City* from a socio-legal perspective. More specifically, I examine the representation of women's sexuality. Viewing the debate within this framework enables an enriched understanding about the changing nature of the governance of women's sexuality. As stated above, I will combine different approaches to television studies in my analysis. Narrative theory provides a framework with which to recognize the narrative structure of *Sex and the City*. Viewing *Sex and the City* through a feminist lens enables me to explore women's sexuality. Furthermore it establishes *Sex and the City* as being part of a genre that is aimed predominantly at women and this has implications for the forms in which women are addressed. Discourse analysis enables an analysis of *Sex and the City* as a self-help text. Each episode has a problem or issue that is discussed. The problem is introduced by Carrie Bradshaw as a topic for her column. The characters always use psycho-social strategies to solve the problems. *Sex and the City* interpellates the viewer, perhaps because its characters are spread out on the spectrum of different discourses surrounding women's sexuality. The show has a chatty style that resembles women's magazines. Each of the characters expressly evaluates the problem and assesses her take on how it should be dealt with. In each episode, the friendship network acts as a resource and is usually mobilized to solve the problem. These resemble the

different stages of self help texts. *Sex and the City's* format makes it easier to answer questions about how the characters are morally regulated.

This thesis explores the question of how the moral regulation of women's sexuality is represented in *Sex and the City*. I examine the major research question by narrowing its focus on three themes: pleasure, relationships and reproduction. The first chapter will focus on women's sexual pleasure and will examine sexual satisfaction, masturbation, taboos and promiscuity. For the most part, the show represents heterosexual sex and negotiates a heteronormative position on pleasure. This chapter will explore how the characters govern themselves and govern others in the self-reflexive process of figuring out what they find sexually pleasurable. The second chapter will examine how women's sexuality is morally regulated with respect to their relationships. This chapter will explore how the single woman is represented, examine the soul mate ideal and how finding 'the one' is renegotiated in the characters' romantic scripts. The third chapter will focus on how motherhood is defined as being a part of women's sexuality. It will explore the negotiation of how motherhood fits into the women's lives and will explore how the show represents governance of the self and governance of others when trying to face being reproductively challenged.

Chapter 1
The Quest for Women's Sexual Pleasure: Negotiating Sexual Agency and Women's Sexual Identity

“Fuck me badly once, shame on you. Fuck me badly twice, shame on me.”
 - Samantha Jones, *Sex and the City*

In *Sex and the City* sexual pleasure is understood as a necessary human aspiration. What pleasure consists of is negotiated individually and within the friendship network of the female protagonists. The show reconfigures femininity away from the traditional bi-polarity of the acceptable and unacceptable in terms of sexual pleasure, representing women's sexuality as complex, filled with many contradictions, and recognizing the grey areas that exist with different positions on women's sexuality. The show features a plurality of available techniques and practices for women's sexual pleasure. It establishes that activities are conceived as being pleasurable based on individual comfort level and that women's sexual pleasure is a continual need that has to be met. Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte are represented as playing dominant roles in their sexuality by vocalizing their needs. Furthermore, their sexual partners are expected to change their sexual practices to enable women's sexual pleasure. This chapter will explore four key sexual issues that the show takes up: sexual satisfaction, masturbation, taboos and promiscuity.

Women's sexuality is not innate but is constructed through social interaction. Valverde recognizes an attempt to validate non-expert discourses about sexuality in the late 1960's. She suggests a shift occurred at this time that allowed women to discuss the politics of sexuality with each other in the context of everyday life (Valverde 1985: 13). Sexuality, for women, involves reflecting on who they are and what they want (Valverde 1985: 10). The politics of sexuality are regularly discussed by the friendship network in

Sex and the City. This chapter explores how women's sexual pleasure is an essential part of their identities. It examines how women become sexual subjects in achieving their own sexual pleasure by exploring how the characters in *Sex and the City* talk through sexual issues. I further argue that the show predominantly represents heterosexual pleasure, negotiating a heteronormative position on pleasure anchored in questions of individual autonomy and choice.

Identity Formation, Expertise and Attaining Sexual Satisfaction

How often should women be having sex? Should women fake orgasms? Can you have a great relationship without great sex? These are the first type of sexual issues that *Sex and the City* tries to address and in each of the episodes analyzed there are many answers offered to each of those questions. When debating sexual issues, the show's overall position is that women have to choose what is "normal" for them. While an ultimately liberal position, the show is more ground-breaking in its continual representation of the protagonists' sexual needs and their identities as engaged sexual subjects. The characters are figured as active in the production and negotiation of the norms of sexual pleasure.

The episode "The Drought" is an example where the notion of overall norms regarding women's sexual pleasure is rejected for an individually determined one. In "The Drought" the question of the week for Carrie's column is: How often is normal? Each of the characters faces an issue that helps address what is considered normal for them. In this episode Mr. Big and Carrie face a dry spell in the bedroom, Miranda has not had sex in three months, Samantha turns celibate and Charlotte dates a man on Prozac who has no sex drive (1/ 11/ The Drought).

Miranda: Samantha, I cannot believe you would give this up on purpose.

Samantha: Actually I hardly miss it.

Miranda: How long has it been?

Samantha: A hundred years.

Charlotte: *looking out the window* It never goes down, does it? Look it's still...

Samantha: Hard.

Charlotte: Yeah.

Samantha: Gummy bear please...Give me the fucking candy!

Carrie: Hey, snapping over gummy bears might be a sign that celibacy is not for you (1/ 11/ The Drought).

This conversation takes place when the girls are watching Carrie's neighbours have sex. Samantha, Charlotte, Miranda and Carrie are mesmerized by how long the man can last. They are clearly in awe of her neighbour's sex life. This is significant since it establishes that all of the characters aspire to achieve sexual pleasure and are enjoying voyeurism. This scene suggests that each of the characters wants to have an active sex life like Carrie's neighbours. The fact that all of the characters are hypnotized by the 'afternoon show' normalizes that as an ideal that they all want to achieve. Pleasure is represented as something that is to be desired, not just in fantasy, but in everyday life.

After Carrie accidentally farts in Mr. Big's presence, they stop having sex. She begins to question whether it is normal for a couple to sleep together without having sex. For the next three days Carrie is represented as being self-reflexive, actively assessing whether her actions caused the dry spell her relationship is experiencing. When Carrie needs to turn to an outsider to assess the situation she depends on the friendship network. Carrie wants to know if Miranda thinks it is normal that she and Mr. Big have not had sex in a while. She wants to know how long is too long to go without sex when one is in a relationship. Governance scholars suggest that increasingly, statistical measures and judgments about what is normal establish norms that subjects use to measure their

conduct against when disciplining themselves (Gill 2007: 64); Carrie seeks such a norm but does not turn to formal expertise.

In this episode Carrie tries to find out what the established norm is for the frequency of sexual activity in which one engages while in a relationship. Miranda thinks that Big and Carrie not having sex could be perfectly normal and that the answer depends on what is normal for them. Samantha, on the other hand, suggests that sex is a barometer for what is going on in the relationship and that Carrie not having sex might be an indication that something is wrong. In the end, Big comes over to resolve things, and when he sees Carrie's neighbours having sex, he tells her that they can do better than that. Carrie and Big's sex life returns.

Amanda D. Lotz finds that *Sex and the City* continues the traditional depiction of the new-woman character type. Even though the issues the show discusses about gender norms have been previously addressed on television, *Sex and the City* can be distinguished from previous depictions because legal and social issues are discussed through the eyes of a multiplicity of female characters and the issues discussed are more personal (Lotz 2006: 33). One factor that sets *Sex and the City* apart from single character depictions on gender issues is that the series does not construct one perspective as being correct; it suggests that any of the character's viewpoints or all of them are equally viable (Lotz 2006: 99). *Sex and the City* is cognizant of the diversity of women's experiences, the range of possibilities available to each and the variety of desires among the characters (Lotz 2006: 100). Representations of women's sexual pleasure in *Sex and the City* reflect the complexity of different discourses about women's sexual pleasure. Each of the characters represents a general position on women's sexuality. However,

these positions do not limit their sexual beliefs and are variable. Samantha and Charlotte's sexual positions are usually on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Charlotte: Do you think you'll ever ... never mind.

Kevin: What? Think I'll ever go off of it?

Charlotte: Yeah

Kevin: No.

Charlotte: Not even for me?

Kevin: Nope. Come on, wouldn't you rather be with a guy who is kind and giving and not that interested in sex, than an unstable oversexed prick who only wants to get laid?

Charlotte: Nope (1/ 11/ The Drought).

In "The Drought" Samantha, the most sexually voracious of the characters, tries being celibate. By the end of the episode her urgency for sexual pleasure is evident when she asks a random man to fuck her in her yoga class (1/ 11/ The Drought). At the other end of the spectrum, even though Charlotte often declares that orgasms do not make or break a relationship, her character often faces sexual problems which make her realize that women's sexual pleasure is a need that has to be met for her. Charlotte realizes that sex is an essential part of a relationship when the man she is dating will not go off of Prozac to get his sex drive back. This is a moment where Charlotte realizes that her sexual pleasure is non-negotiable.

Charlotte: I mean don't you ever just want to be really pounded hard? You know, like when the bed is moving all around and it's all sweaty and your head is just knocking up against the headboard and you feel like it might just blow off?

Dammit, I just really want to be fucked, you know, just really fucked (3/ 16/ Frenemies).

Another issue where Charlotte and Samantha are juxtaposed is their outlook on what brings women sexual pleasure. Samantha usually views sex as an end itself, whereas Charlotte usually views sex as something to be shared between couples. In "Frenemies" Charlotte gets into an argument with Samantha because she thinks that

Samantha talks too explicitly about sex and flaunts her sexuality. During their fight, both women decide to spend time with other women. Samantha realizes that there is such a thing as going too far on being sexually free when her new friend decides to give a man a blowjob under the table at a restaurant. Charlotte realizes that sometimes women need to talk explicitly about their sexual urges while she is eating lunch with her sorority sisters. In this scene her sorority sisters treat Charlotte as though she is Samantha. After drinking few too many cocktails Charlotte voices her frustration over not having sex with her husband Trey. Her sorority sisters voice their disapproval of Charlotte's statement, pointing out that they are eating. This suggests that they do not find the conversation Charlotte is having appropriate. Again, the two most different characters are closer in their recognition of the need for sexual pleasure, combined with the recognition that sexual pleasure, alone, does not solely define women's sexual identity.

Carrie: So, still faking it?

Miranda: Yep.

Samantha: Is he that bad in bed?

Miranda: No, he's just. He's a guy. They can rebuild a jet engine but when it comes to a woman ... what's the big mystery? It's my clitoris not the sphinx (2/ 4/ They Shoot Single People Don't They?).

In *Sex and the City*, women aspire to achieve orgasms from sexual activity and the discussion with men is candid. Men are expected to be knowledgeable about female anatomy and are expected to be able to please their sexual partners. In "They Shoot Single People Don't They?" Miranda catches herself faking orgasms with an ophthalmologist she is dating. She finally decides to stop and confesses to Josh that she has been faking it. His first reaction is to blame her and ask her if she has a physical problem. Miranda gets defensive and asks him what makes him think it is not his fault. Finally, he realizes that all the other women he was previously involved with might have

been faking it, and asks Miranda for tips. Miranda tries to teach him how to meet her needs for two days. In the end, she fakes it with him to reward him for all of his effort, but the fact that she returns to ignoring his phone calls suggests that she refuses to settle for a man who cannot satisfy her sexually (2/ 4/ They Shoot Single People Don't they?).

Until the 1970's, when women failed to reach orgasm, medical authorities would assure men that women had physical or psychological impairments that were preventing them from achieving orgasms (Maines 1999: 6). Josh is reproducing the medicalization of women through a discourse where women are blamed for being unable to achieve orgasms, rather than looking at the skill of their partners. This episode criticizes these long held beliefs by establishing that the man can be at fault. Miranda is shown achieving orgasms throughout the series with many men. The fact that Josh wants to train hard and get tips on how to please Miranda, suggests that women's sexual pleasure is important to men, as well.

Finding sexual pleasure in relationships is not one-sided in *Sex and the City*. A shift has occurred in today's society where women's sexual knowledge and prowess makes them more desirable. Alan Hunt suggests that new forms of governance differ from old forms since the focus shifts from developing character to developing personality. This requires individuals to create distinctive and attractive identities (Hunt 2003: 171). Since women's sexual pleasure is an inherent part of their identity, being good in bed is an aspiration which enhances personality development. In the introduction to *Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960's*, Hilary Radner claims that the public discourse surrounding sexuality is part of the formulation of an ethical system that defines the relations of the self to the self and that the focus on pleasure is the source of

self-fulfillment (Radner 1999: 4). Discourses surrounding sexual pleasure as part of the formulation of an ethical system exist in *Sex and the City*. The techniques utilized by the characters to make decisions about what is pleasurable for them, enable a closer analysis of identity formation. Governing oneself and governing others requires truth-telling practices in order to create conditions for self-transformation (Hunt and White 2000: 99). Personality development requires these truth telling practices to take place before one's peers (Hunt and White 2000: 106). This is exemplified in "Was it Good for You" where Charlotte leans on her friends when she questions her ability to sexually please a man.

Samantha: Of course it's her, and I have to say I'm not surprised. Ever seen her on a Stairmaster? Nothing happening below the waist. Nada. No sail.

Carrie: How can you say that? Even if she was bad in bed, which she isn't, is it really that important?

Samantha: Absolutely! Who we are in bed is who we are in life. I never met a man who was bad in bed, who was good in life (2/ 16/ Was it Good For You?).

In "Was It Good For You?" Charlotte's date falls asleep on her while they are having sex. Charlotte, being extremely upset over this, goes over to Carrie's house for comfort. Charlotte believes that her date fell asleep on her because she was bad in bed. Carrie tries to convince Charlotte that it was not her fault and suggests that her date might have been tired (2/ 16/ Was it Good For You?). Charlotte decides to solve her problem by signing up for a tantric sex workshop called "How to Please a Man". She cannot bear to go alone and is embarrassed by her shortcomings so she signs her friends up as well because she wants them there for support. They are hesitant at first, but agree to accompany her.

Charlotte: Look. I have a trainer for the gym I can have a trainer for...

Samantha: Fucking (2/ 16/ Was it Good For You?).

This suggests that Charlotte wants to take a workshop on how to please a man to acquire a skill she feels is necessary for the project of forming her identity. This is an example of a self-improvement project where an individual actively seeks out the means to achieve who they want to be. Advice manuals have played a crucial role in the governance of women's sexuality throughout history (Mawani 2006: 146). Historically, sexual manuals were developed from an androcentric point of view and were predominantly about pleasing men with women playing submissive roles. After the First World War, pressure was placed on women to be sexually free. Women's repressed nature was blamed for men's promiscuity (Jeffreys 1985: 98). According to sexologists of the 1920's, men were the only ones recognized as being able to provide women with sexual pleasure through sexual intercourse. Sexual pleasure was not expected to be positive or strengthening for women, rather specialists predicted that women could not gain pleasure from sexual intercourse unless they subjected themselves to their husbands (Jeffreys 1985: 181). A cultural shift has taken place where aspiring to be an expert at giving and receiving sexual pleasure does not stem from a fear of losing a man. Rather, being a knowledgeable and experienced sexual partner brings women power and is a necessary part of their sexual identity. The importance of sexual pleasure is heightened and both men and women are expected to be able to please and be pleased.

In "Was it Good for You?" Miranda wonders why the self-help workshop is being held in someone's apartment, but it becomes apparent that the expert is going to demonstrate how to give a lingam massage on her husband. Charlotte is serious throughout this scene. She is wearing glasses and is consistently taking notes. She admonishes her friends to be quiet and respectful during the workshop. At the end of the

episode Charlotte gives a lingam massage to the doctor that fell asleep on her. Carrie's voiceover states that Charlotte was always a great learner and that Charlotte later told her that it was the best fifty dollars she ever spent (2/ 16/ Was it Good for You). In this case external expertise is validated. Expertise assists the population in the management of the self. It is through self-inspection, self-problematization, self-monitoring and confession that individuals evaluate themselves according to criteria provided by others (Rose 1990: 11). In *Sex and the City* self-inspection, self-problematization, self-monitoring and confession take place within the friendship network. The actual evaluation of the self is thrust upon the friendship network and the issue at hand is evaluated within the group. The group is necessary in the show for this process of self-management to occur. In this episode, even though Charlotte seeks external expertise, the friendship network is there for support and her friends attend the tantric workshop with her.

So far women's sexual pleasure has been discussed in the context of the dating world. Representations of women's sexual pleasure in the context of marriage in *Sex and the City* suggests that wives, too, need to be sexually satisfied, and that to do so their sexual needs need to be vocalized. Husbands are expected to work on sexual problems that a couple may be facing. A major sexual issue that Charlotte faced was Trey's impotence. Again self-governmental techniques were applied to resolving the issue.

Trey: It's no big deal. Sometimes intercourse just doesn't do it for me.

Charlotte: Oh.

Trey: You know I can get the sails up, just can't bring it into the harbour.

Charlotte: Is there anything I can do?

Trey: Yes. There is.

Charlotte: What?

Trey: You can marry me.

Charlotte: I'm already doing that (3/ 12/ Don't Ask Don't Tell).

Charlotte tries to sleep with Trey the night before her wedding day. Upon discovering that Trey cannot get it up, she cannot sleep all night. Right before Charlotte walks down the aisle she reveals Trey's impotence to Carrie. She tells Carrie not to tell anyone else. Carrie lies and claims that it happens to everyone sometimes, but she also suggests to Charlotte the option of not marrying Trey. Charlotte decides to go through with the wedding anyway (3/ 12/ Don't Ask Don't Tell).

Once Charlotte is married she tries discussing the sexual problems they have been having with her husband. She first proposes Viagra but this suggestion offends him and he immediately refuses on account of heart problems in his family. When she wants to discuss other options, Trey gets uncomfortable and decides to avoid their problems by going for a run instead (3/ 14/ Sex and Another City). Charlotte then turns to the internet to find a solution for Trey's impotence. She stumbles upon a hydraulic penis implant and shows Trey the picture. Trey thinks it is absurd but he does agree to go to therapy (3/15/ Hot Child in the City). Atypically, Charlotte and Trey turn to external expertise to sort out their sexual problems. This places them under the professional gaze of a therapist. Rose contends that subjects of expertise are individuals who lack the cognitive, emotional, practical and ethical skills to be responsible for managing themselves (Rose 1996: 348). In this case, the therapist's expertise is supposed to help resolve the sexual issues that Trey and Charlotte are having.

The therapist is a Yale graduate that Trey finds through his alumni association. Since Trey and Charlotte appear to be uncomfortable discussing their sexual issues, the therapist suggests using non-threatening language to talk about their genitals. At this point, Trey questions the therapist's credentials. Charlotte names her vagina Rebecca and

Trey names his penis Schooner. The therapist gives the couple homework by asking them to reveal a fantasy at bedtime using their safe names for their genitals. Anthony Giddens asserts that therapy is an experience which involves the individual to engage in systematic reflection about the course of his or her life's development (Giddens 1991: 71). This suggests that the expert knowledge given by the expert must be undertaken by the individuals that are undergoing therapy. Charlotte is serious about following the therapist's instructions and tells Trey her fantasy. When it is Trey's turn, he thinks it is silly and refuses to do it.

Charlotte is subsequently shocked when she is woken up that night by Trey masturbating to *Jugs*, a pornographic magazine. When they are updating their therapist on recent events, the therapist sees it as a good thing because it establishes that Trey is not gay. The therapist then recommends that Trey integrate Charlotte into his sexual routine. Charlotte makes sure this happens by sticking pictures of her face on the women in *Jugs* (3/ 15/ Hot Child in the City). This dynamic is different from how the women are usually represented when they go to their friends to resolve sexual issues. Unlike Charlotte, Trey would rather avoid the issue rather than resolve it. This dynamic does not enable Charlotte to obtain the sexual pleasure she is craving nor does it enable the development of Charlotte's personality. Without sexual pleasure the growth of the marriage and the development of herself are frustrated.

Charlotte: He masturbates and he reads porn but when it comes to dealing with me. Nothing.

Samantha: Madonna/whore.

Charlotte: You think?

Samantha: Absolutely! Trey sees you as his virginal wife not his sexual play thing. You're not going to get anywhere until you change how he sees you.

Charlotte: I don't know if I can do that.

Carrie: Yes you can, come on you're sexy. He should see you. You're something to see (3/ 16/ Frenemies).

When the therapist's advice fails, Charlotte decides to bring it up with her friends, thus returning to her primary circle of expertise, her confession circle. Charlotte discloses that it has gotten so bad that she almost masturbated with her husband right next to her. Charlotte's friends suggest that Trey needs to see Charlotte sexually. Charlotte puts her friends' solution into action by going lingerie shopping. When Charlotte surprises Trey with lingerie he is shocked and demands she take it off because she is his wife. Charlotte looks Trey in the eye, strips off her lingerie and delivers the powerful lines, "Look at me. This is me. I'm not a Madonna. I'm not a whore. I'm your wife. I'm sexual and I love you." After making the bold statement she begins to pleasure herself for her husband. Because of this Trey manages to have sex with his wife for the very first time (for a minute and a half) (3/ 16/ Frenemies).

This is significant because advice from the friendship network was successful where advice from a medical professional failed. I suggest this indicates that the friendship network replaces the role that formal experts play and that the group of friends actually resolve the issue that Charlotte is facing. This is indicative of a shift that is occurring within governance in the 21st century. New locations of moral governance exist alongside older forms. Individuals are taking a more active role in governing others and governing themselves. Rather than relying on expert advice alone, women are turning to the community with which they are affiliated. Hunt suggests that with the destabilization of trust in expert knowledge there is an emergence of individuals acquiring a degree of expertise for themselves in a limited number of fields (Hunt 2003: 171). I argue that women's sexuality is one of the fields where women are acquiring a

degree of expertise for themselves. Charlotte uses the internet to acquire a degree of expertise on how to deal with impotence. The friendship network's advice on Trey needing to see her as a sexual being incites Charlotte to govern herself and present herself as being sexy. It mobilizes her as a sexual agent.

What makes *Sex and the City* interesting is that the show itself has a didactic function, instructing viewers on new or different practices, terms and issues. Not only is the show a representation of the governance of women's sexual pleasure, but the show itself functions as a site of expertise and knowledge for its viewers. *Sex and the City* normalizes certain techniques of governance, such as women consulting their friends in the formation of their limits and expectations of sexual pleasure. It frames women's sexual pleasure in the language of autonomy and choice. Furthermore it reinforces sexual pleasure as something that can be negotiated and places women's sexual pleasure as an inherent part of women's personalities.

The De-Medicalization and Normalization of Self-Pleasure: Developing an Expertise of the Self

What do women fantasize about when they masturbate? Are sex toys enjoyable? Do women masturbate while they are in relationships? These are the second type of sexual issues that are explored in *Sex and the City*. Representations of female masturbation in *Sex and the City* are in line with feminist discourses about sexual freedom and autonomy. Female masturbation is normalized in the show. The women openly talk about masturbating and most of the characters are seen on screen with a vibrator. Masturbation is continuously represented as being perfectly healthy and

pleasurable. Whether the women in *Sex and the City* are single, married or in relationships, they can always take care of themselves.

Hillary Radner suggests that a significant change took place with the discovery of clitoral orgasm which enabled measuring women's pleasure. This re-conceptualized women's sexuality independently of men since penetration was no longer the only method a woman could obtain pleasure (Radner 1999: 18). This conception of women's pleasure was empowering to women since there was no longer a necessary dependence on men (Radner 1999: 19). This facilitated a movement away from women's sexuality being relative to, and dependent upon, men's. Feminists have discussed masturbation as representing women's freedom, autonomy and rebellion against the status quo (Laquer 2003:75). I argue that female masturbation within *Sex and the City* can be thought of as part of a series of continuous practices of identity formation. Furthermore, I suggest the characters in *Sex and the City* govern each other and themselves as sexual beings by talking about masturbation, sharing fantasies and sharing their experiences about the sex toys they have used.

Historically vibrators were used in treating hysteria in women. Hysteria was often a condition that afflicted young, single, and unmarried women. Rachel P. Maines claims the disease paradigm of hysteria reconciled differences between the andocentric understanding of sexuality and women's actual experiences (Maines 1999: 22). In today's world there is an understanding that women have sexual drives and that sexual pleasure is a need that has to be met. Sex toys have left physician's office and are sold widely to be used as aids by women to bring themselves sexual pleasure.

Charlotte: I think I broke my vagina.

Carrie: Oh, am I pulling too hard?

Charlotte: Metaphorically. I mean with the rabbit.

Carrie: Oh so you've been using it.

Charlotte: Yes, and I'm afraid if I keep using it I'll never be able to enjoy sex with a man again (1/ 9/ The Season and the Hare).

In "The Season and the Hare" when Miranda talks to her friends about knowing where her next orgasm is going to come from, she is referring to her new vibrator, the Rabbit Pearl. Charlotte is initially sceptical. She compares sex toys to boyfriends, decides that sex toys cannot call or meet the parents and appears to be against them. However, when she sees "the Rabbit", she ends up purchasing it because of its female friendly appearance. Charlotte becomes obsessed with her vibrator instantly. Eventually her friends have to call a "Rabbit Intervention" where she is forced to decide that she is not going to settle with herself. Charlotte is represented as being incapable of making rational life choices when she chooses to stay home with her new sex toy instead of going out with her friends. When Miranda takes the toy away, she tells Charlotte that she thought she could handle it. In this case Charlotte does not display enough self-control to be able to deal with a vibrator (1/ 9/ The Season and the Hare).

This episode is significant for two reasons. First, it establishes that sex toys and masturbation are accepted as being normal and healthy. However, the fact that Charlotte's friends have to call an intervention suggests that sex toys are an additional way for women to be pleased and are not replacements for men. The heterosexual norm of sex is re-established when Charlotte decides not to settle for herself and continues her quest for a man that will make her happy. Although the show is forward-looking in the sense that female masturbation is normalized, there are still messages suggesting that masturbation or the use of sex toys are just additives to women's sex lives. Second, the friendship network once again takes over the role an expert would

play by intervening and making Charlotte give up her sex toy. As noted above, historically women's sexuality, especially the therapeutic nature of vibrators has been medicalized. The friendship network itself uses medicalized language, such as calling an intervention. Instead of doctors governing the use of vibrators, this role switches to the friendship network. Even though the friendship network normalizes masturbation to an extent, they also set limits and develop a norm for the healthy use of sex toys.

Magda: (referring to a vibrator) But no man will marry you if that is by [sic] bed. It mean [sic] you don't need him (3/ 3/ Attack of the Five Foot Ten Woman).

Even though women's masturbation with sex toys is atypically normalized, *Sex and the City* does not completely escape traditional discourses about women's sexuality but rather negotiates its messages within them. In "Attack of the Five Foot Ten Woman" Magda, Miranda's new cleaning lady, discovers Miranda's goodie drawer that contains condoms and a vibrator. Miranda's instinct is to justify having these items so she is not judged. She quickly asserts she has a boyfriend and further explains she was single before that. Magda's traditional views are clear when she asks Miranda if she intends on marrying her boyfriend, moreover, she reaffirms the norm of everybody wanting to get married. When Miranda responds she is unsure, Magda shouts "God bless you". Miranda comes out and tells Magda she does not need her blessing, or God's blessing, and that her life is fine the way it is. Magda displays her disapproval of Miranda's beliefs by replacing her vibrator with a statue of the Virgin Mary. Miranda gets angry, defends drinking coffee, having sex and enjoying battery operated toys. She emphasizes that she does not need to be judged for being a thirty-four year old single woman. At the end of the episode Magda surprises Miranda by setting up a display of condoms on her nightstand. This indicates that women with different perspectives on sexuality can

peacefully co-exist and do not need to push their lifestyle choices on others. Carrie's voice over states:

And that night in her spotless apartment Miranda knew she had done the right thing taking a stand because of her nightstand. Magda realized that while single women in New York never made pies, they sometimes mate guys (3/ 3/ Attack of the Five Foot Ten Woman).

Samantha, the most sexually open character, develops a considerable level of expertise about sex toys. Samantha has mentioned having a "goodie closet" before, but in "Critical Condition" she plays the role of expert when she goes to replace her vibrator. The store employee claims they do not sell vibrators and only sell massagers. It is evident that women in the store are in the massager section trying to buy vibrators. Samantha advises each of them on the vibrators they are holding. It becomes evident that Samantha has tried almost everything (5/ 6/ Critical Condition). She clearly has greater expertise than the store employee or other customers. Many discourses about women's sexual pleasure suggest that the more orgasms they can achieve during masturbation will eventually lead to the ability to achieve more orgasms in their sexual activities with men (Giddens: 1992: 16).

Fantasizing during masturbation is another topic freely discussed on *Sex and the City*. The show establishes that there are no boundaries to the topic of fantasy. In "The Agony and Ex-Tacy" Samantha develops a crush on a priest that she nicknames Friar Fuck. Over dinner, Samantha confesses to her friends that she spent all afternoon masturbating while thinking about Friar Fuck. Charlotte is shocked a priest is playing a star role in Samantha's fantasies. Samantha justifies it and asserts the point of fantasizing is to use her imagination. She confirms her own beliefs by stating that fantasizing is both fun and healthy (4/ 1/ The Agony and Ex-Tacy). The discussion around the table

normalizes masturbation because even Charlotte, the most conservative of the group, admits she masturbates. The fact that the friends are sitting around the dinner table casually discussing their sexual habits makes it a norm that is acceptable within their community.

Fantasy and sex toys literally collide in “Escape from New York” when Samantha meets a dildo model and brings him home after a sex toy party. The dildo modeled after his penis is a bestseller. The reverse gaze takes place when Samantha is using the dildo model to fulfill a sexual fantasy of sleeping with a real-life dildo whereas the dildo model wants to talk about his poetry and wants to prove that he is more than a sex toy (3/ 13/ Escape from New York). This episode objectifies the dildo model and it is obvious that Samantha is only interested in him for the sexual pleasure that he can provide her. She ends up letting him down easily but she still gets to keep the best part of him, his dildo. This episode tries to combine fantasy with reality, and suggests that each have their own place in women’s sexual lives.

When discussing self-pleasure, *Sex and the City* normalizes masturbation and reaffirms discourses about women’s sexuality where they are encouraged to become experts of themselves. In the series, norms and limitations about masturbation, fantasy and the use of sex toys are negotiated within the friendship network. The show is strategically forward-looking by placing liberal views about self-pleasure against the backdrop of traditional views. Moreover the discourses surrounding women’s self-pleasure are further de-medicalized yet remnants of medicalized language is embedded within the friendship network when they take on the role of experts.

Playing with Taboos: Sexual Decision-Making Practices

The fourth sexual issue discussed in *Sex and the City* is sexual taboos. Specific fetishes are not normalized, rather the series sets norms by which women should abide when they are making decisions about engaging in sexual activities that are considered taboo. The representations of sexual pleasure in *Sex and the City* suggest that a plethora of sexual activities exist from which women can choose. It is suggested that women should not be judged by what they do, and what is considered normal is evaluated according to individual comfort level. The show's discourse on taboos is complex because notions of having choice and being free to participate in taboo activities are placed against more traditional norms about women's sexuality where some activities are considered acceptable only in the context of marriage. A fear that women will be categorized as not being "marriage material" is voiced within the show reflecting the overarching heteronormative matrimonial ideal. Usually a taboo is explored when one of the character's dates makes an atypical sexual request. The characters then engage in protracted discussions and self-management in order to deal with the request, thereby establishing the norm.

Hunt claims that ethical self-governance results as a consequence of responsibilization. Each of us is responsible for our own biography. Living an ethical life does not mean making determinations between right and wrong conduct, but rather requires the individual to engage in a process of self-reflexivity whereby knowledge and self-knowledge is advanced in the self-management of oneself (Hunt 2003: 172). This is especially true in *Sex and the City* when Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha have to decide on whether or not they will find their partner's fetish pleasurable and fulfill his

sexual requests. The fetishes themselves are not usually normalized, but the fact that the characters regularly face requests that they have to question, suggests that people having fetishes is quite normal.

Charlotte: I'm afraid if I don't then you'll dump me, and if I do, then I'll be the up-the-butt girl. And I don't want to be the up-the-butt girl because, I mean, men don't marry the up-the-butt girl. Who's ever heard of Mrs. Up-The-Butt? No, no, no, I can't. I want children and nice bedding and I just can't handle this right now (1/ 4/ Valley of the Twenty Something Guys).

Is anal sex appropriate and pleasurable for women? In “Valley of the Twenty Something Guys” Charlotte phones Carrie for advice when her “perfect boyfriend” proposes having anal sex. Even though Carrie is running late for her date with Mr. Big, she makes time for her friend. She cabs over picking up Miranda and Samantha on the way. The girls have a discussion about anal sex in the back of a cab. Miranda thinks it depends on how much Charlotte likes the man. She sees anal sex as an issue of power and control. Will Charlotte’s boyfriend respect her more or less? Samantha thinks a hole is a hole and that sex is just a physical expression. Her ‘don’t knock it till you try it’ attitude is consistent throughout the series.

Charlotte engages in her own self-governance through the act of having to assess whether her boyfriend will respect her more or less. In the end, her decision not to have anal sex reinforces the perceived pretence of the norm that women who engage in anal sex will be ruined for their husbands and will fall into the category of women that are not considered marriage material. Even though discourses about choice and doing what one feels comfortable with are discussed and encouraged, Charlotte’s resolution is based on a more traditional perspective about women’s sexuality.

Having sex while watching pornography is discussed in “The Cheating Curve”. In this episode Miranda’s boyfriend, Ethan, turns on a pornographic film while having

sex with Miranda. At first she finds it sexy but she soon realizes that she is competing with his sex videos. Miranda admits to Carrie that her boyfriend's porn addiction is bordering on humiliating. The next time she is with Ethan, he goes as far as requesting that Miranda "hold it", so he can rewind the pornographic film playing in the background. When Miranda makes him choose between the women in his videos or her, he chooses the women in his videos. Miranda storms out (2/ 6/ The Cheating Curve). This representation of Miranda voicing her sexual needs and taking a stand when she is uncomfortable is in line with the show's dominant discourse. Miranda is expressing herself as a sexual subject and making a choice to walk out. This narrative suggests when women experiment with sexual activity, they need to feel desirable and get pleasure out of it. Miranda refuses to play a submissive role and engage in a sexual activity just to keep her partner happy.

"Golden showers" are discussed in the third season when Carrie dates a politician who wants her to urinate on him. Once again, Carrie turns to her friends for advice on how to deal with her boyfriend's current sexual request. The general consensus within the group of friends is that exceptions can be made for the "right guy". It really depends on with what Carrie would be comfortable. Carrie is clearly uncomfortable with the whole idea. This can be seen when she avoids drinking water while on a date with him. After spending a night together, the politician suggests taking a shower. She finally tells him that she cannot do it. She comes up with alternatives that she would be comfortable with since being able to please him is a concern. After his request is turned down, he breaks up with her on the premise of his campaign team not thinking it is appropriate for him to be dating a sex columnist (3/ 2/ Politically Erect). Carrie's comfort level deciding

whether or not to succumb to the politician's request is the predominant theme in sexual choices that women make in the show. Women are constantly sent messages that traditionally taboo topics are now acceptable since there is no right or wrong. Rather there is a menu of sexual options and it is up to the individual to choose what she is comfortable with.

Carrie: How did this happen? How did they get the message that the ass is now on the menu?

Miranda: I bet there's one loud-mouthed guy who found some woman who loved it and told everyone: women love this!

Carrie: Who is this guy?

Miranda: Who's the woman who loved it?

Samantha: Don't knock it till you've tried it!

Carrie: Bingo (4/ 6/ Baby Talk is Cheap).

Tuckus Lingus becomes a topic of discussion at a restaurant when Marathon Man, a man Miranda is dating, surprises her by giving her a rim job. Miranda decides to ask her friends for their opinions. Samantha has had it performed on her but would never reciprocate. Charlotte admits to both giving and receiving with Trey. When Miranda is shocked Charlotte is more sexually "advanced" than she is, Charlotte justifies her decision by asserting she and Trey are married. Since Miranda's friends have been receptive to rim jobs, the next time she sees Marathon Man she gives in. She knows she has to do something for him, so she offers to give him a massage. While she is massaging him, he keeps on sticking his bum in the air, wanting Miranda to reciprocate. Miranda ends up yelling "I don't want to do that!" She is mortified, continues massaging him, but never sees him again (4/ 6/ Baby Talk is Cheap).

After the discussion with the friendship network, Miranda is encouraged to push her boundaries and be open to the idea of *tuckus lingus*. Once again the message is that it depends on with what each individual is comfortable. When Miranda is not comfortable

with reciprocating she exercises her sexual agency. Charlotte engaging in a taboo sexual activity with Trey suggests that in the right context, such as marriage, it is positive for women to be more open and experimental with different ways of obtaining pleasure. One can further speculate that the nature of the act itself does not make it taboo, but whom you engage in the act with is a defining feature.

Charlotte: Jack thinks I'm sexy.

Miranda: He's just buttering you up. First you start thinking you're hot. Then he brings up the threesome thing. Boom, suddenly you're kissing another woman while he beats off (1/ 8/ Three's a Crowd).

In "Three's a Crowd" Charlotte's boyfriend, Jack requests having a threesome. When Charlotte discusses threesomes with her friends, it is revealed that Miranda may have participated in one but was too drunk to remember, Carrie has never had one and Samantha only believes in guest starring in them. Carrie's question of the week is: Are threesomes the new sexual frontier? In this episode, Jack gets Charlotte to check out other women and tries to convince her that they are flirting with them. Jack's influence, emphasizing Charlotte's sex appeal, rubs off on Charlotte, and she gets very excited over a dream she has about her, Jack and another woman. Charlotte confides in Carrie about her dream and wonders whether having a threesome would bring her and Jack closer. Carrie asks Charlotte if she finds it strange that she thinks having sex with a person she does not know will bring her closer to Jack. In the end, Charlotte gets very close, but does not actually end up having a threesome. She and Jack go cruising for women at a benefit party. Charlotte extends the invitation, however when the three are upstairs, the woman and Jack dive into each other and Charlotte is thrown off the bed (1/ 8/ Three's a Crowd). This suggests that this threesome was not about Charlotte's sexuality, but was about her date wanting to have sex with other women. Carrie's comment above re-establishes the

norm of a monogamous, committed relationship, and suggests that adding an extra person may indicate a problem.

Miranda, upset that none of her friends want to choose her to be in a threesome with them, discusses this rejection with her therapist. Miranda seeks validation from an external source to reaffirm her desirability by responding to an advertisement in the paper. As soon as a couple chooses her as their third partner, Miranda's need is met and she leaves the bar (1/ 8/ Three's a Crowd). The event itself is represented as an anti-climax. This suggests that having a threesome is not as important as it has been made out to be. It deflects the focus from the taboo act itself and towards the self-reflection that encountering the taboo act incites.

The examination of taboo sexual requests in *Sex and the City* enables the examination of the self-reflective process in making sexual decisions. Norms are represented as being based on individual comfort level. Negotiating what is normal for oneself takes place within the friendship network where limitations and boundaries are set. Moreover, certain techniques of governing oneself are normalized. Women are encouraged to be problem solvers. A broad range of sexual practices are represented as being pleasurable and the sexual choices that women make are represented as being deeply tied to their sexual identities and their individual personalities. When making choices about sexual pleasure, the women's decisions are not free from traditional sexual views and judgement.

Promiscuity: Risk-Management and Sexual Practices

Charlotte: Do you think I'm a whore?

Samantha: Oh please, if you're a whore, what does that make me?

- (3/ Episode 6/ Are We All Sluts)

Do too many sexual partners make women sluts? Is having multiple partners risky? How should women deal with these risks? This is the fifth type of sexual issue addressed in *Sex and the City*. Even when safe sex is not being directly addressed, there are visual representations of the characters carrying condoms. This suggests that safe sex is being endorsed. Women on *Sex and the City* are constantly aware of the physical risks of having multiple sex partners. They are savvy sexual subjects.

Hunt contends that morality functions through discourses about harm and risk (Hunt 2003: 166). Risk will be examined as a tool of governance and it is suggested that moral regulation occurs through risk discourses. Mary Douglas claims we have removed danger from politics and deal with danger through the language of science (Douglas 1992: 4). She further contends that risk is highly politicized (Douglas 1992: 13). Pat O'Malley proposes risk as both a discourse and a technique of governing. Risk understood as an additional tool of governance that functions alongside existing governance techniques (O'Malley 1996: 190). Once one accepts that risk functions alongside more traditional governing techniques, one can further propose that risk can occur in non-actuarial and non-scientific discourses (Moore 2000: 414). I suggest that accepting risk as a governmental technique makes it easier to accept the claim that moral regulation is hidden in the language of risk discourses. Once it is accepted that risk is not solely actuarial, it can also be argued that it is not entirely objective and that risk is subject to moral and normative judgments.

There has been a recent preoccupation with risk and sexual activity. Sex within monogamous relationships has been normalized whereas society tends to stigmatize those who have multiple sex partners (Hunt 2003: 182). Promiscuity has always been perceived as high risk behaviour. If someone is promiscuous they put themselves at a higher risk for contracting sexually transmitted infections (STI's). Risk discourses usually downplay the moral dimension by highlighting risk through medical discourses (Hunt 2003: 182). Here I examine the moralization of women's sexuality through analyzing episodes where the characters have to question being comfortable with their sexual histories when interacting with medical discourses. I argue that a shift occurs where women are not judged by what they do, but rather by how they conduct themselves while doing it.

In "Are We All Sluts?" Miranda discovers she has chlamydia. She complains to Carrie about her judgmental gynaecologist and having to contact all of her previous sexual partners. Miranda has to face her biggest fear; making a list of every man she has ever slept with. She becomes self conscious about her number and begins to wonder how many is too many. Eventually she confesses her number to Steve and he accepts her anyway (3/ 6/ Are We All Sluts?). Miranda contracting an STI from her risky behaviour makes her question whether or not she is promiscuous. She is forced to be self-reflexive and assess whether or not her number is too high. Miranda's insecurity is curbed after Steve accepts her, regardless. This suggests that women should not be judged by their sexual pasts and that having multiple partners is normal and healthy. At the same time, sex is reproduced as a risky behaviour which can affect one's health. The management of

those risks may involve the medical profession and a prescribed course of action by the sexual agent.

O'Malley finds that responsibility is an integral part the politicization of the self. A responsible individual is expected to take rational steps to ensure avoiding risk and causing harm to the self and others (O'Malley 1992: 261). Samantha, the most promiscuous of the group, engages in the most high risk behaviour. When Samantha meets Tom Reymi (the male Samantha), he tells her he will only sleep with her after he sees results from an AIDS test. In this scene Reymi insists that everyone that has as much sex as they do needs to get tested. Before Samantha decides to get tested, she first discusses the issue with her friends. At the restaurant Samantha asks her friends if they have ever had an AIDS test. Carrie has had two and Miranda has had three. Both are shocked that Samantha has never been tested. When they ask her why, she lies by telling them she does not need one because she always practices safe sex. When they give her sceptical looks, she admits she is terrified and is worried she has AIDS (3/ 11/ Running With Scissors). The risk of AIDS is clearly significant enough that external expertise is required and not merely the advice of the friendship network.

Expert knowledge is often integrated within risk discourses. Experts or medical professionals use techniques of actuarial assessment and classify clients or patients so they can fit them into categories for the purposes of risk management (Moore 2000: 413). This can be seen when Samantha goes to get tested for AIDS. The nurse asks her if she has had a test before and why she wants to get tested. She asks questions about the kind of sexual activity that Samantha engages in. She is asked if she has oral sex, anal sex,

what kinds of condoms she uses, and how many sexual partners she has had (3/ 11/ Running With Scissors).

Professionals, within risk discourses, are expected to instruct subjects about the risky nature of the practices in which they are engaging. Professionals provide instructions to their clients to manage risky behaviour so they can conduct themselves in a way that reduces the risk they pose to others (Rose 1996: 349). This is represented in *Sex and the City* when Samantha gets the results of her AIDS test. She faints when she is called into the little room that her friends have warned her about. Samantha does not have AIDS but is called back into the room to get lectured on practicing safe sex (3/ 11/ Running With Scissors).

Miranda: What I don't understand is, if they got it all, why do you need chemo?

Samantha: Because he's an asshole!

Carrie: Evidently there could be something microscopic.

Samantha: Like his dick!

Carrie: Excuse me, do you have cancer or Tourette's? (6,2/ 3/ Catch -38).

In "Catch-38" Samantha once again questions her risky sexual behaviour when she is diagnosed with breast cancer. Carrie accompanies Samantha to get her results from a lumpectomy. After Samantha is diagnosed as being at stage one, she asks the doctor how this happened to her. He suggests a variety of risks, including genetics and lifestyle choices. When Samantha questions what he means by lifestyle choices he explains that some studies found that women without children are at an increased risk for breast cancer. Samantha is immediately offended and searches for a new doctor (6,2/ 3/ Catch-38).

Denise Gastaldo suggests that health education constructs identity. The condition must be assessed through knowledge about the individual. She also notices a shift to a participatory model and finds normality is constructed through the creation of norms

which users assess themselves against when making lifestyle choices (Gastaldo 1997: 120). This interaction with the medical professional causes Samantha to question her identity and the choices she has made. She wonders if she is being punished for her high risk behaviour. This can be seen in a conversation Samantha has with her friends when she starts ranting about how angry she is with her doctor and that having kids seems to be the 'get out of cancer' card. At one point in the conversation Samantha internalizes the expert's reaction and interprets it as the doctor calling her a whore and insinuating that she deserves cancer (6,2/ 3/ Catch-38). This is an instance where morality is functioning through a risk discourse. Samantha's doctor presents her condition within a medicalized scientific discourse, but there is an obvious moral dimension to the factors that put her 'at risk'.

Samantha's lifestyle choices are ultimately recuperated in the waiting room of a female oncologist with whom she is trying to get an appointment. When she discovers the other woman waiting with her is a nun, she realizes the nun did not have children, did not have sex, did not masturbate, and still managed to get cancer. This assures her that saints and sinners face the same risks (6,2/ 3/ Catch-38). The moral regulation of Samantha takes place in and through the risk discourses. She is interpellated by the moral underpinnings of the doctor's judgement. She internalizes the judgement and assesses herself according to medicalized discourses about being more susceptible to health risks by not following the traditional path of getting married, having monogamous sex and having children. Ultimately she is able to resist it, but not before being judged as a result of her sexual practices.

Conclusion

This chapter establishes that sex is a key component of female identity and finding out what women find pleasurable is an important aspect of self-creation. Sexuality is produced through being self-reflective individuals and deciding what each individual finds pleasurable. *Sex and the City* enables an exploration of how women are constituted as sexual agents. Here I explored the range of techniques and processes by which the characters utilize their sexual agency. The discourses about women's sexual pleasure in the show are liberal, focusing on individual autonomy; having the ability to make choices is assumed. The characters have to engage in the process of choosing from a plethora of diverse sexual practices and make decisions on who they strive to be, sexually. The techniques utilized in making these choices establish norms that mark them socially.

In *Sex and the City* the characters negotiate their sexual subject positions within the friendship network. The friendship network plays an essential role in making sexual choices. When trying to decide whether the women are comfortable with an issue at hand the friendship network encourages the individual to experiment and push herself to figure out her boundaries and limitations. The friendship network is where the women turn, to find out what their friends have experienced and are comfortable with. At times when an issue is beyond the friendship network, external expertise is brought into the picture, although not always successfully. Even though a character may be dealing with a therapist alone, what occurs in therapy is up for discussion amongst the group of friends. At other times one of the characters makes the whole friendship network attend a workshop, so expertise can be accessed together. Throughout various episodes they

encourage themselves and encourage each other to eliminate angst, anxiety, boyfriends, and husbands if their needs are failing to be met or if any of these factors are restricting their choice and autonomy. Characters change their views and are forced to address and manage their risky behaviour. Individual growth through experience is encouraged within the friendship network. This is in line with living in a reflexive society where personal narratives are constantly written and rewritten through self-reflection and modifying individual behaviour to form one's chosen identity.

Chapter 2

Finding 'The One': Negotiating Relationships and the Project of the Self

Carrie: Later that day I got to thinking about relationships. There are those that open you up to something new and exotic, those that are old and familiar, those that bring up lots of questions, those that bring you somewhere unexpected, those that bring you far from where you started, and those that bring you back. But the most exciting, challenging and significant relationship of all is the one you have with yourself. And if you can find someone to love the you you love, well, that's just fabulous (6.2/ 8/ An American Girl In Paris (Part Deux)).

In *Sex and the City* expectations of what women desire in relationships are often negotiated within the friendship network. The representation of relationships in *Sex and the City* enables an analysis of the interplay of different discourses and ideologies about women's roles in relationships from various perspectives. The show recognizes the complex nature of relationships by examining them through the different characters' experiences. The fact that each of the characters' experiences is diverse suggests that there is not a preferred 'way of being' in relationships but rather one has to figure out one's own needs and work towards achieving them. Women's roles in relationships are analyzed through exploring how the series places women in the context of negotiating their positions as single or married. The negotiation of relationships is a part of self-actualization and the making of our own biographies. The soul mate ideal is a recurring theme that each of the characters struggles with. All of the women engage in self-reflective processes whereby they negotiate where they fit within these broader themes.

The single women are simultaneously represented as happy being single, yet are not completely fulfilled, as they are still obsessed with relationships. There is a plurality of lifestyle choices available from which these women can choose. Sexuality in contemporary society is understood as being a malleable feature of the self and is accessible to developing different lifestyles (Giddens 1992: 15). Relationships in *Sex and*

the City are represented as a central aspect of the women's lives. Each of the characters are affluent, have jobs, and their primary base for emotional support is the friendship network. Even though each of the characters' ideal versions of a relationship is different, one thing that remains consistent is the women having their needs met and not compromising who they are for the men in their lives.

Single and Fabulous!: Accepting the Single Lifestyle as a Project of the Self

Is there a single and married divide? Does a marrying kind exist? Is it better to fake a relationship than to be alone? Are single women satisfied with their single woman status? *Sex and the City* explores these issues throughout the series as arguably the leading popular culture text on single women. The "new single woman" has been defined as being content with her life and the prospect of remaining single. She takes pride in her accomplishments, relationships, and identity. She cannot be classified as having a specific personality (Trimberger 2005: xvii). Women's acceptance of their singleness comes from resisting dominant cultural messages that normalize finding a male soul mate and getting married. In the show, certain norms are established regarding how to live as a single woman. While the characters claim to be comfortable with being single, they nonetheless continually question their single status. While the previous chapter demonstrated the women as relatively autonomous sexual subjects their capacity to self-define runs into the inevitable constraint of the social environment. People are judged and interpreted in social settings according to their socially sanctioned relationships with others. Not all elements of our biography are within our control.

Sex and the City is cognizant of the divide that has traditionally existed between the single and married. The predominant stereotype of the single woman is that there is something wrong with her because she could not get a man or else did not want one (Gordon 1994: 1). In *Sex and the City*, the characters try to define their existence as single women and negotiate their position against the backdrop of the traditional discourses of marriage and soul mates. Representations of the characters in *Sex and the City* establish being single as being an acceptable lifestyle choice that exists alongside other ways of being.

Samantha: You know married women are threatened because we can have sex anytime, anywhere with anyone.

Carrie: We can?

Samantha: And they're afraid we're going to have it anytime anywhere with their husbands.

Charlotte: I would never sleep with a married man.

Samantha: What makes you so sure you haven't? Wedding rings come off you know. Face it ladies, if you are still single, you are not to be trusted (1/ 3/ Bay of Married Pigs).

In "Bay of Married Pigs" Carrie is rushed out of her friend's vacation home after her friend's husband flashes her; giving her a full frontal view of his penis. Back in New York, she talks with her friends about the experience. Carrie does not understand why her friend got so upset. Her friend said Carrie could not understand because she was single. This incident leads to a discussion about how single women are perceived as threats to married women, and that if they are not hated, they are pitied. Carrie writes her next article about the "cold war" between marrieds and singles. Different discourses about marrieds and singles are explored through interviews with the general public within the show. Married women do not see their single friends as often because they are reminded of their own desperation in the past. Single women think married women

forget who they are after marriage. One married woman goes so far as to say that getting married is a part of facing reality and growing up, whereas being single is about living a life of stunted adolescence. While writing her article, Carrie begins to wonder if the differences between marrieds and singles stems from the fear of the unknown.

When she decides to infiltrate married life by having dinner with a married couple, she gets set up with a man who wants to get married. She is not sure she is the marrying type but decides to try and see if she could fit into the world of marriage (1/ 3/ Bay of Married Pigs). Carrie is experimenting with identity, showing that identity is malleable, and constructed in part through social interaction. When she attends her boyfriend's housewarming party, she brings her single girlfriends along. While Carrie is part of a couple, she finds she is welcomed by married women. This representation is contrasted with Samantha, whose talking to a man about investing in stocks results in the man's wife coming over asserting her role as his wife by dragging him away with her. By the end of the episode, Carrie decides the married lifestyle does not fit her, breaks up with the man, and enjoys a night at the movies with her single friends (1/ 3/ Bay of Married Pigs).

Miranda doubts her own status as a single woman when she realizes being a part of a lesbian couple would guarantee her a seat in her boss' inner circle. Miranda's single status leads a coworker to assume she is a lesbian and he sets her up with a woman at a work softball game. At first, Miranda wonders when being single translated into being a lesbian. Miranda informs her date she is straight, but the moment Miranda's boss believes she is in a stable relationship she is invited to dinner at his home. The woman she has been set up with agrees to accompany her. When Miranda finally admits to her

boss that she is not a part of a couple, and has just been faking it to try to make partner within her law firm, he assures her he will not hold it against her, but is disappointed since his wife was looking for a lesbian couple to “join their circle”. In the elevator Miranda kisses her date to see if she could be a lesbian. She feels nothing and realizes she is definitely straight (1/ 3/ Bay of Married Pigs). Overall this episode illustrates the social performance of relationships endorsed by law or social norms. When one is not in a relationship, one is excluded from social networking opportunities available to those who conform to norms about being in relationships. Furthermore, the assumptions of others shift depending upon their perceptions of the protagonist’s role in a socially endorsed relationship. Not all aspects of identity, then, are within individual control.

Miranda: Every couple of years an article like this surfaces as a cautionary tale to scare young women into marriage.

Carrie: So I’m a cautionary tale? Shoot me.

Charlotte: *reads article* Filling their lives with an endless parade of decoys and distractions to avoid the painful fact that they are completely alone.

Miranda: How is that helping? This piece of trash has nothing, I repeat, nothing to do with us.

Sam: Exactly, we are single and fabulous!

Charlotte: Absolutely (2/ 4/ They Shoot Single People Don’t They?)

In “They Shoot Single People Don’t They?” Carrie agrees to be photographed for an article in the magazine *New York* which she is led to believe is about being single and fabulous. She arrives late to the photo shoot after a night of partying with her girlfriends. The photographer takes pictures of her without hair or make-up done, under the guise of doing test shots. Carrie is mortified upon discovering the photos are published on the cover for an article called “Single and Fabulous?” Over lunch the friends discuss the hostility of the question mark. They attempt to convince each other and themselves that the article is “bullshit”. The article, however, manages to cause insecurity among the

characters about their single woman lifestyle. Carrie's question of the week becomes: Is it better to fake it than to be alone? She wonders if she has been faking happiness towards being single. She gets very drunk at a bar and picks up a man named Jake to make herself feel better. On a stop to buy cigarettes, he flashes the magazine cover and asks if it is her. Carrie realizes if she sleeps with Jake it would be the first time she would have sex to validate her life. She decides this would turn that dreaded question mark into a fact (2/ 4/ They Shoot Single People Don't They?). This representation once again shows an internal struggle faced by one of the main characters questioning her single status. By not succumbing to the pressure brought on by negative discourses about single women, the show normalizes the single lifestyle. The self-assessment that takes place each time one of the characters doubts her single status plays a significant role in forming women's sexual identity as a single woman.

Charlotte starts a relationship with her handy man, Tom, but soon realizes she cannot fake intimacy. Meanwhile, Samantha dates a man who does not hesitate to use the words "we" when making promises about the future. When Samantha realizes she is being stood up for dinner, she begins to cry because she fell for a man's line. She confesses to the waiter that sometimes she needs to hear a "we". The waiter kisses her and suggests if he goes home with her, she would not be alone. Samantha decides that sometimes it is better to be alone than to fake it (2/ 4/ They Shoot Single People Don't They?). This suggests that although dominant societal messages exist to cast doubt about women being happy with their single status. None of the protagonists compromise what they want and they all refuse to settled for anything less. All of them realize that it is

impossible to be fulfilled while faking a relationship. This discourse establishes and validates the single lifestyle.

Samantha: (*crying*) I should have gotten married. Then at least I'd have a curtain that closes. Oh Carrie, it doesn't matter how much you have. If you don't have a guy who cares about you, it don't mean shit! (3/ 10/ All or Nothing).

In her moments of weakness, Samantha, the character most satisfied with her single lifestyle, has doubts. "All or Nothing" starts off with Samantha having the girls over to celebrate her new apartment and success at work. She is celebrating having it all. After that night, Samantha gets the flu. She phones every man in her black book to fix her curtain rod. Her attempt to get their help fails; not one man comes to her aid. Instead they ask her about having sex, which only makes her angry. Carrie takes care of Samantha and assures her she is not alone because they have each other (3/ 10/ All or Nothing). This representation is significant because it shows the friendship network taking over the role men would usually play. Single women are not represented as being alone, but rather, as having a friendship network to lean on. The friendship network in *Sex and the City* is often represented as being more dependable than most of the men the women encounter. Furthermore, because friendship is not encumbered by sexual relations it can be more nurturing and supportive.

Sex and the City explores one of the fears of single independent women. It addresses the question of whether women's independence and power throws off the power structure to a degree, making it more difficult for them to find relationships because their independence is perceived as threatening to men. This theme is explored the most through Miranda's experiences. Miranda, no matter how strong she appears, is not immune to the common fear of single women, dying alone.

Miranda: I've got the money, I've got a great job and I still get, it's just you?

Carrie: Nah, they're threatened. Buying a place alone means you don't need a man.

Miranda: I don't.

Charlotte: Everyone needs a man. That's why I rent. If you own and he still rents than the power structure is all off. It's emasculating. Men don't want a woman who's too self-sufficient.

Samantha: I'm sorry did someone just order a Victorian straight up? (2/ 5/ Four Women and a Funeral).

In "Four Women and a Funeral" many events occur which cast doubt on Miranda's initial excitement about purchasing her own apartment as a single accomplished woman. First, the real estate agent asks if her boyfriend is going to move in with her. When Miranda reveals her single status, the real estate agent offers her son's business card. While signing her mortgage, she has to check off many single woman boxes and is asked questions about whether her father will be paying the down payment. When taking measurements, Miranda's neighbor informs her that the woman who previously lived there kept to herself, never married and died alone in the apartment. She was dead for an entire week before anyone noticed and her cat ate half her face. Miranda's fear of meeting the same fate as the old lady increases when she chokes on her dinner on her first night in her new apartment. She cannot immediately reach Carrie because she screens her calls. When she gets a hold of Carrie she is panicked about dying alone. Carrie offers to come over but Miranda assures her she will be fine.

The next day while Miranda is exploring her new neighborhood, she experiences her first panic attack and takes a cab to the hospital. At the hospital, she admits to Carrie the cause of her panic attack was from her fear of dying alone. Carrie comforts Miranda by supporting her decision about buying an apartment. By the end of the episode Miranda comes to terms with her singleness. When the mortgage officer makes a mistake on the application form and lists Miranda as being separated, Miranda pushes herself to stop

panicking and writes a letter explaining she is single (2/ 5/ Four Women and a Funeral). This suggests being single is an element of women's identity that has to be worked on. Being comfortable with the single woman lifestyle is part of the project of the self, and a part of that, is resisting traditional cultural norms.

Trimberger suggests a significant factor which contributes to making single women more acceptable is the narrowing divide between married and single women. With women waiting longer periods before marriage, and more people getting divorced, singleness occurs on a continuum (Trimberger 2005: 13). This is true among the friendship network in *Sex and the City*. Marriage does not change the nature of the friendship network. The friendship network is strong throughout the marriages of Miranda and Charlotte. Regardless of the protagonists' relationship statuses, they continue to understand each other's sexual issues. This establishes the bond between the women in the friendship network in *Sex and the City* is strong enough to not be broken by the men in their lives.

Charlotte: I was married and now what I'm single again?

Carrie: Sweetie, you aren't single you're just separated.

Charlotte: That's right. I'm not single. I'll never be single again. I'll be divorced, the only thing worse than being 34 and single is being 34 and divorced.

Carrie: Oh, thanks.

Miranda: I can think of something worse, being 34 and trapped in a marriage that doesn't work (3/ 18/ Cock a Doodle Do).

In "Cock a Doodle Do" Charlotte is obsessing over why things fell apart in her three-month marriage to Trey. The fact that Charlotte, the most marriage-focused of them all, admits when something is not working and takes a break rather than living a lie sends out a positive message for women not to stay in a marriage just because it is expected. The theme of being pressured by expectations is further explored when Trey

comes over to have sex with Charlotte. When Charlotte asks Trey if their sexual problems stemmed from him not wanting to be married to her, Trey admits he did not want to be married to anyone. He confesses he thought it was time because when one reaches a certain age that is what people expect (3/ 18/ Cock a Doodle Do). Clearly that is represented as the wrong reason to get married. Both the conversation with her friends at the beginning of the episode and the realization between her and Trey validate that reaching life milestones, such as getting married, have to occur naturally. This is an example where cultural norms about the fantasy marriage fall apart. It affirms there is no proscribed way in which a woman can achieve a successful relationship. This is a situation where it is better for Charlotte to live the single lifestyle rather than take part in a marriage that fails to work. Giddens finds that an emotional reconstruction of the past is necessary to form a narrative towards the future (Giddens 1991: 60). In this episode Charlotte only moves on once she has understood what happened in her relationship with Trey.

Soul mates: An Impossible Ideal? Re-negotiating the Rules Surrounding ‘The One’

Is ‘the one’ out there? Can someone really complete you or should you be able to complete yourself? Is ‘the one’ a romantic ideal that sets women up to fail? And what happens if ‘the one’ can never be found? How many great loves can one have? These are the second types of relationship issues explored within *Sex and the City*. By the end of the series, there is no concrete resolution, but each of the protagonists finds a relationship that works for them. The predominant North American cultural norm of looking for a soul mate and then becoming an egalitarian couple is problematic for single women since

most single women are left feeling that they will one day find, 'the one' (Trimberger 2005: xiii).

This section applies Anthony Giddens' concept of confluent love to the relationships in *Sex and the City* as a model that relieves the pressure of meeting impossible standards set out by the 'soul mate' ideal. Women's sexual prowess is seen as acceptable, but only while on the quest for 'the one'. Giddens asserts that stories aimed at female audiences are stories about 'quest romance'. In this type of narrative, sexual encounters are seen as detours on the way to an eventual love relationship (Giddens 1992: 50). In this conception, sex before marriage and having fun before finding the one is acceptable, but at the end of the day, women are expected to settle down when they stumble upon 'the one'. *Sex and the City* does not suggest that soul mates do not exist, but rather suggests that soul mates do not need to exist, and that love is something that can be worked at and achieved. It is a negotiated project, not a treasure at the end of the quest. This ties into governmental studies since the lessons learned on these detours are supposed to help identity formation and enable women to perfect skills that are necessary for relationships.

Miranda: Everyone says that as soon as you get a place of your own, someone will propose, I thought it would be to me (2/ 7/ The Chicken Dance).

In "The Chicken Dance" Miranda decides to decorate her apartment for her house guest, Jeremy, with whom she has been flirting online. Instead he instantly connects with her interior decorator, Madeline, and Miranda gets stuck sitting in on somebody else's great first date. A week later, Jeremy announces his engagement to her interior decorator at his going away party. Miranda questions how it is possible since they just met.

Charlotte believes it is love at first sight. She finds it encouraging that one can be single

one minute and be proposed to the next. Samantha does not believe it is love. She does not understand the obsession with getting married and is convinced married people want to be single again. Carrie begins to wonder if it is still possible to believe in love at first sight in a city as cynical as New York. When she asks Big this question, he believes in lust at first sight and suggests Madeline and Jeremy's union will not last long if they are referring to each other as 'soul mates'.

Madeline and Jeremy's wedding incites issues among the friendship network. Carrie is asked by the bride to recite a poem about love at the wedding. She is not sure what to write about love. She writes about sex. At the wedding, Big answers a phone call during Carrie's recital. This upsets Carrie when she realizes Big cannot sit through her poem meanwhile two people are committing their lives to each other. This suggests she may want more. Miranda feels invisible to the opposite sex when she is in charge of the guestbook and not one man acknowledges her existence. Samantha goes home with a man she slept with years ago and begins to think she might as well get married or move because she has run out of men. Charlotte is sick of going to weddings where the bride is always the center of attention. She wears a revealing bridesmaid dress and acts out her own soul mate fantasy with one of the groomsmen. This fantasy falls apart when the groomsmen's father feels Charlotte up, and he refuses to stand up for her. By the end of the episode Carrie's voiceover states that some people know they are meant to be together and she knows she is meant to eat cake in bed with Mr. Big (2/ 7/ The Chicken Dance). The narrative suggests there is no right way to find love or have things work. The 'soul mate' ideal casts doubt on how each of the protagonists feels about her relationship status. Although the characters actively voice their resistance to cultural

norms about finding ‘the one’, they are not free from self-doubt. Furthermore, since women in the show are represented as being sexual subjects capable of making lifestyle choices in the process of forming their sexual identities, they should be able to achieve this ideal. Instead, this version of a stable, supportive and equitable relationship which serves a woman’s needs is set up as an unattainable ideal, the quest is futile. Giddens asserts that the main question which permeates women’s sexual identity in the self-reflective process is ‘Who am I?’ (Giddens 1991: 30). When the characters engage in the self-reflective process and work out their feelings about the soul mate ideal, each gets one step closer to knowing herself better and being able to situate herself in her current status more comfortably.

Another form of expertise in contemporary society that helps with the management of finding a soul mate is dating services. Richard Bulcroft *et. al* have suggested that dating services provide rationally calculated responses to risks about interpersonal relationships that are occurring in modernized society (Bulcroft *et. al* 2000: 81). The characters in *Sex and the City* discuss dating services in “The Agony and Ex-Tacy”

Miranda: Look at this. Don’t let your soul mate slip away.

Carrie: Oh I know, it’s almost a threat. It’s like, we have him, he’s just waiting for you, but hurry cuz he’s slipping, slipping away, oops there he goes.

Miranda: Soul mates only exist in the Hallmark aisle in Dwayne Reid Drugs.

Charlotte: I disagree. I believe there is that one perfect person out there to complete you.

Miranda: And if you don’t, what? You’re incomplete. It’s so dangerous (4/ 1/ The Agony and Ex-Tacy).

In “The Agony and Ex-Tacy” Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha are invited to an engagement party. The engagement card that reads, “Two Souls, One thought” incites a discussion among them. Miranda is cynical about it and thinks it is a

sign of a pushy fiancée. Charlotte thinks of it as romantic. Carrie thinks there is something wrong if two people are sharing one thought. The next day Carrie gets a dating service application in the mail that is addressed to “Dear Single”. After the women see the dating application they begin to discuss the idea of soul mates, once again. Charlotte believes in them. Carrie likes to think that people have more than one soul mate. Samantha claims she has had hundreds and that the soul mate idea sets women up to fail. Miranda is uncomfortable with the idea of having to look outside herself to feel complete (4/ 1/ The Agony and “Ex’- tacy).

Carrie’s question of the week is whether a soul mate is reality or a torture device? While out for coffee with the girls, Carrie confesses she hates herself for saying it, but she felt sad not having a man care about her on her birthday. She realizes she is upset about not having a soul mate when she is not even sure if she believes in them. During this discussion Charlotte suggests they be each other’s soul mates and that men be people they have fun with (4/ 1/ The Agony and ‘Ex’- tacy). *Sex and the City* attempts to destigmatize singleness and positions relationships with friends as more important than romantic relationships (Henry 2004:68). This is significant because the friendship network takes over the role that has been traditionally played by men in romantic relationships. Bulcroft *et. al* suggest that forces of modernization have resulted in increased individualization which has created an environment where intimate relationships become a salient part of individual identity and personal biography (Bulcroft *et al.* 2000: 64). I argue the most intimate relationship the protagonists experience is within the friendship network itself. This representation in *Sex and the City*

provides an alternative to romantic relationships where women can have their emotional needs met by one another.

Charlotte always believed in soul mates but after her marriage with Trey ends, she begins to have doubts and her belief in finding great love waivers. This is a good example of the narrative of how changes in life circumstances can incite shifts in a person's position about love and relationships. The adaptation to circumstances beyond one's control stimulates a project of self-governance. In moving on with her life Charlotte has to negotiate who she was, who she is and who she wants to be. Charlotte's divorce from Trey enables an exploration about techniques women use in governing themselves when put in a position of starting over. Giddens asserts that taking control of one's life involves risk since it means potentially dealing with wide-ranging possibilities. The individual must break with the past to contemplate novel courses of action. To do this one must change their established habits (Giddens 1991: 73).

Charlotte: I am going to have sex with a sailor tonight.

Carrie: She almost got me on that one.

Charlotte: I'm serious. I have to have sex to put Mrs. Trey MacDougal behind me. I'm a whole new Charlotte York.

Carrie: What about the great love?

Charlotte: Maybe that was bullshit! (5/ 1/ Anchors Away).

In "Anchors Away" Charlotte informs the girls about an article about everyone getting two great loves in life. This theory again instigates discussion among the friends. Miranda believes Charlotte finds theories that are convenient for her, since when Charlotte was married she believed every woman only got one great love. This article makes Carrie doubt the possibility of finding great love again since she considered both Aidan and Big to be her great loves. After seeing the negative impact the theory is having on her friends, Charlotte tries to discredit the article by stating she read it in her

dentist's office. However, it is too late and the topic of great love is already internalized by the characters.

Carrie's fear of not having another chance at great love resurfaces when she meets an old woman sprinkling lithium on her ice cream in a café where singles are required to sit at the counter. She reveals that she broke up with a man in 1982 thinking someone better would come along, and he never did. Carrie's issue is resolved when she dances with a sailor at a navy party who believes anyone is lucky to find one great love (5/ 1/ Anchors Away). This is yet another example where a tale about loneliness initially makes the characters internalize fear about never finding 'the one' but in the end this fear is eventually defeated through talking with others. Furthermore this episode gets to the important question of whether one will remain alone, if one can miss their chance at happiness and if one only gets a limited amount of opportunities throughout a lifetime. These questions become important to the characters since they let go of so many men in their search to find a relationship that works for them.

Charlotte is rebuilding her identity as a single woman and getting back into the dating world. Before the night begins, she declares she is going to have sex to get over Trey. At the navy party, she pushes herself far enough to show a sailor her breast. She draws that as her boundary and tells him she cannot do any more (5/ 1/ Anchors Away). This is significant because it shows that one's sexual position, limits and boundaries are always in motion and can change according to different stages in life. Charlotte is taking the steps she feels necessary to get over her past relationship. She has to make choices about her sexual identity. This is the first episode where she is shown shedding her previous notions about 'the one', and attempting to take a different approach to dating.

She cannot shed all of her inhibitions and be purely sexual but she finds herself somewhere in the middle.

Popular therapeutic discourses have always been recognized as a form of regulation (Gill 2007: 62). Self-help literature and expert knowledge are relocated as knowledge forms which individuals use whereby they govern themselves through their freedom. Individuals in a society where advanced liberal rule prevails are construed as the subjects of choices and aspirations to self-actualization and self-fulfillment. They are governed through an allegiance to their 'community' (Rose 1996: 41). A large number of women's self help literature directed at singles and divorcées are instruction manuals on how to find the 'one' and on how to find love again. These knowledge forms assist individuals in adjusting their personal identity in ways that help them become successful in relationships (Bulcroft *et al.* 2000: 81). The community in the case of the protagonists in *Sex and the City* is the friendship network. When the characters negotiate their positions on soul mates, they analyze different knowledge claims in a group. When they are seeking expert advice to make changes in their lives, they assess, together, the techniques that experts are suggesting.

In "Unoriginal Sin" Carrie discovers her column is being turned into a book. Carrie has to write a dedication, introduction and conclusion to set the tone. She has to decide whether she is an optimist or pessimist. This is difficult for Carrie because she realizes she is becoming cynical. Charlotte suggests going to an affirmation workshop to rid her of her cynicism. Carrie agrees to attend in hopes of getting material for her column (5/ 2/ Unoriginal Sin).

Charlotte believes Dr. Cheryl's affirmations have helped her get rid of negative thoughts. Charlotte has clearly been interpellated by Dr. Cheryl's message since she is following her therapeutic techniques in hope of experiencing a self-transformation. Charlotte is shown writing affirmations on a mirror and listening to an affirmation tape. While at the workshop, Dr. Cheryl gives a pep talk in which she professes love only comes to those who believe they deserve it. During the question and answer period Charlotte asks how long it takes for the affirmations to work. Charlotte confesses she used to believe and found 'that someone', but everything fell apart and she has been putting herself out there again, but feels hopeless. Cheryl recasts the blame on Charlotte by suggesting she is not really out there and not really trying. Carrie steps in and defends her friend. By the end of the episode Carrie decides the book is hopeful and dedicates it to her friend Charlotte, the eternal optimist (5/ 2/ Unoriginal Sin). This is an example of dominant discourses in women's self help literature where a woman's single status is often represented as arising from low self esteem. Often texts blame women for being single and assume the ideal state is with a man. The show does not fully repudiate that message, but does not blame women for their singleness.

In "Cover Girl" Charlotte wants to buy a self-help book called *Starting Over Yet Again*. She makes it to the self-help aisle, reads a few of the titles and notices a woman reading and crying. Charlotte rejects belonging there, puts the book down, and pretends to search for the travel section. Her embarrassment over purchasing the book at the store makes her order it on the internet. Amazon.com starts sending her recommendations for other self-help books. Charlotte refuses to see herself as a woman who reads those books and throws her copy out the window. (Incidentally, the book hits a random woman on

the street who has been contemplating divorce and she sees it as a sign (5/ 4/ Cover Girl)) Rimke states that self-help literature is a contemporary form of governing citizens (Rimke 2000: 62). The fact that Charlotte is represented as being ashamed and embarrassed for purchasing the book suggests there is negativity attached to not being able to manage your romantic life and being reliant on books. In this case Charlotte is resisting being governed by self-help literature. It seems after following all the rules, and being the character that turns the most to self help literature, Charlotte has a change of heart after her marriage to Trey fails. This suggests she is moving away from proscribed formulas by which one should live their life. She prefers her single identity and her friends.

Happily Ever After: Resolutions Regarding Finding ‘The One’

Is it possible for women to find happiness without compromising themselves? What kind of men should headstrong single women stick with? What do women learn about themselves while in relationships? These are the third type of issues this chapter attempts to answer by examining how the serious relationships of the main characters are represented. Even though the women end up in relationships, the role the characters play within these relationships, shifts. The men with whom the women interact either succeed in evolving with them or are discarded. The lasting loves of these characters’ lives are those that evolve with the women and meet their requirements. Most importantly, each woman is loved for who she is. When the characters are in serious relationships, they are all self-reflexive within these relationships and repeatedly turn to the friendship network

for advice when they have to deal with issues with themselves or issues within the relationship.

Giddens suggests that today's society is moving towards pure relationships. He defines a pure relationship as a social relationship entered into whereby each person involved derives what they need from a relationship, and that this union lasts only as long as both parties involved are satisfied (Giddens 1992: 58). Furthermore he establishes a model of confluent love which makes it possible to negotiate one's needs, yet continues to share some of the qualities of the romantic love complex (Giddens 1992: 61). Confluent love presumes equality in emotional give and take. Furthermore, confluent love is premised upon a model of a pure relationship. It is a version of love in which individual sexual activity is a factor that is negotiated as part of the relationship (Giddens 1992: 63). This version of love is in line with today's reflexive society and provides a model of relationships where women's roles in relationships can be negotiated. It moves away from the traditional notion of romantic love in which one partner cannot live without the other and where there is a risk of losing oneself entirely. Intimacy is the closest connection between the reflexive project of the self and the pure relationship (Giddens 1991: 94). Intimacy is achieved through psychological 'work' and only possible between individuals who are secure with themselves and their identities. The characters in *Sex and the City* are mostly intimate within the friendship network and use it as a support network within which they can discuss intimacy issues they experience during their romantic relationships. The psychological work required to achieve intimacy in romantic relationships sometimes occurs with the aid of the friendship network.

The main characters' relationships are further examined to analyze how each of the characters renegotiates them to work for her. In this way, each engages in techniques of the self. Serious relationships are opportunities for women to form their sexual identities. Multiple relationships enable the women to decide what kind of men they want to be with. Each of the women discovers which techniques work and which fail. The relationships Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte experience let the women discover who they are and what they want out of relationships. They utilize their agency to make choices about relationships that work for them.

Miranda: It's not fate. His light is on. That's all.

Charlotte: What light?

Miranda: Men are like cabs. When they're available their light goes on. They wake up one day and decide they are ready to settle down and have babies, whatever. Then they turn their light on. The next woman they pick up, boom, that's the one they'll marry.

Charlotte: Sorry I refuse to believe that love is that random.

Miranda: Please, it's all about timing. You've got to get them when their light is on.

Carrie: Most men I meet are flashing yellow.

Miranda: Or off duty. They can drive around for years picking up women and not be available.

Carrie: Then they really shouldn't be allowed to get behind the wheel.

Miranda: Most men don't stay lit long before they take the plunge versus most women who've been lit pretty much since birth (3/ 8/ The Big Time).

The representation of Charlotte's relationship with Trey MacDougal suggests that fairytale romances fall apart and that the ideal fails to work in practice. The year Charlotte meets Trey she has already designated that as the year she is going to get married (3/ 1/ Where There's Smoke). She meets Trey after she discovers her friend's husband is in love with her. Trey literally rescues her when she is nearly run over by a cab, trying to run away from her friend's husband. He picks Charlotte off the ground and

it is obvious they both believe it is love at first sight (3/ 7/ Drama Queens). Charlotte's whirlwind romance ends up with her proposing to herself (3/ 9/ Easy Come Easy Go).

Trey and Charlotte appear to be the perfect couple. He is a handsome, charming and successful doctor. The friendship network at her engagement party comments on how they cannot believe Charlotte wants to be a part of a world where everyone looks like cardboard cut outs. Charlotte has to negotiate how much she is worth with Trey's mother in the prenuptial agreement (3/ 10/ All or Nothing). Once the couple is married they have trouble dealing with Trey's impotence, which leads to a separation within three months of their marriage. When Trey is no longer impotent, Charlotte finds that Trey's penis rules their relationship (4/ 4/ What's Sex Got to do With It?). When the couple moves back in together, Charlotte and Trey decide the next logical step is having a baby. Once again, the couple has problems dealing with Charlotte being reproductively challenged. Trey gets frustrated and tells her they should be enough. That is not enough for Charlotte and they get divorced. This is a relationship where none of Charlotte's needs are met.

Charlotte's second relationship with Harry is more in tune with Giddens's conception of a pure relationship. Two integral components of a pure relationship are commitment and intimacy. Commitment is internally referential and applies to both the relationship as well to the other person involved. The pure relationship must be reflexively controlled against the backdrop of external events and changes (Giddens 1991:6). Charlotte and Harry constantly deal with problems as they arise and work together to make their relationship last.

Harry: I love making love to you.

Charlotte: No. That was not love. That was just sex.

Harry: Charlotte, you are so beautiful, your skin is so soft and smooth.

Charlotte: And you have a hard dick. Now put your pants on and go. Is that okay?

Harry: Whatever you say (5/ 7/ The Big Journey).

Charlotte's relationship with Harry Goldenblatt is depicted as being far more effective, since she learns about his faults and loves him regardless. Charlotte starts off the relationship not wanting more than sex. She is critical of his hairy back, that he is balding, and that he sweats a lot. He is different from the men Charlotte usually dates. Once Charlotte begins to fall in love with Harry, he reveals he cannot marry someone who is not Jewish (6,1/ 1/ To Market to Market). Charlotte converts to Judaism so Harry will marry her. She has to prove her seriousness about converting to Judaism to the Rabbi. She is rejected many times before she is given a chance (6,1/ 2/ Great Sexpectations). Charlotte takes her conversion seriously and spends days preparing Harry a traditional meal for Shabbat. When Harry comes home and wants to watch the game on TV instead, Charlotte gets offended since she does not think Harry appreciates the amount of work it took for her to become Jewish and how hard she worked to prepare the meal. An argument ensues and Charlotte demands Harry set a wedding date. While she is angry she points toward the fact that he is lucky to have a woman like her. Harry walks out on her and their relationship ends (6,1/ 4: Pick a Little Talk a Little). After the break-up, Charlotte throws herself into the Jewish dating world. She ends up with a "perfect date" but rejects him because he does not measure up to Harry. Charlotte then sees Harry at a mixer and apologizes to him. She tells him she loves him and does not care if they ever get married. Harry then proposes (6,1/ 6/ Hop, Skip and a Week).

Unlike Trey, Harry is supportive of trying to conceive and adopt. The issues that the couple goes through will be discussed in the following chapter. This deconstructs the

ideal of meeting 'the one' in a magical way, and instead sets up another possible way of 'being' in a relationship. Charlotte manages to achieve a stable and supportive relationship with a man only when she lets go of the ideal of perfection. This depiction agrees with Giddens' observation about relationships shifting from a model of romantic love; where one's identity is dependent on projective identification and 'wholeness' is achieved by meeting 'the one', to a model of confluent love; which is not confined to heterosexual relationships and presumes equality in emotional give and take among partners (Giddens 1991: 61-62).

Steve: One quick question and I'm out of here. Why do you hate guys so much?

Miranda: Excuse me?

Steve: We just met so I know that ain't all about me. Wait, wait, wait.

Miranda: What do you want?

Steve: I just want to get to know you better. Do me a favour. Can you for one second believe that maybe I'm not some full of shit guy? That maybe I do like you? That maybe the other night was special? Do you think that maybe you can believe that?

Miranda: No. Maybe I've just slept with too many bartenders (2/ 8/ The Man, The Myth, The Viagra).

Miranda and Steve's relationship begins as a one night stand. Miranda is bitter and cynical and does not expect a relationship to evolve. After having sex, Miranda makes it clear to Steve that does not have to pretend he will call. Steve, on the other hand, is persistent and sees through her turning down his advances. He shows up at her apartment to ask her out on a date. He catches on when Miranda gives him the wrong time for when she is meeting her friends. At the bar, Miranda is rude to Steve and they get into an argument about why Miranda hates men. When Mr. Big shows up to dinner for Carrie, Miranda begins to believe that relationships can work. She chases Steve in the rain and tells him that maybe she can believe (2/ 8/ The Man, The Myth, The Viagra).

Steve is one man in her life that is both patient and vocal enough to call her on her commitment issues. Their first break-up occurs because of their different lifestyles. Steve becomes uncomfortable when Miranda buys him an expensive suit. Miranda thinks she is being punished for being successful (2/ 10/ The Caste System). This deals with changing sex roles and men needing to evolve to adapt to shifts in power. Women have embraced the idea of equality as a quality they expect in relationships. Men and women's roles have not evolved at the same pace as the change in attitudes (Bulcroft *et al.* 2000: 77). After the break up, Miranda runs into Steve on the street and literally runs away from him. He once again shows up at her apartment and does not let her get away with it. At this point they decide to be friends and end up sleeping together. They eventually get back together.

Steve shows Miranda how to let someone take care of her when she gets laser eye surgery. Miranda is stubborn and wants to rely on Carrie rather than him. When he comes to get her she is high on valium and is still squirming and mumbling "no rescue". When Miranda wakes up, however, she appreciates Steve (3/ 1/ Where there's Smoke).

Miranda: I can't. I can't do this.

Steve: Of course you can we'll order pizza. It's no big deal.

Miranda: It's a big fucking deal. I just spilt marinara sauce all over myself and you're here and you saw that and I drop things okay?

Steve: Okay so do I.

Miranda: I do love you but I've never lived with anybody before and I'm stubborn and I like the remote and I can't cook and I don't do laundry sometimes for like two weeks and my sponges smell and you're going to see all that and I'm scared and I don't know if I can move forward but I really don't want to lose you.

Steve: Hey *hugs Miranda* I'm not going anywhere (3/ 4/ Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl).

In "Boy Girl Boy Girl" moving in together is not represented as being natural.

Instead, it is something Miranda needs to work at. Governing techniques that utilize agency give women an apparent great degree of autonomy over their lives. Control is a

theme that is developed in the show, but relationships are unpredictable. Miranda not only learns how to negotiate with Steve but also struggles with negotiating losing control within herself and letting someone in. Giddens asserts that shared histories are created and sustained depending in terms of how those involved in relationships integrate each other into their life-plan calendars. Furthermore self-identity is negotiated through developing intimacy with another (Giddens 1991: 97). Miranda has to constantly assess herself and her own development within her relationship with Steve.

After many break-ups, when Steve and Miranda realize they love each other the wedding is on Miranda's terms and she proposes to him over beer. She gets married in a maroon dress in a community garden. When Samantha finds out that she has breast cancer on Miranda's wedding day, instead of being adamant about the wedding day being her day, Miranda sits down with her friends to have a serious conversation about Samantha's health condition (6, 2/ 2/ The Ick Factor). This is exemplary of two things. First Miranda utilizes her sexual agency when she breaks with convention and decides to enter into marriage under terms with which she is comfortable. Second, the friendship network is put ahead of her wedding since she refuses to pretend to be happy, ignores the rest of her guests, and gives Samantha her full attention.

Miranda learns the art of compromise through her family when she makes the decision to move to Brooklyn. Miranda truly loves Steve and does not let his mother live alone after she has her stroke. When she finds Steve's mother eating pizza from a garbage can she takes her home and gives her a bath. At the end of this episode Magda, Miranda's cleaning lady comes up to Miranda and says "What you did. That is love. You love" (6, 2/ 8 American Girl in Paris Part Deux).

With an expanded life expectancy it is argued that individuals need to construct a personal biography and meaning through socially meaningful events (Bulcroft *et al.* 2000: 75). The growth that Miranda experiences in her relationship with Steve reflects this. By being a self-reflexive individual and by assessing her sexual issues within the friendship network she was able to find a relationship with which she was satisfied.

Samantha: I think I have monogamy. I must have caught it from you people
Carrie: Now it's airborne (4/ 15/ Change of Dress).

The first man Samantha is seen falling in love with is Richard Wright. Both are active sexual players and neither believes in monogamy. When Samantha mentions Richard to her friends, they immediately notice Samantha likes him. Samantha tries to limit their relationship to work and sex, but Richard manages to get Samantha to dance with him while on a romantic date. This is the point where Samantha allows herself to get closer to Richard (4/ 13/ The Good Fight). Samantha begins to worry after telling Richard she loves him while on ecstasy. He later says he understands she was high and understands it did not mean anything. Samantha realizes she wants it to mean something (4/ 14/ All That Glitters). In "Ring A Ding Ding" Richard keeps giving Samantha gifts signed "best, Richard". When Samantha discovers his gay assistant is gift shopping for him, she gets him to sign one of the cards with her gifts, love Richard, to find out whether Richard loves her. Richard is stunned when she reads the card but tells her that he loves her (4/ 16/ Ring A Ding Ding). After a threesome between Samantha, Richard and a young waitress goes sour, Richard decides to try "this monogamy thing" with her (4/ 17/ A Vogue Idea). Eventually, Richard gets scared and cheats on Samantha. After much apologizing from Richard, she gets back together with him. Even though they are back together, Samantha has a hard time trusting him. While at the casino Samantha runs up

eleven flights of stairs in a pearl thong in an attempt to catch Richard cheating when he actually has a business meeting. She discovers he is not cheating but she decides she cannot do this to herself, she loves him, but loves herself more (5/ 3/ Luck Be an Old Lady).

Commitment in a close relationship entails recognizing the tensions of a relationship and being willing to take a chance on it (Giddens 1991: 92). Commitment is exemplified by examining Samantha's relationship with Smith. Smith and Samantha face many hurdles and both of them are committed to each other despite the tensions that exist.

Smith: I forgot to tell you something on the phone. I love you.

Samantha: You flew back to tell me that?

Smith: Can you think of a better reason?

Samantha: No I can't. You have meant more to me than any man I've ever known (6, 2/ 8/ An American Girl in Paris Part Deux).

Smith and Samantha's relationship begins by them fulfilling each others' sexual fantasies. They end up having to be themselves when Samantha discovers Smith is a recovering alcoholic. He invites her to dinner under the guise of a sexual fantasy. When she arrives he reveals he changed his mind and suggests playing a new game where they will play themselves (6,1/ 4/ Pick a Little Talk a Little).

When Smith realizes he is falling in love with Samantha, he is eager to express it. Samantha's commitment issues lead her to fall down a hatch in a sidewalk while trying to avoid holding Smith's hand. Samantha complains to Carrie about Smith trying to hold her hand. Carrie advises Samantha that life is short and suggests she might want to hold his hand. Smith is vocal about wanting to express how he feels and Samantha eventually gives in and lets Smith hold her hand (6,1/ 11/ The Domino Effect). Samantha's

commitment issues are further explored when she begins to doubt her relationship with Smith because of his age. When Smith is invited to a party hosted by her ex-boyfriend Richard Right, Samantha insists on accompanying Smith. While at the party, Samantha decides to have sex with her old lover. Smith does not break up with her, instead of leaving, he waits to see if Samantha is okay and decides to take her home (6,2/ 1/ Let There Be Light). This displays a contrast between the empty sex she has with Richard compared to the genuine interest that Smith has for her. Samantha realizes that age is not the defining feature of a relationship and appreciates Smith for accepting her for her faults. She is seen hating herself for having cheated with Richard, and her cheating enables her to realize what she has with Smith.

Smith is extremely supportive when Samantha is diagnosed with breast cancer. He shaves his head when she loses her hair (6,2/ 4/ Out of the Frying Pan). He is patient during Samantha's sexual dry spell while she is undergoing chemo. By the end of it, it becomes very clear, that although Samantha does not want to get married, Smith is definitely the man that she has fallen in love with.

Aidan: No you talked and I listened. Carrie, I looked at you tonight from across the room and I thought, I love her, and she loves me, and what are we waiting for?

Carrie: Because I need more time.

Aidan: What's going to change? This is me. I don't have any tricks up my sleeve. This is who I am.

Carrie: This isn't about you. I'm not ready for marriage.

Aidan: Well I am. I'm sorry if that scares you but I am. People fall in love, they get married, that's what they do.

Carrie: Not necessarily. Why? Why can't we just keep things the way they are? Just live together.

Aidan: I don't want to live together. I've had girlfriends for twenty years. I want you to be my wife.

Carrie: Aidan you're pushing me.

Aidan: Well maybe you need to be pushed. What's the big deal? It's just a stupid piece of paper.

Carrie: If it's just a stupid piece of paper then why do we need it?

Aidan: Because I need it. I want to make this official and lock this thing down.

Carrie, I want the whole wide world to know that you're mine.

Carrie: Whose else's would I be? Oh my god. You still don't trust me.

Aidan: You don't even wear that ring on your fucking finger.

Carrie: I am yours. There is nobody else. I love you, but I can't marry you to make you trust me. Aidan. Aidan. Look at me. Look at me before we make a huge mistake.

Aidan: If you don't want to marry me right now. You'll never want to marry me.

Carrie: That's not true.

Aidan: I think it is (4/ 15/ Change of Dress).

Aidan Shaw is one of Carrie's great loves. He is the opposite of Mr. Big. He does not have commitment issues and suggests she meet his parents after only three weeks of dating. Carrie begins to panic because things are too perfect. First she turns down the invitation because she thinks it is too soon. Then she confronts Aidan about being too available. When she realizes she is acting like Mr. Big, she decides to show up to meet his parents (3/ 7/ Drama Queens). Carrie soon gets drawn into a love affair with her married ex-boyfriend, Mr. Big. When she confesses to Aidan he breaks up with her because although he loves her, he does not think that is something he can get over (3/ 12/ Don't Ask Don't Tell). Aidan and Carrie get back together, but not without hard work. Even though Aidan has agreed to get back together with Carrie he is still punishing her by flirting with a waitress that works at his bar. Carrie gets frustrated and begs Aidan to forgive her. It is clear that Carrie has not forgiven herself (4/ 7/ Time and Punishment).

Carrie and Aidan decide to move in together and soon after this, he proposes to her. Carrie has a bad reaction to marriage. She does not want to plan her wedding and begins to fear that she is missing "the bride gene". Miranda suggests Carrie try on a hideous dress to get the fear out of her system. Carrie cannot breathe with the wedding dress on. Later at lunch with her friends, she tells them her body is literally rejecting marriage and shows them the rash she has broken out in. They suggest she talk to Aidan

about it. At first Aidan agrees to give her more time, but the couple eventually breaks up (4/ 15/ Change of Dress).

This episode professes the norm that one should not get married because it is the next logical step in a relationship. Carrie questions whether women are programmed to get married and is not sure marriage is an institution that is right for her. Carrie has the option of getting married. She has a loving and committed boyfriend. She still chooses the single lifestyle because she decides marrying Aidan would be a mistake.

Carrie: Well. Maybe it's time to be clear about who I am. I am someone who is looking for love. Real love. Ridiculous, inconvenient, consuming, can't live without each other love. And I don't think, that love, is here in this expensive suite in this lovely hotel in Paris (6,2/ 8/ American Girl in Paris Part Deux).

Petrovsky is a good example of Carrie testing a relationship where she is supposed to be happy in the moment. Petrovsky is an older artist who used to be a playboy while in his prime. When Petrovsky invites Carrie to move to Paris with him, she talks it over with the friendship network. They are concerned about Carrie uprooting her whole life for a man. They ask her material questions about her career, her apartment and living arrangements in Paris. Carrie discusses the questions her friends have with Petrovsky. Petrovsky asks Carrie which questions are hers (6,2/ 6/ Splat!). Petrovsky only being interested in Carrie's thoughts, detaches Carrie from the friendship network and individualizes her in their relationship. This relationship is away from the dominant problem solving dynamic in the series. Miranda does not approve of Carrie's relationship because she is not herself around him. Charlotte wants to know what Petrovsky is promising her, since marriage is not the end goal of this union. This is the one time in the show where Carrie rejects the advice of her community and decides it is time for her to move on in Paris (6,2/ 6/ Splat!).

When in Paris, Petrovsky constantly puts his art work ahead of Carrie and her needs. Carrie is having a hard time adjusting to Paris and misses her friends. She finally meets fans of her book at a bookstore who decide to throw a party in her honour. Instead of attending the party, she attends an art gallery with Petrovsky to support him when his art work is unveiled. Petrovsky ignores Carrie all night. Carrie conveniently finds her “Carrie” necklace, which is symbolic of Carrie finding herself again since her “Carrie” necklace was a staple piece of jewelry she wore throughout the series which she bought with her friends. It defined her. Carrie had lost her “Carrie” necklace when she arrived in Paris; without the necklace she was constantly compromising who she was for Petrovsky. Carrie stops following Petrovsky around and leaves the gallery to try to make the party her fans are throwing her. She arrives too late and discovers her fans have defaced her books and spilt red wine on them. This is the first time Carrie is ever seen letting friends down. She is angry at herself and confronts Petrovsky. He refuses to talk about it, belittles her, and complains he is tired. He defends himself by claiming he has always been honest about who he is. While arguing, he slaps her, and this forces Carrie to let him know who she is (6,2/ 8/ An American Girl In Paris Part Deux). This episode validates Carrie’s lifestyle in New York. When Carrie rejects the advice of the friendship network her life falls apart. Finding the necklace reminds her of the support the friendship network provides and she realizes she has compromised herself and her life for a man. This relationship fails when Carrie is honest about who she is.

Big: It took me really long time to get here. But I’m here. Carrie, you’re the one.
 Carrie: Oh kiss me you big cry baby! (6,2/ 8/ American Girl in Paris (Part Deux))

Carrie’s relationship with Mr. Big remains fairly close to the traditional representation of romance. One thing that differs is that a relationship develops after

having sex with him on the first date. None of the conditions are ever perfect for them. First he cannot commit and Carrie finds that she loves him more than he loves her (1/ 12/ Oh Come All Ye Faithful). The second time they date, nothing changes and Big makes a decision to go to Paris without consulting her (2/ 12/ La Douleur Exquise). After Mr. Big gets married to Natasha, a young woman he meets while in Paris, they have an affair. The first person she talks about the affair with is Samantha who listens without judging her (3/ 10/ All or Nothing). When Carrie reveals her affair to Miranda, she demands that Carrie stop. Charlotte is devastated when she randomly runs into Carrie and Mr. Big while she is running errands for her wedding. Charlotte asks Carrie what she would do if someone was doing this to her. Carrie admits she would kill the woman. The affair comes to an end when Natasha, Mr. Big's wife, breaks her front teeth while chasing Carrie out of their apartment (3/ 11/ Running With Scissors).

When Mr. Big comes back to New York for heart surgery Carrie takes care of him. He thinks Carrie is "the one" while he is feverish and delusional. When he is healthy again he closes himself off yet again (6,1/ 11/ The Domino Effect). Yet, when he realizes Carrie is the one he comes back to New York to tell her. Carrie is on her way to spend her last night with her girlfriends before going to Paris with Petrovsky. Carrie refuses to listen to him because it has been six years and nothing has changed. She refuses to be jerked around any longer and asks him never to call her again. While Carrie is in Paris, Charlotte hears Mr. Big leaving Carrie a message telling her that he loves her. Mr. Big meets the friendship network and tells them that he loves her. He knows that those girls are the loves of her life and he tells them that any guy would be lucky to come in fourth. If she is happy he will leave her alone, but he is prepared to go to Paris and

walk the streets searching for her. Miranda tells him to go get their girl (6, 2/ 7/ An American Girl in Paris Part Une). This is important since all the relationships that survive in the show are approved by the friendship network. Significant others have to accept the friendship network into their lives as well as their wives or girlfriends. In order for Big to succeed in his relationship with Carrie he has to gain acceptance to Carrie's friendship network, which is her source of intimacy. Similarly, all of the men that the women end up with include the friendship network on events which are traditionally dealt with by the couple itself.

Conclusion

It can be seen from this chapter that women are constantly grappling with their positions in relationships. Single women are becoming more prevalent and the discourses presented in *Sex and the City* makes it evident that single women as a group are less stigmatized than they have been in the past and are becoming more socially acceptable. Being single is now understood as just another lifestyle choice available to women. The representations of the women in *Sex and the City* negotiating their positions in relationships and being self-reflexive to figure out what they want out of relationships suggests that the friendship network plays a vital role in advising and assessing experiences.

This chapter establishes that although women are sexual agents, their capacity to define themselves runs into the inevitable constraints of their social environment. Although the soul mate ideal is constantly represented in *Sex and the City*, the fact that each of the characters follows a different relationship script suggests that there are many ways to find relationships that are successful. These various representations suggest that

there is no right or wrong way to fall in love and that each woman has to find a relationship that she is comfortable with. The representation of resistance to cultural norms about women's relationships suggests that there are many ways of being in relationships and that one way is no better than the other, rather the most important part about relationships is that women's needs are met and that they do not have to compromise themselves. This fits well with Giddens' notion of confluent love which includes equality in emotional give and take since this relationship model enables negotiating individual needs within a relationship.

If one accepts that intimacy is only achieved when one is comfortable with one's own identity. The friendship network becomes the character's primary source of intimacy since that is the one environment where each of the women are accepted as who they are. Intimacy is achieved through psychological work; this occurs on two different levels in *Sex and the City*. The first occurs within the friendship network itself since the characters work at sustaining the friendship network and do have to negotiate how to accept four different views on the same topic. The second occurs through their romantic relationships where they try to solve intimacy issues with help from the friendship network by applying solutions that were discussed with their friends.

Relationships in *Sex and the City* are neoliberal representations of relationships since the characters play a role in their self-formation. The combination of confluent love's presumption of emotional give and take and the fact that several aspects of the relationship are to be negotiated make "working at" relationships an integral part of successful relationships. This model of love allows one to question the soul mate idea, dispels myths of perfection and instead views relationships as consisting of choices that

can be made to shape a relationship as the couple desires. Successful relationships depend on whether the couple's needs are being met. This fits well with pure relationships, where individuals stay in a relationship, as long as needs are met. Furthermore the negotiation of needs leads to self-formation since each partner is expected to know oneself so they can assert their needs. Moreover some issues negotiated within a relationship are about lifestyle choices and each part of the couple has to negotiate and compromise on making such decisions. Questions about lifestyle choices form an individual's biography.

Chapter 3 Reproduction: Creating, Resisting and Negotiating Motherhood

Charlotte: But it's a baby shower.

Miranda: No, it's a cult.

Carrie: A cult, what are you talking about?

Miranda: Listen to me, they all think the same, dress the same, and sacrifice themselves to the same cause, babies.

Charlotte: She's insane.

Miranda: Hey. I've lost two sisters to the motherhood. I know what I'm talking about (1/ 10/ The Baby Shower).

Being a mother has traditionally been understood as an essential element of women's identities. Yet, there has been no single history of reproductive politics and this suggests that motherhood and reproduction is a social and political event (Solinger 2005: 21). Even though women have defined having children as a choice, they have to make reproductive decisions within existing public policy. Middle-class women are not free from employment policies governing family leave, health insurance and provisions for day care (Solinger 2005: 17).

Sex and the City reconfigures women's roles as mothers and the politics of motherhood by representing being a mother as an optional lifestyle based on deliberate choices. Rather than accepting motherhood as a natural identity, the show recognizes a range of choices available in choosing what 'type' of mother to be, if at all. This is difficult because women have to decipher conflicting knowledge forms about motherhood. I argue that deciphering these different knowledge forms occur within the friendship network. Being a mother is a negotiated subject position within the series. Motherhood is an element of the feminine personality that has to be shaped within women's personal biographies. In order to do this, reproduction is both de-romanticized

and de-naturalized. Reproduction is represented as a technologically mediated activity, thoroughly implicated within the regimes of medicalized knowledge.

Samantha's character does not have any desire to have children and likes what life offers without them. Carrie is undecided about her feelings towards children but is willing to keep her options open. Miranda, the least maternal character next to Samantha, unexpectedly becomes pregnant, decides to keep the baby and has to negotiate how to be a mother without losing herself. Charlotte, the most maternal character, wants a baby, but has difficulty conceiving and has to struggle the most on her path to becoming a mother.

This chapter examines how the characters in *Sex and the City* interact with broader cultural norms of motherhood and how these notions fit with their self-images as women. First, I examine how reproduction is de-naturalized and how the management of motherhood and reproduction is scientized and technologized through medical and legal discourses. Second, I examine the different contexts within which motherhood is consumed. Third I explore how the concept of the 'ideal mother' is resisted within the show. Fourth, I suggest the friendship network plays a predominant role in negotiating motherhood and repositions the role that fathers play. Last, I examine the option of remaining without children as a lifestyle choice.

De-Naturalizing Reproduction and Reproductive Challenges: The Medical Legal Management of Motherhood

Are you less of a woman if you cannot conceive a child naturally? Can you beat the biological clock with science? What are the challenges faced when trying to adopt? Discourses of law, medicine and social science intersect to create the problematic

feminine subject who is in need of surveillance and regulation (Smart 1992: 7). Law has been used throughout history to regulate women's sexuality and reproduction. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there has been an intensified gaze on reproduction and sexuality in regulating populations. Since reproductive technologies, such as in vitro fertilization, freezing of embryos, surrogacy, and genetic screening have become available, women have been able to separate having sex for pleasure and having sex to reproduce (Arditti 1997: 322). Women are no longer limited by their age or by their inability to conceive but are represented as having options, although, reproductive technologies are predominantly available to middle-class or upper-class women who have the means to pay for expensive medical interventions (Arditti 1997: 323). Adria Schwartz proposes that women are rejecting the constraints of biology and using alternative modes of reproduction to contest the traditional shame of barrenness, the biological clock issue, and the validation of womanhood by reproductive function (Schwartz 1994: 242). This section explores how reproduction is denaturalized through the application of science and technology and how this expands reproductive choices for affluent women.

Miranda: I'm a biological underachiever and it is ironic because that ovary went to Harvard (2/ 11/ Evolution).

In "Evolution" Miranda is told by her gynecologist that her right ovary has stopped producing eggs. She discusses her lazy ovary at lunch with her friends. Miranda wonders if her ovary has given up on thinking she will get married or have children. Miranda, feeling pressured about running out of time, decides to give a chance to a man she would not ordinarily date. When the man confides in her about getting hair plugs, she divulges she is taking hormones and considering freezing her eggs because of her

lazy ovary. Miranda believes such options remove the biological clock issue. Her date, on the other hand, has conservative views on reproductive technologies. He brings up the traditional naturalized concern about risks associated with reproductive technologies, such as women giving birth too late in life. He believes some women are not “meant” to procreate and that nature weeds out the “weak”. Miranda decides to stop taking the hormones because she realizes there is still enough time (2/ 11/ Evolution). This representation reflects the dialogue about repercussions of reproductive technologies and what they have done for feminism. Miranda’s reaction against her date is a strong reaction against women being defined by their ability to reproduce. Miranda stopping taking the hormones is a resistance to women in their thirties being governed by their biological clock. Miranda resists being “fixed” by reproductive technologies and their discourses.

Another choice to make with respect to women’s reproduction is whether or not to have a child once a woman realizes she is pregnant. With the advent of birth control, there was a fear that the lower classes were out-producing the higher classes (Smart 1992: 19). As abortion is made more readily available, society is not free of the fears created throughout history, and the moralization of abortion is still felt through the medicalization of women’s sexuality. Contemporary society does not use official power of the state to control the reproductive rights of middle-class women. However, women continue to be influenced by family pressure, economic circumstances and social pressures (Rothman 2004: 23). Abortion is a topic that is rarely discussed in the media. *Sex and the City* addresses the issue of abortion when Miranda becomes pregnant with Steve’s baby.

Miranda: He only has one ball and I have a lazy ovary. In what twisted world does that create a baby?

Carrie: Yah I see your point.

Miranda: It's like the Special Olympics of Conception (4/11/Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda).

Miranda has to decide whether she wants to be a mother when she becomes pregnant with Steve's baby. While the girls are having lunch, Charlotte is upset over having her period. She and Trey have been trying to conceive for five months and she is convinced she is the reason they are not getting pregnant. While she is ranting about other people having babies by just looking at each other, Miranda is forced to reveal she is pregnant with Steve's baby. When Charlotte finds out Miranda is not going to consider having the baby she leaves. Samantha, Carrie and Miranda talk openly about abortion. Samantha has had two and Carrie has had one. Miranda is put on a waitlist for an abortion since her regular doctor does not perform them (4/ 11/ Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda). This suggests that moral discourses are often buried within medical discourses. Abortion is a procedure that doctors perform at their own discretion according to their own attitudes. Women who seek to control their fertility continue to risk enduring moral judgment and stigmatization (Hawkes 2004: 162). Even though Miranda's doctor claims she is not judging her, Miranda feels judged because of the referral to another medical practitioner. Miranda internalizes this judgment and discusses it with Carrie. Miranda also reflects on the fact that Charlotte has a fifteen percent chance of ever conceiving. This representation suggests that decisions about becoming a mother take shape within a woman's social environment.

Miranda: This happened against all the odds. My stupid egg found its way to the three sperm he had left. Oh God, Carrie. Is this my baby? I mean what am I waiting for?

Carrie: Sweetie, do you want to leave?

Miranda: No. I can't have a baby. I could barely find the time to schedule this abortion (4/11/ Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda).

Carrie accompanies Miranda to the clinic for the abortion. It becomes obvious Miranda is uncertain about going through with the procedure when she starts asking Carrie questions about her experience. She wants to know how long it will take to feel normal again, whether it hurts, and most of all, whether she is doing the right thing. She is looking at Carrie to make a decision but she cannot decide for her. Miranda starts questioning what would happen if her other ovary gives up. In the next scene Samantha is giving Miranda some tea and Charlotte brings flowers and asks how she is feeling. Miranda tells Charlotte she is keeping the baby. Charlotte in tears says "we're having a baby" (4/ 11/ Coulda Woulda Shoulda). Although abortion is talked about in *Sex and the City*, all the abortions occur off-screen. The show is forward-looking to an extent, since some of the protagonists have made choices to have abortions in the past. But the reasons behind those abortions are because they were young, not ready or because they barely knew the fathers. Miranda's decision to have a baby re-naturalizes her character. Her age and successful career give her no reason to have an abortion because she has the means to raise a child. This representation also suggests Miranda's age might have helped make her decision to have a child. She is aware she is growing older, and the threat of not being able to have another child if she terminates this pregnancy continues to exist.

When a couple is reproductively challenged babies can become commodities themselves. Denaturalizing birth allows women who have trouble conceiving different avenues to explore. Discourses about parenthood, use the language of "having" a baby of one's own. This can mean that a couple wants a baby for the experiences it can bring to

their lives. Then there is the more literal aspect of physically having a baby (Rothman 2004: 25). Barbara Katz Rothman suggests that reproductive technologies segment the baby market into different reasons behind “having” a child to address the various needs of women (Rothman 2004: 27). Depending on the reason behind “having” a baby, a woman can resort to medical intervention and try to bear a child of her own, or she can resort to adoption. The language of risk appears when women have to make decisions on how they are going to become mothers. Women have to constantly evaluate the risks involved in the choices they have, and find a solution that meets their needs. In vitro fertilization is a high-risk, high-cost, low-success treatment yet remains to be a highly marketed solution (Rothman 2004: 28).

Charlotte: Don't talk to my friends like that! Without a baby they're all I have!

Trey: And what am I?!

Charlotte: You are the man who gave me a cardboard baby! (4/ 13/ The Good Fight).

Charlotte and Trey face a second major challenge in their marriage when they begin to experience problems conceiving. Charlotte's doctor suggests getting Trey's sperm tested. Trey initially gets offended at the suggestion of something being wrong with his sperm. Charlotte explains it is easier to test the man since it is less invasive. Trey's tests indicate his sperm are strong and healthy (4/ 10/ Belles of the Balls). When Charlotte gets her fertility tested, she finds out her blood and mucous test shows elevated anti-sperm antibodies which leaves her with a fifteen percent chance of conceiving naturally (4/ 11/ Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda).

Charlotte tries to take an active part in trying to become a mother. In order to do this she relocates herself within the medical discourse of reproductive technology. She gets hormone injections, tries IVF and continues researching all the options available to

her. She learns from other couples' experiences in her building. Trey is embarrassed that Charlotte is sharing their personal problems with strangers. Charlotte goes as far as learning Mandarin, in case they have to adopt a baby girl from China. Charlotte eventually gets frustrated with doing all the work with minimal support from her husband. Trey confesses he does not want to try having children anymore (4/ 12/ Just Say Yes). Trey ends the relationship because this is not something they can move past. Charlotte admits she does not think she should have to give up wanting a baby (4/ 14/ All That Glitters). The representation of Charlotte's experience with Trey suggests that dealing with reproductive issues is difficult. Naturally conceiving a child when one is reproductively challenged involves research, resorting to medical expertise, modifying the body and learning from other people's experiences. The body is malleable and can be "corrected" or "fixed" by medical science, reproducing the norm of motherhood.

Charlotte is forced to deal with her reproductive problems a second time in her relationship with Harry. Charlotte's second experience is significantly different from her first. Harry and Charlotte are supportive of each other. Furthermore, Harry takes the extra step and includes Charlotte's friends. In this situation, in addition to having a husband that communicates with her and works with her to try having a child, Charlotte also has her friends there for advice and support.

In "To Market To Market" Charlotte is insecure when she discloses to Harry that she may not be able to give him children. Harry assures her he loves her, accepts her regardless and suggests they can adopt (6,1/ 1/ To Market to Market). This representation suggests Charlotte is not free from society's judgment on the link between womanhood and having children. She is aware of the desire to conceive naturally, and

equally aware of the hard work involved when one has reproductive problems. Charlotte is concerned about the possibility of Harry not wanting to put in the work required.

Harry's acceptance of Charlotte's condition suggests a woman's worth does not depend on her reproductive capability.

Charlotte: What are you looking at?

Harry: Doing some research.

Charlotte: On what?

Harry: Adoption.

Charlotte: Oh.

Harry: It could be just a back up, you know. If we put ourselves on some lists by the time we know what's what we'll have some choices. What do you think?

Charlotte: That seems like the right thing to do (6,2/ 4/ Out of the Frying Pan).

In "Out of the Frying Pan" Charlotte receives a phone call from Dr. Steiner telling her none of her eggs are viable. When Harry gets the bad news, he asks what she wants to do next. When Charlotte suggests IVF again, Harry makes sure it is what Charlotte wants because it has not worked in the past. Charlotte is clearly upset by this. This time it is Charlotte who runs away from her issues by literally running in the park. While Charlotte is avoiding the problem and is upset by her inability to conceive, Harry is researching, being active and putting them on adoption waiting lists (6,2/ 4/ Out of the Frying Pan). Charlotte feels inadequate because she is not measuring up to the norm where "normal" woman can get pregnant in the "natural" way. Even though, throughout the series, Charlotte is seen as an active agent in trying to make becoming a mother work for her, she is not free from the traditional notion of womanhood being validated by her ability to reproduce. The teamwork in this couple's struggle to conceive is evident when Harry takes steps to research adoption when Charlotte is at a weak point. Charlotte and Harry balance each other out and becoming parents is a process they engage in together.

Charlotte: Hi honey. I'm a bad wife I ordered Chinese.

Harry: I got something from China too. They're giving us a baby.

Charlotte: What? How?

Harry: I guess God remembered our address. We get her in six months. Here she is.

Charlotte: That's our baby. I know it. That's really our baby (6,2/ 8/ An American Girl in Paris Part Deux).

In "An American Girl in Paris Part Deux" Charlotte has to support Harry after a disastrous meal with potential birth parents for a child that they are trying to adopt. The birth parents change their minds and decide to keep their baby. Charlotte holds onto Harry's hand when they get the news. In the next scene Harry is sitting at his computer writing an angry e-mail to their baby lawyer. Charlotte reminds him the lawyer warned them about this type of thing happening. By the end of the episode, the couple finds out they are adopting a Chinese girl (6,2/ 8/ An American Girl in Paris Part Deux). Charlotte getting a baby girl from China moves away from the norm of a naturalized birth. Instead, Charlotte becomes a mother through filing adoption papers and getting letters of recommendations signed. Additionally, Charlotte and Harry's wealth enables them to better succeed since they can place themselves on transnational adoption lists rather than solely focusing on national adoption.

Consuming Motherhood and Identity

What is the ultimate baby shower gift? What will the baby's nursery look like? What kind of toys should you buy? What items must an expectant mother buy to provide the most adequate care for her baby? What steps must a woman take to prepare for a baby before the baby even arrives? These are the second types of questions *Sex and the City* addresses when considering the interaction of motherhood and consumption. Andrea Clarke argues that from the beginning of pregnancy, the conceptualization of

motherhood is bound with consumption choices (Clarke 2004: 55). Motherhood is constructed and negotiated through the acquisition of consumer goods (Clarke 2004: 56).

The relationship between motherhood and consumption is dealt with on a daily basis. Mothers have to ask themselves what they can do, and what they need to buy, in order to properly care for their children (Taylor 2004: 12). Motherhood is no longer based on what is good and what is bad, but rather is enmeshed with choices about how to rear a child, which is deeply connected with the type of mother a woman wants to be. In other words, consumption is linked to self-help discourses. Contradictory discourses exist about what items are needed to care for a baby. The items themselves are often reviewed and evaluated, and there is a wealth of information that exists for expectant mothers to familiarize themselves with. Once they have armed themselves with the information, they have to make choices that meet their needs.

Charlotte: Well you need to start thinking about these things cause there are a million questions to answer before the baby ever gets here. Do you have a birthing plan? Do you know what kind of mother you want to be?

Miranda: Yes. I plan to be a good mother.

Charlotte: But a marsupial mom or a stroller mom? Will you be breast feeding or bottle feeding? And what about baby proofing? Cause with all the sharp edges around here, I mean this place is a death trap.

Miranda: Okay, you need to back off.

Charlotte: I'm just trying to help.

Miranda: This is your idea of helping? Pointing out all the things I do badly?

Charlotte: I'm not pointing out.

Miranda: Yes you are.

Charlotte: You need to try to let other people in a little. Cause once you have that baby it's not just you anymore. You're not going to be able to control everything (4/ 17/ A Vogue Idea)

In "A Vogue Idea" Miranda is frustrated with shopping for her baby. Miranda begins to question how she is going to balance being a mother with her career. Charlotte suggests throwing Miranda a baby shower since it is a stress free way to get gifts. When

organizing the gift registry, Charlotte interrupts Miranda while she is on an important conference call, claiming it is urgent. Charlotte begins to explain philosophies behind the items she insists Miranda requires and informs her of the possibilities of things she could purchase. Miranda does not have time to make decisions. Later that evening, Charlotte visits Miranda's to make sure her apartment will be ready for the baby. Miranda gets frustrated with Charlotte's questions and threatens not to show up to her own baby shower (4/ 17/ A Vogue Idea).

A major part of the project of pregnancy is creating a child-centered space. Every decision has a notion of a "type" of mother attached to it (Clarke 2004: 61). This decision making process is difficult for Miranda since she does not have access to knowledge about the choices available to her. Charlotte acts as Miranda's source of expertise on babies. Charlotte's list of questions about what type of a mother Miranda intends to be is reflective of the plurality of choices available to Miranda. Motherhood is no longer a binary of good and bad, rather there are various choices about the "type" of mother that women achieve to be. Consumer goods become an expression of these identities.

After her argument with Charlotte, Miranda talks to Carrie about the doubts she is experiencing about her maternal ability. She admits to Carrie that she is beginning to think she needs to be child-proofed. When Miranda un-wraps her gifts, she is not sure what they are and her guests have to explain what they do. The gifts are then put on display by being passed around to each of the guests. At one point, Miranda is handed a baby. The baby begins to slip off the couch, Miranda fails to notice and Carrie manages to grab him before he falls. Charlotte gets upset when seeing a baby rattle from Tiffany's

reminds her of her failure to conceive with Trey. Miranda's maternal ability is confirmed when she comforts Charlotte. Miranda asserts her need for Charlotte because she would be clueless throughout her pregnancy without her knowledge. Charlotte assures Miranda she would have figured it out (4/ 17/ A Vogue Idea). This representation denaturalizes motherhood by suggesting motherhood is a skill that needs to be learned. Furthermore it exemplifies Hunt's notion of the self-construction of one's personal biography.

Comforting Charlotte boosts Miranda's confidence about her mothering skills. The fact that Charlotte insists Miranda would have figured out how to be a mother, reinforces that being a mother is a skill that can be learned. Miranda constructs her personal biography as a mother by interacting with the friendship network and reflecting on her experiences.

Resisting the Ideal Mother

Is there a mothering type? Can mothers have jobs, relationships, and sex? Do you have to give up your life as you know it, when you become a mother? Can single mothers be good mothers? These are the third types of issues analyzed in *Sex and the City*. Once the process of motherhood is de-naturalized, it enables women to resist the idea of the 'ideal mother'. The 'good mother' is a norm that has been established as a mother that stays at home and raises well adjusted children that will be industrious, while a normal father the breadwinner, divides his time between the work place and the home (Gleason 2003: 105). This conception of a 'good mother' marginalizes certain types of women as potential 'bad mothers'. Literature about the moral regulation of mothers has predominantly focused on the social judgement of single women and minority women from the lower socioeconomic classes. Historically, the welfare state decided which

women were desirable recipients of welfare based on what it meant to be a good mother (Little 1999: 124). Being a good mother was based on finances, sexual and social activities, and the cleanliness of the family home (Little 1999: 126). These studies are helpful since they deal with establishing norms about what a good mother is, but it is interesting to examine how these norms translate when governing affluent women. There is a strong resonance of norms established against the socially disadvantaged into the ideals developed about motherhood which affluent women use in governing themselves and governing others.

E. Anne Kaplan claims that popular culture contains heterogeneous and contradictory discourses about motherhood. Representations combine past images with new ones. Biological and reproductive roles ascribed to women are being questioned and motherhood is no longer represented as being automatic or a natural part of a woman's life cycle (Kaplan 1992: 181). Examining how single, white, middle-class women are governed at a distance, through expertise, different knowledge forms about motherhood and through their peers is possible by examining how motherhood is negotiated in *Sex and the City*. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim suggest the abundance of expert knowledge on how to become a good mother is targeted at middle-class women who are well-educated city dwellers and who are having a child at an advanced age (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 117). Resisting this ideal is complex because women are often subject to the judgment of others. Even though representations about motherhood are diverse, women are not free from the ideal of the traditional mother developed throughout history. More specifically, this section focuses on how the characters resist and create a multiplicity of meanings about motherhood.

Samantha: Well, I for one love my life and I will not be made to feel inadequate by all this baby talk.

Miranda: I spoke to a woman with a Masters in Finance and all she wanted to talk about was her diaper genie.

Carrie: Oh come on guys, it doesn't have to be like that. You don't have to lose yourself to have a kid. I know plenty of cool hip mothers who live in the city and who still have great careers and stuff.

Miranda and Samantha: Who? (1/ 10/ The Baby Shower).

In "The Baby Shower" the girls go to Connecticut for their friend Lainey's baby shower. The contrast between suburban moms and city girls is immediately evident. Lainey makes underhanded comments about their bar-hopping ways. When Carrie goes to the bathroom to take a break from the moms at the baby shower, she finds a naked picture of Lainey, and begins to wonder which parts of themselves these women have not let go of. The camera interviews the mothers where one admits about wondering what happened to Lisa (possibly a lesbian lover), one admits having an internet lover, and another admits to being guilty of smoking a joint in her child's tree house (1/ 10/ The Baby Shower). This suggests that suburban moms appear to belong to the 'cult of motherhood' but each of them has their own secrets. This anomaly between who they represent themselves as and who they are, reiterates the pressure felt by women to fit the ideal type of what mothers should be.

Miranda has always been the most independent character in the series. She is usually the character most likely to break conventions and is the most cynical about the 'cult of motherhood'. Miranda has to struggle with incorporating motherhood into her shifting identity. Motherhood as a site of self-regulation can be examined by exploring how Miranda negotiates motherhood for herself in the show.

Miranda: I just faked a sonogram.

Carrie: I'm sorry?

Miranda: I was lying there. The technician's giving me a guided tour of my uterus. Then she tells me I'm having a boy.

Carrie: Oh my god! Miranda! You're having a boy!

Miranda: You see. That. That's what this woman wanted out of me but I couldn't get it up for her so I faked it.

Carrie: What exactly does a fake sonogram look like in case I ever need to do it?

Miranda: *Makes sonogram face*

Carrie: Oh.

Miranda: Everyone else is glowing about my pregnancy. When will I? (4/ 15/ Change of Dress).

In "Change of Dress" Miranda has a sonogram and learns she is having a boy.

Miranda begins to question when and whether her maternal gene will kick in after having to "fake a sonogram". Miranda "fakes a sonogram" by smiling wide and pretending to be ecstatic. She ends up putting on her "faking a sonogram face" to Magda, Charlotte and Aidan. After giving it to Aidan she admits she thinks she is going to physically hurt herself, when she is referring to how wide is forcing herself to smile. Later that night Miranda feels her baby kick for the first time and gets excited in the privacy of her own bathroom (4/ 15/ Change of Dress). This representation takes into account the pressure placed on women to be excited expectant mothers, especially when having a boy. Throughout Miranda's pregnancy she continuously questions whether she is maternal because she does not fit the domesticated 'good mother' stereotype that is considered to be the norm.

Miranda: I had a baby. But I'm still allowed to have sex.

Walker: Is it, uh, mine?

Miranda: No. No. The guy's a friend who I accidentally slept with.

Walker: Ooh. I'm not good with kids.

Miranda: Neither am I. Look, months from now if we're still together, we'll figure this out, but for now it's just us and um I'm still the same person so let's go screw our brains out (5/ 5/ Plus One is the Loneliest Number).

Ideas about appropriate behaviour for mothers still manage to translate into affluent women judging themselves or being judged by others. Walker, a man Miranda had slept with before she had Brady, calls her for a second date. Miranda admits to the girls that she did not tell him about Brady and is reluctant to mention the baby because she is afraid that being with a child will change things for her and Walker (5/ 5/ Plus One is the Loneliest Number).

After Miranda reveals having a baby she brings Walker to her apartment. They begin to have sex when Brady starts crying in another room. Miranda keeps on screaming “mommy’s coming”. This is too much for Walker. When Miranda checks on Brady, she realizes she is not the same person she once was (5/ 5/ Plus 1 is the Loneliest Number). Miranda challenges what is expected of her as a mother and tries to hold on to her once single lifestyle. She has to figure out how Brady fits within her personal biography. She tests her boundaries to figure out the changes she has to make in her life to accommodate the baby. At first, Miranda tries to make her relationship work, by putting off figuring out where the baby fits in her love life. She believes she will be able to negotiate how Walker fits into Brady’s life after she knows whether he fits into hers. This technique fails to work. Miranda realizing she is not the same person as she once was re-establishes the norm that a baby has to come first.

Kendel: Miranda, you’re not a bad mother. You just didn’t have the chair.
Miranda: Thank you (5/ 6/ Critical condition).

In “Critical Condition” Miranda wonders if she is a bad mother since Brady will not stop crying. Miranda faces judgment from other mothers in the building since she has never acknowledged them or their babies. Eventually Kendel, Miranda’s neighbour, brings Miranda an oscillating chair to keep Brady from crying. Kendel is surprised

Miranda had not heard of the chair; Miranda confides she is the first one of her friends to have a baby. Kendel insinuates Miranda is going to face some challenges since women who do not have babies are clueless. Miranda defends her friends and asserts they have been helpful (5/ 6/ Critical Condition). Even though Miranda has a child she is estranged from the 'cult of motherhood'. Challenging cultural norms surrounding motherhood, and attempting to keep her life with her friends, has resulted in closing off other avenues for support with women in similar situations. Miranda's experience with Kendel suggests that knowing other mothers can prove to be helpful, since they might have knowledge that women who have not had children might not be aware of. Knowledge through experience suggests that mothers often become experts of themselves and can pass the expertise onto other mothers. Miranda defending her friends suggests she is not prepared to believe her friends cannot help, but she is thankful for having the support of another mother. Miranda also stops doubting her mothering ability when another mother validates she is not a bad mother. This is a kind of knowledge that the friendship network cannot claim because their knowledge is experience based.

The unmarried mother's material life was historically difficult because she had to depend solely on her own wage. Mothers participating in the labour market full time were defined as bad mothers since motherhood had been constructed as a full time occupation through psychological discourses (Spensky 1992: 102). Furthermore in the 1950's many discourses were constructed about a child needing a loving environment and the mother was expected to provide this environment, and having secured a husband before having a child was part of this healthy environment (Spensky 1992: 109). As women's roles outside the home have changed, women have had to find a way to balance

their careers with balancing their jobs as mothers. Having choices in the career world has also led to middle-class women having the financial security with which to raise their children alone. Women are now often conflicted about maternal ideals that are ascribed to them and the affinity they feel towards their children with desiring to be successful at their careers.

Brady is crying

Carrie: What's wrong with him?

Miranda: Oh he'll be fine. He just misses his mommy, Magda (6, 1/ 6/ Hop Skip and a Week).

Balancing having a child with having a demanding career is explored in "A Hop Skip and a Week." Brady cries every time Miranda leaves the house and this leads Miranda to feel guilty. At work Miranda is called into the office where two partners at her law firm are concerned about Miranda's performance since she has been late to important meetings and they have noticed her leaving early. She not so kindly reminds her partners that after her mother died she was back to work on Monday. Later that night Miranda is seen rushing home. She asks Magda if Brady is awake and is upset that Brady went to bed before she could see him. In another scene, there is a reversal where Brady cries when Magda leaves for the night. This bothers Miranda since Brady is beginning to think Magda is his mother. It is important for Miranda that Brady recognizes her as his mother. She finally talks to her boss about cutting back on her hours at work. Miranda realizes she cannot be at home all the time so she sticks pictures of herself on the baby mobile so Brady can see her at all times (6,1/ 6/ Hop, Skip and a Week).

This is contrasted with Charlotte who decides to leave her job when trying to conceive a baby with Trey. After the conception of the working mother, the

domesticated mother is often left with feelings of inadequacy. There are a range of discourses about validating a woman's choice to stay at home (Kaplan 1992: 188).

Charlotte: You were so judgmental at The Coffee Shop yesterday

Miranda: Excuse me?

Charlotte: You think I'm one of those women.

Miranda: What? One of what women?

Charlotte: One of those women we hate, who just works until she gets married.

Miranda: Charlotte it's 8:15.

Charlotte: That's not a response.

Miranda: It's an 8:15 in the morning response.

Charlotte: The women's movement is supposed to be about choice, and if I choose to quit my job, that is my choice.

Miranda: The women's movement? Jesus Christ I haven't even had coffee yet.

Charlotte: It's my life and my choice.

Miranda: Okay Charlotte. This isn't about me. This is your stuff.

Charlotte: Admit you're being very judgmental.

Miranda: I'm dripping all over my bathroom and you're calling me judgmental and if you have a problem with quitting your job, maybe you should take it up with your husband.

Charlotte: See. There it is. You husband. There is nothing wrong with having a husband.

Miranda: Charlotte I'm hanging up.

Charlotte: *gasps* Don't you hang up. And, and, and, stop saying Charlotte like that. I'm quitting my job to make my life better and do something worthwhile, like have a baby and cure AIDS.

Miranda: Oh. You're going to cure AIDS? Good for you Charlotte, just don't be too disappointed if all you end up with is a pretty ceramic mug with Trey's name on it.

Charlotte: Take that back.

Miranda: I'm hanging up.

Charlotte: Don't you hang up. I'm interviewing girls to replace me and I really need you to get behind my choice.

Miranda: You get behind your choice.

Charlotte: I am behind my choice. I choose my choice.

Miranda: Charlotte I don't have time for this. I have to go to work. Some of us still have to go to work.

Charlotte: *yelling* I choose my choice. I choose my choice (4/ 7/ Time and Punishment).

In "Time and Punishment" Charlotte discusses quitting her job at the art gallery.

The friendship network is surprised and tells her to think hard before leaving a job she loves. Charlotte divulges Trey suggested she quit, and further that she wants to quit

because she will become pregnant soon. When interviewing girls to replace her, Charlotte finds it hard to admit to a young woman that she is leaving her job to become pregnant. When the young woman asks why, Charlotte tells her it is because she is married and is planning on having a baby, but also lies about being on the board of the Lennox Hill Paediatric AIDS Foundation to validate herself (when she is thinking of volunteering to help raise money for the new paediatric AIDS wing). On Charlotte's last day at the gallery, she is on edge about leaving because she has worked her whole life. The young woman makes her feel better by telling her that her mother worked and it would have been nice to have her at home (4/ 7/ Time and Punishment). This representation is important because it presents the audience with the option of staying at home. However, Charlotte is not free from the judgment of the friendship network that is largely formed of liberated women. Her insecurity behind her decision is made evident when she phones Miranda asking her to get behind her choice. The show does not validate her choice, because later on when things fall apart with Trey, Charlotte expresses frustration of only volunteering because she is not getting rehired since galleries think she is over qualified (4/ 16/ Ring a Ding Ding). Even though the show recognizes the choices that the women's movement has left this generation's women with, the cultural norm of problematizing stay at home mom's is reproduced. Once again, when one of the characters veers off course from the advice the friendship network offers, she is left in an undesirable predicament.

The Role of the Friendship Network

In “Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda” Miranda is deciding on whether or not to keep her baby. Miranda makes the decision to figure out what she wants before telling Steve (4/ 11/ Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda). This representation is significant since the friendship network knows that Miranda is pregnant before the baby’s father knows and acts as a support network both when Miranda is deciding whether or not she is going to have the baby, and is also the support network throughout her pregnancy. This representation suggests the father can be replaced with both science and the friendship network in terms of participation in, and authority, within the process.

Miranda: When this gets going, don't let anyone get all cheerleadery on me. I don't want any of that, you can do it, push push shit! (4/ 18/ I Heart New York).

Miranda starts her descent into motherhood in an unconventional way, beginning in the delivery room. In “I Heart New York” she asks Carrie to be in the delivery room with her. Miranda finds Steve is a great coach, but too emotional. In the delivery room, Carrie ensures Miranda gives birth under her terms. Carrie makes the nurse stop cheering her on to keep pushing. Before the final push, Miranda grabs Carrie’s hand, and Carrie gives Miranda an encouraging look. Steve is in the delivery room watching the birth of his son. When the baby is born he passes the baby to Carrie, who then passes him to Miranda. When Miranda names the baby Brady Hobbes, Steve starts to cry, but Carrie gives him a look that lets him know not to (4/ 18/ I Heart New York). This representation is significant since the friend replaces the role the father would traditionally play. Steve is involved and in the delivery room, but even though Miranda has Steve in her life, she still wants Carrie to be part of the birth. Miranda relies on her friends to help make sure she has control over giving birth. The friendship network does

not replace the role of men in the characters' lives but acts as an additional facet that is necessary in the formation of women's maternal identity.

Anna Fels suggests the most significant part of identity formation is the interaction with others. Others are necessary to legitimate the individual's role identity in order for the individual to preserve a stable self-concept (Fels, 2004: 75). In *Sex and the City*, Miranda does not want the new baby to change her identity. She fears becoming one of those mothers she has talked about hating in the past. When Miranda first has Brady, Carrie comes to visit her for advice. Miranda is having trouble breast feeding Brady, which makes it hard for Miranda to focus on Carrie. Miranda gets frustrated and does not want to become one of those mothers who cannot carry on an adult conversation. Carrie tries to comfort her friend by telling Miranda that she is still one of them. Carrie supports the fact she is a mother and promises not to tell anyone (5/ 1/ Anchors Away). The friendship network's approval is important to Miranda while she is trying to figure her place as a mother. Appraisal from her friends is necessary for Miranda's self-concept to remain stable.

Samantha: Babies are not my scene. From what I've heard, this one sounds like an asshole.

Carrie: You can't call a baby an asshole.

Samantha: Why not? She called it a meatloaf.

Carrie: I don't think it would kill all of us to be a little more supportive.

Samantha: Oh, alright, when he's in college I'll take him for a drink and flirt with his friends. How's that?

Carrie: Maybe you could just stop by tomorrow and say, I hear you had a baby, how's that going?

Samantha: Carrie. I have no time. I'm booked all day. I have my hair appointment and I'm returning a vibrator before that.

Carrie: Hair and a vibrator.

Samantha: Yes that is my life and I don't have to justify it. I hate it when people have babies and they suddenly expect you to turn into some kind of Norman Rockwell painting.

Carrie: We're not talking about people. We're talking about our friend Miranda and she's sinking (5/ 6/ Critical Condition).

In "Critical Condition" Miranda confesses to Carrie that she is beginning to think she is a bad mother. She admits she is frustrated with Samantha not acknowledging she has given birth. Carrie asks Samantha to support Miranda. Samantha decides to babysit Brady and sends Miranda to her hair appointment. While Samantha is babysitting for Brady, his oscillating chair breaks. She is seen being uncomfortable and trying to get the baby to stop crying. When Miranda comes home, Samantha tells her the chair broke, when Miranda asks Samantha how she got Brady to stop crying, Samantha shows Miranda the oscillating chair with her vibrator on top of it (5/ 6/ Critical Condition). Samantha, a single woman who does not have any experience with babies, manages to figure out how to stop babies from crying. This suggests that with a little creativity, taking care of a child is something that can be figured out. Once again, motherhood is denaturalized and represented as a skill that can be learned. Furthermore, Samantha, the least maternal character babysitting to support her friend, displays the extent of support members of the friendship network are willing to give. Miranda requires both validation and assistance from her community when constructing her identity as a mother. This scene suggests the friendship network can effectively play this role.

Life without Children

Does every woman want to have a child? Can women have fulfilling lives without children? This is the fifth maternal issue *Sex and the City* addresses. Deciding not to become a mother, either by choice or by circumstance, is validated in *Sex and the City*.

Women not having children can be explored by examining how Carrie and Samantha interact with motherhood.

Samantha: I don't have a baby, everybody drink (1/ 10/ The Baby Shower).

In "The Baby Shower" Samantha decides to throw herself an "I don't have a baby shower". At her party she toasts to not having a baby. Her choice to not have children gets further validated when Lainey shows up at the party. Lainey admits she woke up one morning and did not recognize herself or her life. In an attempt to prove she has not lost sight of herself, Lainey attempts to put on a strip show, only embarrassing herself further because she cannot find it within herself to go through with it (1/ 10/ The Baby Shower). This suggests becoming a mother changes a woman's identity and a woman often engages in self reflection to figure out what this means for her own identity: past, present and future. Lainey's struggle of forming her identity as a mother is evident with the tension she feels between her 'wild' past and her 'suburban pregnant' present. Samantha's choice to not have children is validated because compared to Lainey's identity crisis she is represented as being independent and fabulous. Samantha's representation as a whole person without children, counters the social norm that women are not complete unless they have children.

Women's choices about having children are often constrained by their biological clocks. Traditionally, marriage has come before children. Whether single by choice or by circumstance, women eventually have to make decisions about whether they want to become mothers before they are physically incapable of conceiving a child. Women now have to ask themselves whether they want to be mothers and furthermore within what context to become mothers (Kaplan 1992: 182). In *Sex and the City*, Carrie is not sure

she is the mothering type; she has thought about having children, but has not gotten around to it.

Charlotte: Why should you give up a baby for a man you hardly know?

Carrie: Why should I give up a man for a baby I don't even know I want? (6,2/ 3: Catch 38)

After Carrie sees how great her boyfriend, Petrovsky, is with Brady, she asks him if he has ever thought of having children. She discovers he already has a child, has no interest in wanting more, and has had a vasectomy. Carrie, being thirty-eight years old, wonders what this means for their relationship. While Brady is playing at the park, Carrie confesses what she has learned about Petrovsky. Charlotte advises Carrie to leave him immediately since they are thirty-eight. Charlotte puts pressure on Carrie by discussing how women are confounded by their biological clocks. If a current relationship will not bring her children, she is encouraged to find one that will. Charlotte suggests this is an important issue to discuss with Petrovsky to find out if he would reverse his vasectomy. Carrie is at a point in her life where having this conversation is necessary but, on the other hand, she does not want to sound like a desperate woman. Samantha suggests Carrie look at what else is on the menu, evaluate the kind of life Petrovsky could offer her without a child, and then decide if she would be satisfied. Carrie wants the question answered whether Petrovsky will be able to love her enough to make up for her not having a child. When Carrie has the talk with Petrovsky he asserts he knows who he is and will never change his mind. He admits that parenting is an extraordinary experience and he would not want to take that away from her. The issue is left unresolved (6,2/ 3/ Catch 38). This episode focuses on the tensions that exist between the cultural norms of women wanting children and battling the biological clock

versus motherhood as an optional lifestyle choice. Carrie engages in the self-reflective process but in the end she is unable to decide how children fit into her personal biography. Each of the women has different viewpoints and neither of the viewpoints are categorized as “right” or “wrong”. Instead, each viewpoint offers Carrie one more thing to consider. Although deciding to become a mother is recognized as an important life choice, Carrie decides to leave that part of her identity, unanswered. Leaving this question unanswered in turn resists cultural norms about the biological clock because Carrie is willing to take more time to test out the relationship with Petrovsky.

Conclusion

Once motherhood is understood simultaneously as a social construct and a project of the self, it enables women to negotiate how children will fit into their lives. In *Sex and the City*, the choice to have or not to have children becomes part of one’s sexual identity. Being a mother, does not make a woman whole, but rather it is presented as a choice that one can strive towards if she desires. Motherhood is denaturalized so that it, too, can become part of the construction of autobiography. Miranda works within existing discourses about motherhood and has to find her place somewhere between what is expected and with what she is comfortable. She tries to defy convention, in some ways she succeeds and in other ways, the experience of having a child changes her. The different personality types in the friendship network provide Miranda with a strong support system that helps her internalize and process different knowledge forms about motherhood. Miranda has the financial means to hire help and has the support of the father. The representation of Miranda’s experiences suggests that single women can

position themselves as good mothers and still have successful careers, successful relationships and successful friendships. It is important to recognize that these representations assume freedom to make choices, whereby, women who have financial independence are often privy to making choices.

The acceptance of the separation between the feminine body and being a mother enables women who are reproductively challenged to have a chance at motherhood. Through the representations of the struggle that Charlotte faces suggests that becoming a mother can be achieved but one has to work at it. One has to research different knowledge forms, different forms of expertise, talk and learn from other people's experiences, weigh various options, be active agents and put themselves on waiting lists, learn different languages and keep pushing themselves without giving up. Individuals are expected to know what they want and find a way to get it. One should keep in mind that cost is a factor when it comes to evaluating choices that are available. Charlotte succeeds with the help of the friendship network and the support of her husband. Becoming a mother is represented as being a realistic goal that women can get if she desires.

Conclusion

This thesis examined how women construct themselves as sexual subjects when making choices about sexuality, relationships and reproduction always within a context of overarching norms of governance. These norms are predominantly articulated and renegotiated within the friendship network. The friendship network is the primary site of intimacy since the relationship the women have with each other is stronger than the relationship they have with most men. The women within the friendship network refer to themselves as each other's soulmates. Usually a problem is brought to the group, and all four viewpoints are presented. Sexual messages are evaluated through talk. Talk is part of the "therapy". Each viewpoint is seen as equally acceptable and the character facing the issue then engages in a process of self-reflexivity based on the viewpoints of the friendship network and other external events that take place. Reflexivity is an integral part of creating one's biography. Each of the character's experiences leads to personal growth and self-formation. Self-formation is necessary to achieve an individual distinct identity and this identity is often based on lifestyle choices that the characters make. Identity is never static but instead is fluid. The women often rebuild their identities after a life crisis.

Neoliberal de-governmentalization of the state has led to governing at a distance, especially with respect to medicalized discourses. In *Sex and the City* expert knowledge is a source of information the characters initially turn to but in the end, the resolution comes from within the friendship network or through a process of self-reflection. Formal expertise frequently fails and the characters and the friendship network become experts of themselves within expertise reflecting both their personal experience and their

internalization of more formal modes of knowledge. The friendship network itself sometimes uses medicalized language that professionals would traditionally use. When the group turns to formal expertise, it is often accessed together or the expert's advice is revealed and discussed within the friendship network. The women in *Sex and the City* respond creatively to expert advice and interact with existing modes of governance. Risk is also used as a tool of governance. The characters interacting with risk discourses often incite self-reflection and self-doubt since moral issues are often buried within risk discourses. Women are expected to be responsible and to take rational steps to avoid risk. The characters often find themselves initially judged when interacting with professionals, but the self-doubt is often counteracted through their interaction with the friendship network which stands by the choices each of the characters makes.

The first chapter on sexual pleasure suggests that there are a plurality of available techniques and practices to achieve pleasure and that sexual pleasure is based on individual comfort level that one can achieve if one vocalizes their needs. None of the women engage in sexual activities where they are made to feel submissive. Sexual satisfaction is seen as a realistic goal that can be achieved if one works at it. Women's sexuality is constructed through social interaction and this labour of the self. Women's sexuality lends to identity formation since each woman can utilize choice to define who they are and what they want sexually. Sexual choices are presented as a part of making lifestyle choices. Women's sexual personalities are developed through truth-telling practices which occur within the friendship network. Truth-telling is an essential element of self-transformation within the friendship network, which means that the friendship network is necessary for self-management. A woman must first confess her issue to the

group, the analysis that takes place within the group is reflected upon, and in the end the woman becomes a sexualized subject through asserting her agency. Furthermore, diverse sexual practices are normalized through talking about them both for the characters and the audience members. Even though sexual practices are presented as a menu of sexual options that women must choose from, the choices remain limited by traditional notions of being considered “marriage material”.

Relationships as discussed in the second chapter are presented as individualized. There is no one norm that all women are striving to achieve. Instead the characters engage in the project of the self so they know themselves well and know what their needs are. None of the women compromises her identity for a man. There is no concrete resolution on whether soul mates exist or not but each character finds a relationship which works for her. Most fantasies in *Sex and the City* are usually represented as falling apart. Negotiating their positions with respect to relationships occur on two levels. First, they must negotiate their position within their current relationships status. This chapter recognizes that not all elements of biography are within our control. Second, they must negotiate what they want in their relationships with their partners. Since the series begins with all the women being single, part of the negotiation that takes place is re-creating oneself as a person in a relationship. Each woman engages in the self-reflective process and gets advice from the friendship network to figure out her role as the nature of relationships change. Each of the women has her own commitment issues that she must work through. The characters have to adapt to living with their partners and learning to share their space and their lives. Relationships are continuously represented as being work.

Even though the main character's perspectives on the single woman lifestyle are quite liberal it is impossible to ignore existing traditional views in society. Part of the women's sexual identity depends on how they shape their sexuality within society's existing structure. In *Sex and the City* the friendship network's position as the primary source of intimacy for the women facilitates a strong support network. Even though a separation of marrieds and singles exists in society's structure, the friendship network itself is resilient and each woman is fully supported in the friendship network whether single, married or divorced. Since relationship statuses are understood as constituting one's lifestyle, the characters experiment with identity to see if a certain lifestyle fits. The show plays a didactic function, establishing norms about how to live as a single woman. The show's similar structure to women's magazines makes this possible. Popular culture operates as a site where moral regulation occurs by creating norms about how to govern others and govern the self.

The concept of motherhood is denaturalized in the third chapter. Motherhood is represented as a politicized process based on active choices. Women can choose whether or not they want to be mothers however they always do so in a social context governed by norms. When they choose to become mothers the link between consumption and identity formation becomes more evident. Consumption occurs in two ways when contemplating motherhood. The first occurs through the way one chooses to become a mother; one can conceive naturally, go through IVF or adopt either nationally or internationally. Second, who we are, is defined by what we buy and what meanings are attributed to the objects we consume, so the type of mother one wants to be is often reflected by the choices a mother makes with respect to parenting consumption choices.

More negotiation and identity formation takes place once one becomes a mother.

Women themselves have to learn how to care for their baby, feel like “good mothers” and still maintain staying true to themselves and not losing their own identities in the process. Once a mother, a woman must negotiate how dating, sex, career and friends fit into her life. There is once again, no “right” way to be a mother, instead one must negotiate her position as a mother. Motherhood becomes yet another lifestyle choice on the neoliberal menu. Even though women are represented as being able to choose the type of mother one must be, this integration into motherhood does not happen without interacting with the fear of being a “bad mother”.

Overall, the friendship network in *Sex and the City* acts as a primary site where women’s sexuality is governed and thus produced. Women’s sexual identity is formed through negotiating lifestyle choices about sexual pleasure, relationships and reproduction. Each of the characters discusses issues she is having on these topics with each other, interacts with existing forms of formal expertise and different knowledge forms that exist on these topics, and becomes an expert of herself. Each of the characters engage in the process of being self-reflective. They are constantly self-reflecting, self-analyzing and reforming themselves to be the women they want to be. *Sex and the City* reveals the ways in which women are produced and reproduced as sexual subjects.

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Appendix: Episode Selection

Introduction

Season 1: Episode 6: Secret Sex

Sexual Pleasure

Season 1: Episode 4: Valley of the Twenty Something Guys

Season 1: Episode 8: Three's a Crowd

Season 1: Episode 9: The Season and the Hare

Season 1: Episode 11: The Drought

Season 2: Episode 4: They Shoot Single People Don't They?

Season 2: Episode 6: The Cheating Curve

Season 2: Episode 16: Was it Good for You?

Season 3: Episode 2: Politically Erect

Season 3: Episode 6: Are We All Sluts?

Season 3: Episode 9: Attack of the Five Foot Ten Woman

Season 3: Episode 11: Running With Scissors

Season 3: Episode 12: Don't Ask Don't Tell

Season 3: Episode 13: Escape from New York

Season 3: Episode 14: Sex and Another City

Season 3: Episode 15: Hot Child in the City

Season 3: Episode 16: Frenemies

Season 4: Episode 1: The Agony and Ex-Tacy

Season 4: Episode 6: Baby Talk is Cheap

Season 5: Episode 6: Critical Condition

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 3: Catch-38

Relationships

Season 1: Episode 3: Bay of Married Pigs

Season 1: Episode 12: Oh Come All Ye Faithful

Season 2: Episode 4: They Shoot Single People Don't They?

Season 2: Episode 7: The Chicken Dance

Season 2: Episode 8: The Man, The Myth, The Viagra

Season 2: Episode 10: The Caste System

Season 2: Episode 12: La Douleur Exquise

Season 3: Episode 1: Where There's Smoke

Season 3: Episode 4: Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl

Season 3: Episode 5: Four Women and a Funeral

Season 3: Episode 7: Drama Queens

Season 3: Episode 8: The Big Time

Season 3: Episode 9: Easy Come Easy Go

Season 3: Episode 10: All or Nothing

Season 3: Episode 11: Running With Scissors

Season 3: Episode 12: Don't Ask Don't Tell

Season 3: Episode 18: Cock a Doodle Do

Season 4: Episode 1; The Agony and Ex-Tacy

Season 4: Episode 4: What's Sex Got to do With It?

Season 4: Episode 7: Time and Punishment

Season 4: Episode 13: The Good Fight

Season 4: Episode 14: All That Glitters

Season 4: Episode 15: Change of Dress

Season 4: Episode 16: Ring A Ding Ding

Season 4: Episode 17: A Vogue Idea

Season 5: Episode 1: Anchors Away

Season 5: Episode 2: Unoriginal Sin

Season 5: Episode 3: Luck Be an Old Lady

Season 5: Episode 4: Cover Girl

Season 5: Episode 7: The Big Journey

Season 6, Part 1: Episode 1: To Market to Market

Season 6, Part 1: Episode 2: Great Sexpectations

Season 6, Part 1: Episode 4: Pick a Little Talk a Little

Season 6, Part 1: Episode 6: Hop, Skip and a Week

Season 6, Part 1: Episode 11: The Domino Effect

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 1: Let There Be Light

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 2: The Ick Factor

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 4: Out of the Frying Pan

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 6: Splat!

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 7: An American Girl In Paris (Part Une)

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 8: An American Girl In Paris (Part Deux)

Reproduction

Season 1: Episode 10: The Baby Shower

Season 2: Episode 11: Evolution

Season 4: Episode 7: Time and Punishment

Season 4: Episode 10: Belles of the Balls

Season 4: Episode 11: Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda

Season 4: Episode 12: Just Say Yes

Season 4: Episode 13: The Good Fight

Season 4: Episode 14: All That Glitters

Season 4: Episode 15: Change of Dress

Season 4: Episode 16: Ring a Ding Ding

Season 4: Episode 17: A Vogue Idea

Season 4: Episode 18: I Heart New York

Season 5: Episode 1: Anchors Away

Season 5: Episode 5: Plus One is the Loneliest Number

Season 5: Episode 6: Critical Condition

Season 6, Part 1: Episode 1: To Market to Market

Season 6, Part 1: Episode 6: Hop Skip and a Week

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 3: Catch 38

Season 6, Part 2: Episode 4: out of the Frying Pan

Season 6, Part 2: An American Girl in Paris (Part Deux)