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SEX AND THE CITY:

A Socio-Linguistic Study of Two Main Characters' Language

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Abstract

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Title: *Sex and the City: A Socio-Linguistic Study of Two Main Characters' Language*

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Aim: To examine the possible differences in two of the main characters' language usage.

Method: The study was performed through a careful observation of twenty-four episodes of *Sex and the City*. Relevant literature, articles and a previously written bachelor degree essay were consulted as a foundation for the background and previous research sections.

Material: Twenty-four chosen episodes out of ninety-four in total, including manuscripts

Main results: The two studied characters show very distinct personality traits which results in different attitudes in regards to love and sex, and therefore also in their language usage.

However, both characters seem to be able to borrow personality traits that are typical for the other character, and hence are not as stereotypical as might first be perceived.

1. Introduction

In our present day modern society, our lifestyle choices can be tremendous and overwhelming, and it is not rare to be judged based on these particular choices; who to be, what to do, how to dress and where to live. However, another and perhaps more important choice is how to speak; what to say, when to say it and what vocabulary to use.

This essay explores whether language usage differs between the two most distinct characters in the TV-show *Sex and the City*; Charlotte York and Samantha Jones. *Sex and the City* was aired from 1998 – 2004, and it became known as the controversial TV-show that dealt with groundbreaking subjects such as women's relationship to sex, as well as the tremendous importance of female friendships. Two different areas of language usage are examined; the first part (7.1) focuses on the different attitudes Charlotte and Samantha have regarding love and sex, and how it shows in their language choice. The second part (7.2) focuses on cursing, and how big the differences in their language usage is, based on five particular categories within the field of cursing and swear words.

2. Aims

Based on the expected perceptions of Charlotte and Samantha, the purpose of the first part of this study (7.1) is, via a careful observation of twenty-four out of ninety-four episodes, obtain if, how and when their language usage differs. The observation mainly focuses on differences in the two characters' attitudes in regards to love and sex. If their choice of language is divergent, the goal is then to examine under which circumstances, how and to what extent it varies. Does it differ only in specific situations, such as during intercourse or perhaps only when the two characters are in each other's company? Are there certain words that both of the characters use but others that only one of them uses? The goal of the second part of the study (7.2) is to explore how common cursing is in the TV-show, or to be more specific, how often it occurs in twelve selected episodes, as well as how often it is Charlotte or Samantha that curse. This part of the study will be based on five specific words selected from different categories in Timothy Jay's *Cursing in America* (1992).

3. Organization of the present study

The next section (4) presents sufficient detailed background information about *Sex and the City* in order to be able to understand the aim of this essay. Thereafter, parts of Timothy Jay's book *Cursing in America* (1992) and Madelene Skillström Bygg's Bachelor degree essay "Offensive Language in *Sex and the City* – A Study of Male and Female Characters' Use of Taboo Words" (2006) are presented in the Previous Research section (5). The Methods and Materials section (6) describes how I chose to perform this study; which methods and what materials I used. After that, my results are presented in the Results section (7), in which one part presents Charlotte and Samantha's differences in attitude and the other part shows the results on the cursing. The results section is followed by a discussion about the aforementioned results.

4. Background on *Sex and the City*

The TV-show *Sex and the City* is based on the novel with the same name written by Candace Bushnell. Bushnell began writing a column called *Sex and the City* in 1994 for the New York Observer, which in 1996 became a book containing several of Bushnell's previously written columns. *Sex and the City* was then sold to the network HBO, which turned it into a TV-show, and aired the pilot episode in 1998. The show became a worldwide success and lasted six seasons with ninety-four episodes in total, eventually ending in 2004. Part of the success was the frank and honest way of portraying single women and their sexuality in a new and groundbreaking approach, bringing up subjects that at the time were considered to be taboo. *Sex and the City* follows four single New York female friends in their mid-thirties; Charlotte York, Samantha Jones, Carrie Bradshaw and Miranda Hobbes, and their day-to-day life. The main focus of the show is on their relationships to each other, men, love, dating and sex. Candace Bushnell said that she wrote "about personal experiences, as well as observations of other people's lives" in *Page Six* magazine in 2008. The article by Patty Adams also states:

The column was an instant hit, and by the fifth installment, Candace had a book deal. The resulting 1996 novel, *Sex and the City*, and the television show, which debuted on HBO in 1998, led to a worldwide phenomenon, bringing Blahniks as well as blow jobs into the pop culture vernacular. (Adams 2008)

The show is believed to have inspired and influenced two generations of women all over the globe.

Charlotte York is portrayed as a conservative woman who lives on the Upper East Side, wears pearls, works at an art gallery and later volunteers at a museum. Therefore, she is also presumed by the viewers as well as her three friends to be more conventional and socially correct when it comes to dating and sex. She is the kind of person who decides when she feels the time is right to get married, even though she does not have a boyfriend, let alone a fiancé. During a conversation with some friends she announces:

- 1) Charlotte: - After careful consideration, I've decided this is the year that I'm getting married.
[...]
Charlotte's friend: - Who's the lucky guy?
Charlotte: - I don't know yet. (3:7) ¹

She does not hesitate in making statements such as; “[I] read that if you don't have sex for a year you can actually become revirginized” (3:8) as a matter of fact. Samantha Jones, on the other hand, is open-minded about most things in life, lives in the trendy Meatpacking district and has a high-profile job in a male dominated industry; PR. She appears to be more promiscuous than Charlotte when it comes to dating and sex, as she expresses her liberal values when she declares: “[I]’m a try-sexual, I’ll try everything once” (3:4).

5. Previous research

5.1 Jay (1992)

In his book from 1992, *Cursing in America: A Psycholinguistic Study of Dirty Language in the Courts, in the Movies, in the Schoolyards and on the Streets* Timothy Jay divides cursing up into several different subgenres. According to Jay, the choice of using the word *cursing* when describing all the *dirty words* was made due to the fact that the word seems to be “more widely accepted term for the American public” (1992:1), than for example the term *dirty words*. However, Jay’s intention is to cover all dirty-word usage despite the fact that cursing might seem somewhat incorrect from a linguistic point of view. Therefore, from this point forward, *cursing* shall be used in this study with the same definition as the aforementioned description used in *Cursing in America*. The book brings up how cursing is used in specific situations in real life, and also how the used words affect the speaker as well as the listener. Jay lists different types of cursing, and examples of them, with an explanation of what is by “the person on the street” (1992:1) considered to be cursing today, and in addition he provides the *Webster’s Seventh New College Dictionary* definition of each type as well as “a brief

¹ Season 3, Episode 7

psychological and pragmatic interpretation” (1992:1). The genres that are presented in this essay are based on Jay’s interpretation of what cursing is, and are chosen from a point of view of what is expected to be found in *Sex and the City*. What is important to be taken into consideration is that some of the words that will be presented as examples in the following five cursing-categories might not exclusively belong to that specific category, but rather shift depending on the context and circumstance they appear in.

5.1.1 Taboo

According to Jay (1992), a *taboo* is something that is said in order to suppress specific behavior, speech or thoughts. It is often used within certain, for example, cultural groups in order to control the members of the group. The result is that the taboo prohibits the individual to use particular language or specific words. Taboos often include concepts related to sex, death, body parts and body processes, for example *dick* and *piss*. It is rather common that euphemisms are used instead; such as *make love* instead of the factual phrase *have sex*, or to say *passed away* when someone has died.

5.1.2 Obscenity

Whilst a taboo makes the speaker aware of and limited in his or her language, *obscenity* on the other hand functions to protect the listener from unfavorable language. Jay describes obscenity as something that is “designed to incite lust or depravity” (1992:5), and is usually sexual in nature, for example *fuck*, *tits* or *motherfucker*. Jay further explains that “[o]bscene words are considered the most offensive and are rarely, if ever, used in public media”.

5.1.3 Vulgarity

Traditionally, *vulgarity* was described as the language of common people. However, that is not to say that it is bad or negative, but rather a bit unsophisticated and under-educated. As pointed out by Jay, a person using vulgar expressions can also be described as someone who is “lacking in cultivation, perception or taste” (1992:6). In other words, a vulgarism is not automatically taboo or obscene, but simply put it is the morally crude street language of common people. Some examples that could be perceived as vulgar are *bloody*, *slut*, *kiss my ass* and *up yours*.

5.1.4 Epithets

An *epithet* is a word or a phrase which is used to replace a name, a person or a thing, a derogative and forceful outburst using emotional language, usually uttered from frustration. For instance, if something is experienced to be unfair or hurtful, or if someone does something frustrating, epithets as emotional outbursts that can be used are *shit*, and *hell*. Epithets are usually yelled at “a selected wrongdoer” according to Jay (1992:7) even though he or she is unidentifiable or not present, but they can also be expressed at no one in particular in order to lessen the speaker’s level of anger or irritation.

5.1.5 Insults and Slurs

“Insult (vb): to treat with insolence, indignity, or contempt: to make little of” is the definition of the term *insult* (*Webster’s Seventh New College Dictionary* cited in Jay 1992:8), whilst the term *slur* is likened to “disparage” and “aspersion”. They are both verbal attacks usually uttered in order to evoke harm in the other person by just using one particular phrase or word. However, whilst insults usually refer to something psychological or physical in the other person, *slurs* are mostly of social, ethnic or racial qualities. Some examples are *weirdo* (psychological insult), *fatty* (physical insult), *homo* or *whore* (social slur) and *nigger* (racial slur).

5.2 “Offensive Language in *Sex and the City* – A Study of Male and Female Characters”

In Skillström Bygg’s bachelor degree essay “Offensive Language in *Sex and the City* – A Study of Male and Female Characters’ Use of Taboo Words” she discusses “the gender differences in the use of offensive words in conversations on taboo topics” (Skillström Bygg 2006:10) as well as “the gender differences in the use of offensive words in other contexts” (Skillström Bygg 2006:15). The conclusion section makes it clear that according to her study, the female characters in *Sex and the City* from time to time do use offensive language; something which is “believed to be a typically male trait” (Skillström Bygg 2006:18). However, Skillström Bygg claims that the women in *Sex and the City* use offensive language despite the fact that they do not seem willing to be perceived as male. Rather, she points out, the female characters “are breaking linguistic taboos” which according to her “is a statement of freedom” (Skillström Bygg 2006:18).

5.3 Coates (1996, 2004)

According to Jennifer Coates, there seem to exist a general opinion about what signifies female language. Coates is a Professor of English language and linguistics at Roehampton Institute in London, and amongst other books she has written *Women Talk: Conversation Between Women Friends* (1996) and *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language* (2004). In *Women Talk* she investigates the subject of female language further; in the chapter called “We talk about everything and anything – An overview of the conversations” Coates claims that the idea of being able to talk about everything and anything is one of the female language’s strengths, and that it came up in several of the interviews she constructed for the book. She further explains that the language between female friends, as opposed to any group of people, seems to be freer as “[w]hile other groups of people are associated with particular rules of talk, women friends construe the talk they do as not being constricted by rules or taboos” (1996:64). Coates also states that it was clear from the interviews that women often bring up their own experiences and people they know in their conversations, something which Bushnell confirmed when revealing what she wrote about in *Sex and the City*, in section (4). Coates’s analysis of female conversations also shows “the wide range of topics arising in friends’ conversations” (1996:71) and that despite talking about everything and anything, there is often a certain coherence between the topics that arises in the interviews. In *Women, Men and Language* Coates describes the part that social networks play when it comes to linguistic variation. She further explains the differences in an open and a closed network; “[a]n individual whose personal contacts all know each other belongs to a closed network” (2004:70), whilst a person in an open network socializes with several people who do not necessarily have any connection or relationship to one another. She also describes the open networks as mainly being found in mobile societies and larger cities, and claims that the closed networks mostly occur in rural villages and working-class communities where everybody knows everybody. This is the reason for why closed networks form “linguistic norms” (2004:71), something which open networks usually do not.

6. Method and Material

The DVD-box with all of the six seasons of *Sex and the City* and printed manuscripts from www.satctranscripts.com were used in order to perform this study. To begin with, the first and the last episode of each season were closely examined:

Table 1: The first and the last episode of each of the six seasons

Season	Episode	Year	Director	Scriptwriter
1	Sex and the City	1998	Susan Seidelman	Darren Star
1	Oh Come All Ye Faithful	1998	Matthew Harrison	Michael Patrick King
2	Take Me Out to the Ballgame	1999	Allen Coulter	Michael Patrick King
2	Ex and the City	1999	Michael Patrick King	Michael Patrick King
3	Where There's Smoke...	2000	Michael Patrick King	Michael Patrick King
3	Cock A Doodle Do!	2000	Allen Coulter	Michael Patrick King
4	The Agony and the Ex-Tacy	2001	Michael Patrick King	Michael Patrick King
4	I Heart NY	2001	Martha Coolidge	Michael Patrick King
5	Anchors Away	2002	Charles McDougall	Michael Patrick King
5	I Love A Charade	2002	Michael Engler	Michael Patrick King
6	To Market, To Market	2003-2004	Michael Patrick King	Michael Patrick King
6	An American Girl In Paris (Part Deux)	2003-2004	Tim Van Patten	Michael Patrick King

In addition, for the differences in attitudes section (7.1) only, twelve more episodes were randomly chosen (and studied in the same way as the previously presented episodes):

Table 2: The twelve randomly chosen episodes for 7.1 Differences in Attitudes

Season	Episode	Year	Director	Scriptwriter
1	2. Models and Mortals	1998	Allison Maclean	Darren Star
1	6. Secret Sex	1998	Michael Fields	Darren Star
2	5. Four Women and a Funeral	1999	Allen Coulter	Jenny Bicks
2	6. The Chicken Dance	1999	Victoria Hochberg	Darren Star
2	15. Shortcomings	1999	Dan Algrant	Michael Patrick King
2	16. Was It Good For You?	1999	Dan Algrant	Michael Patrick King
3	4. Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl...	2000	Pam Thomas	Jenny Bicks
3	5. No Ifs, Ands, Or Butts	2000	Nicole Holofcener	Michael Patrick King
3	7. Drama Queens	2000	Allison Anders	Darren Star
3	8. The Big Time	2000	Allison Anders	Jenny Bicks
4	2. The Real Me	2001	Michael Patrick King	Michael Patrick King
4	6. Baby, Talk Is Cheap	2001	Michael Spiller	Cindy Chupack

Worth noting here is the fact that the script-writers are predominantly male; all the episodes in Table 1 were written by men, and Table 2 shows that eight out of twelve episodes were written by the same two men, whilst only four episodes were written by women. This is a rather interesting matter which requires further space and time for a more thorough investigation, hence why it will not be examined in the present study.

For the first part of the study (7.1), a close observation of each of the twenty-four episodes presented in Table 1 and Table 2, and their respective manuscripts (which were copied into *Word* and printed) was performed in order to learn if, when and where any differences in Charlotte and Samantha's attitudes in regards to love and sex occurred, and also how the differences showed in their language choice. When examples were found, the episode in question and its manuscript were studied in order to establish their compatibility, and to make sure that the lines in the results section (7) were quoted correctly.

For the second part of the study (7.2), one word from each of the five aforementioned cursing-categories was selected; *dick* (taboo), *fuck* (obscene), *slut* (vulgar), *shit* (epithet) and *bastard*² (insult), which from here on will be referred to as the cursing-words. In some cases the cursing-words were found in compound words; for example, *shit* sometimes occurred alone but could also be used as a compound word as in the word *bullshit*. Both cases have been included in this study, which will be shown in the results section (7). That is to say, all cases that the cursing-words appeared in have been included no matter whether the actual word stood alone or was used within a compound word.

The first and the last episode of each of the six seasons (see Table 1) were chosen as a foundation for section 7.1, and as a result they were studied once more whilst close attention was paid to if, when and where the cursing-words occurred. The manuscripts were again used in order to compare the printed script and the spoken language in the episodes. Then the cursing-words were searched for in *Word*'s search function, and the number of times each of the words appeared was noted, and in which episodes. Following this, with the purpose of learning which context the words were used in, the episodes in which examples had been found were studied once more, and so were the manuscripts. Consequently, it could be established whether the words had been used as taboos, obscenities, vulgarities, epithets or insults.

The same procedure was performed once more, but only the number of times that Charlotte and Samantha specifically used either of the cursing-words was investigated. Next,

² According to Jay's interpretations and categories

it was established how many times the two characters used the cursing-words within the respective categories that they were chosen from.

7. Results

The results are presented in two sections, firstly in the section about differences in attitude (7.1), which mainly contains quotes from the manuscripts. Some of the quotes have been altered in order to present the relevant information only. In some cases text has been omitted, which then has been replaced by [...]. In other cases, a stage instruction which shows the information within brackets has been added in order for the reader to understand the context better, for example the information that Samantha trips becomes (Samantha trips). Secondly, results are presented in the cursing part (7.2), which shows the differences in how often the selected cursing-words were used in the selected episodes in Table 1, as well as how often Charlotte and Samantha cursed in the aforementioned episodes. The results in this section are also visualized in the form of diagrams.

7.1 Differences in attitude

The episodes in Table 1, with an addition of twelve more randomly selected episodes, were used, which resulted in twenty-four episodes in total that functioned as a basis for this part of the study. In contrast to 7.2 (and the specific cursing-words) which follows further on, 7.1 focuses on Charlotte and Samantha's spoken language in contexts that include love and sex. That is to say, no particular words were investigated, but rather the two characters' attitudes and accordingly the choice of language due to their attitudes.

7.1.1 Love

It is fairly easy to see that Charlotte is rather conservative, but perhaps a more reasonable way of describing her would be to call her determined. She always sticks to whatever she has set out to do, in particular when it comes to finding love or maintaining her relationships. She does whatever it takes in her search for the love of her life; for example, she has her set rules of how to date. In (2) below, the three women Miranda, Charlotte and Carrie discuss how long it should or will take Carrie to get over the break-up from her last boyfriend:

2) Miranda: - Just when exactly do you think you're gonna be getting out of this hostage situation?
[...]

Charlotte: - Don't listen to her; it's only been a month. It takes half the total time you went out with someone to get over them.

Carrie: - I always like a big math solution to any love problem.

Charlotte: - It's the break-up rule. You and Big only went out for a year. So that means she's got five more months to get over him. (2:1)

At the end of the same episode that (2) occurs in, Carrie's voice-over explains Charlotte's reaction to her boyfriend breaking up with her:

3) He broke it off after only three weeks. Charlotte, true to form, was over him in exactly a week and a half. (2:1)

In episode seven in the third series, Charlotte makes the decision to socialize more with her married friends rather than with her single friends, after having been informed that married couples most likely have a higher number of eligible bachelor friends ready to get married than single friends do. She does not hesitate in trying to find her soul mate the way others apply for a new job. In example (4) Miranda is talking about how content she is in her relationship with Steve, and after Samantha has quite clearly stated where she stands when it comes to committed relationships and doing a man's laundry, Charlotte sees an opportunity to present her latest theory to her friends:

4) Miranda: - My new favorite thing to do on a Saturday night is Steve's laundry and I've never been happier.

Samantha: - Your relationship is my greatest fear realized.

[...]

Charlotte: - [...] This is all solid proof of what I've been reading in this great new book. It says if you really wanna get married, you shouldn't spend so much time around dysfunctional single women.

Samantha: - "Marriage Incorporated: How to apply successful business strategies to finding a husband". Chapter one: "How To Get Ahead By Giving Head".

Charlotte: - Fine! Make fun. It's a very smart book. It encourages professional women to approach finding a mate with the same kind of dedication and organization they bring to their careers. (3:7)

Samantha on the other hand could easily be perceived as completely free in her way of thinking, in particular in regards to sex, but she too can be rather judgmental and set in her own ways. Above all when it comes to love; just like Charlotte has her set presumptions of what love is, so does Samantha but in the complete opposite way. Instead of being ruthless in her search for love, she is rather ruthless in her search for sex. At the same time, she is quite

indifferent about it, as if sex is no big deal to her. In the second episode of season four, she claims that she was extremely hungry the night before, but as she was on a diet and could not allow herself to eat anything, she “finally had to get dressed and go out and pick up a guy”(4:2). In the following scene Samantha meets a potential future date in a man who happens to be African-American, and it is interesting in terms of language choice from both Samantha as well as Charlotte, but also in the sense that they are both within their respective stereotype here, something which, at least for Samantha, changes further on in the same episode:

5) Miranda: -Could he be any cuter?

Samantha: - You gotta love a fella who loves the jewelry.

That is one fine-looking man. I'd like to get me some of that.

Charlotte: - Don't talk like that.

Samantha: - Like what?

Charlotte: - You know.

Samantha: - Relax with the Negro liberal reaction. That's not black talk. That's sex talk.

Charlotte: - First of all, it isn't black talk. It's African-American talk. And you shouldn't be talking like that at all Samantha. It's rude and politically incorrect.

Carrie: - As a reminder, Samantha is rude and politically incorrect.

Miranda - She's an equal opportunity offender.

Samantha: - Precisely. I don't see color. I see conquests. (3:5)

However, contradictions to what might be expected appear on a fairly frequent basis throughout the twenty-four studied episodes. Later on in the same episode as example (4), Samantha and the previously mentioned African-American man who is called Chivon are laying naked in Samantha's bed, with rap music playing in the background:

6) Chivon: - Do you like this groove? It's the new kid.

Samantha: - It's so soft. I thought all rap had a harder edge.

Chivon: - They can be hard or soft, like you. You have so much attitude up front. Look at you now.

Soft, sweet...

Samantha: - Sweet, me?

Chivon: - Who do you think you're fooling? (3:5)

Samantha then seems to accept the fact that someone has actually seen the more vulnerable side of her.

Other examples of Samantha giving in to her softer side can be found in the next two quotes, in which she is telling her friends about her latest interest of love, James:

7) Carrie's voice-over: - And with that one touch, Samantha, who was never a believer in relationships suddenly became a convert.

Samantha: - I mean, I'd totally given up on the idea that you could actually talk to men.

Carrie: - Don't spread that around.

Samantha: - Before James all my conversations consisted of two sentences - "give it to me" and "go home." And I owe it all to Charlotte.

Charlotte: - Me? What did I do?

Samantha: - All that bullshit you spout...about not sleeping with men right away actually paid off. I mean, if I'd fucked James already, who knows where we'd be.

Miranda: - Wait. You haven't had sex yet?

Samantha: - Soon. You know, I think he's someone I could actually marry. (1:12)

Example (7) is rather interesting in the sense that it, just as example (4), shows the two stereotypes, as Samantha is expressing both hers and Charlotte's stereotypical expressions, such as "give it to me" and "not sleeping with men right away". Further on in the same episode Samantha goes on to claim:

8) Samantha: - Ladies, I have an announcement. Please don't laugh.

Miranda: - What?

Samantha: - I'm in love.

Miranda: - What?

Carrie's voice-over: - Samantha uttering those words to us was an event as unfathomable as Moses parting the Red Sea. (1:12)

Whilst Charlotte seems determined in her search for true love and secure in the fact that she will find it, Samantha shows doubts to whether it even exists. But as seen in examples (6), (7) and (8) she does seem to accept that softer side of her, the one that comes so naturally to Charlotte, the side that believes in love.

7.1.2 Sex

Whilst being open-minded in her search for a relationship, Charlotte is often portrayed as rather careful and traditional in her way of thinking when it comes to sex. She has her own rules regarding how long to wait before sleeping with a man, just as she has a breaking-up rule as seen in example (1) in section 7.1.1. In the following example she is discussing the possible sexual relationship between Carrie and a man that Carrie is about to go on a date with:

- 9) Charlotte: - Wait a second...if you're serious about this guy, you can't sleep with him on the first date.
Samantha: - Oh god.
[...]
Charlotte: - But if you're serious about a guy then you have to keep him in a holding pattern for at least five dates.
Carrie: - Oh, you've gone up.
Charlotte: - Yes. Because the number of dates that you wait to have sex with a man is directly proportional to your age. (1:6)

In another episode, in which her present lover falls asleep whilst making love to her, Charlotte, who seems to be of the opinion that all necessary skills in order to keep a man are crucial to have, signs up for a tantric sex workshop:

- 10) Charlotte: - I'm mature enough to realize that while I may be good at some things like...
accessories that I might need help in others like...
Samantha: -Fucking?
Charlotte: -Making love. So, I'm taking a class.
Samantha: - A fucking class?
Charlotte: - No, a tantric sex workshop. [...] It's taught by this very well-respected woman psychologist, it's called "How To Please A Man." [...] I have a trainer for the gym. I can have a trainer for...
Samantha: - Fucking?
Charlotte: -Please stop saying that. (2:16)

Worth noting in this conversation are the different attitudes whilst talking about sex, as Charlotte first hesitates before she goes on to say *making love*, as well as the choice of vocabulary, as Samantha instead calls it *fucking*. Charlotte is clearly ready to do whatever it takes in order to please a man, even something as well-planned as taking a class in the subject. What is more is that she considers it to be just as natural as having a personal trainer at the gym. Despite Samantha being the one who is most often viewed as the more open-minded one out of the two women, the conversation in example (9) shows that Charlotte is much more liberal in this specific matter. Samantha is actually rather reluctant to the idea of a tantric sex workshop and makes no secret of it. Also, the fact that Samantha keeps repeating *fucking* so often that Charlotte at the end feels obligated to ask her to stop reveals the stereotypical personality traits in the two characters.

Earlier in the same episode Samantha expresses her rather clear opinion about the importance of performing well in bed, as well as what she thinks of Charlotte's sex life and how she is not surprised a man fell asleep whilst making love to her:

- 11) Samantha: - Ever seen her on a Stairmaster? Nothing happening below the waist. Nada. No sale.
 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 at life.
 Carrie: - Just for the record, in bed, you are....
 Samantha: - Don't make me state the obvious. (2:16)

The example above also reveals Samantha's confidence, something which Charlotte perhaps lacks considering the fact that she goes to get help with her sex life. It seems that Charlotte assumes that it must have been her fault for her date falling asleep, something which Samantha probably would not have done, considering the confidence she shows off whilst speaking to Carrie in example (11).

Throughout the twenty-four studied episodes, Samantha is portrayed as someone who has slept with a great number of men, and in the following example she admits that she leaves the memory of them behind her as soon as their encounter is over (she has recently gone to bed with a man whom she experiences a *déjà-vu* with, after which he confirms that they indeed have slept together before):

- 12) Samantha: - It was kind of a reunion.
 Charlotte: - I don't understand how you forgot someone you slept with?
 Carrie: -Toto. We're not in single digits any more.
 Charlotte: - It's not like you shared a cab with this guy. You slept with him.
 Samantha: - Maybe we did it in a cab.
 Miranda: - I'd like to forget some men I've slept with.
 Charlotte: - I keep a list.
 Carrie: - How sweet: "Men to do today!"
 Samantha: -I'm officially out of men to fuck. I have to get married or move. (2:7)

Not only does this dialogue illustrate the fact that Charlotte and Samantha are entirely different in their interest in remembering who they have slept with, but it is also an excellent example of how their opinions regarding marriage deviate. Samantha's tone of voice and attitude in the last sentence; "[I]'m officially out of men to fuck. I have to get married or move" symbolizes her character's stereotype as well as summing up the perception of her that is more or less consistent throughout the TV-show.

The fact that Samantha is constantly looking for sex, and Charlotte is not, does not seem to usually interfere with the two characters' friendship. But as Charlotte's brother is in town

and is staying with her, and she wakes up to find Samantha in the kitchen wearing a T-shirt and underwear, the differences are more palpable than ever:

13) Samantha: - Where do you keep your coffee filters? Just tell me if I'm warm.

Charlotte: - My brother? You slept with my brother?

Samantha: - Honey, what a doll. He really...

Charlotte: - Is your vagina in the New York City guidebooks? Because it should be, it's the hottest spot in town! It's always open! (2:15)

However, unexpected surprises occur in regards to sex too, just as seen in section 7.1.1 about love. In the following scene Charlotte surprises her friends with an attitude towards love and sex that they seem quite unaware that she possesses. Charlotte, Samantha and Carrie are walking down Broadway on their way to a party where some sailors will be present, during what the New Yorkers call *Fleet week*, and Charlotte has just accepted the fact that she is no longer single, but rather a divorcee as she has recently been divorced from her ex-husband Trey MacDougal:

14) Charlotte: - What's the longest you've gone without sex?

Carrie: - You don't get that info without dinner and a drink.

Charlotte: - Next week will make it six months.

(Samantha trips, surprised)

Carrie: - Watch it.

Samantha: - Thanks. You threw me, and I lost my concentration.

Charlotte: - I am gonna have sex with a sailor tonight.

(Samantha trips again)

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.

(Carrie trips)

Samantha: - Gotcha! (5:1)

Another example of the less prude side of Charlotte is when the four friends are discussing Miranda's sexual relationship to the man she is presently dating. Carrie, Charlotte and Samantha are questioning her on details:

15) Miranda: - It was good. Except he kind of...licked my butt.
 Samantha: - Be specific, you mean the cheeks or...?
 Miranda: - It was more localized than that.
 Samantha: - Ahh...
 Carrie: - Wait a minute. Are we talking tuchus-lingus?
 Miranda: - I'm afraid so. And I thought it was weird. It's weird, right? I mean, are we doing this now?
 Samantha: - If the guy's willing, why not?
 Miranda: - Anyone other than Samantha?
 [...]
 Charlotte: - Well, Trey likes to do it. (All look surprisingly at Charlotte) We're married.
 Miranda: - I'm definitely in the slow sexual group if even Charlotte is open to this.
 [...]
 Miranda: - But then do I have to reciprocate?
 Samantha: - No. I would never do it back to them.
 Miranda: - Neither would I.
 Carrie- Me neither.
 Charlotte- You wouldn't? (4:6)

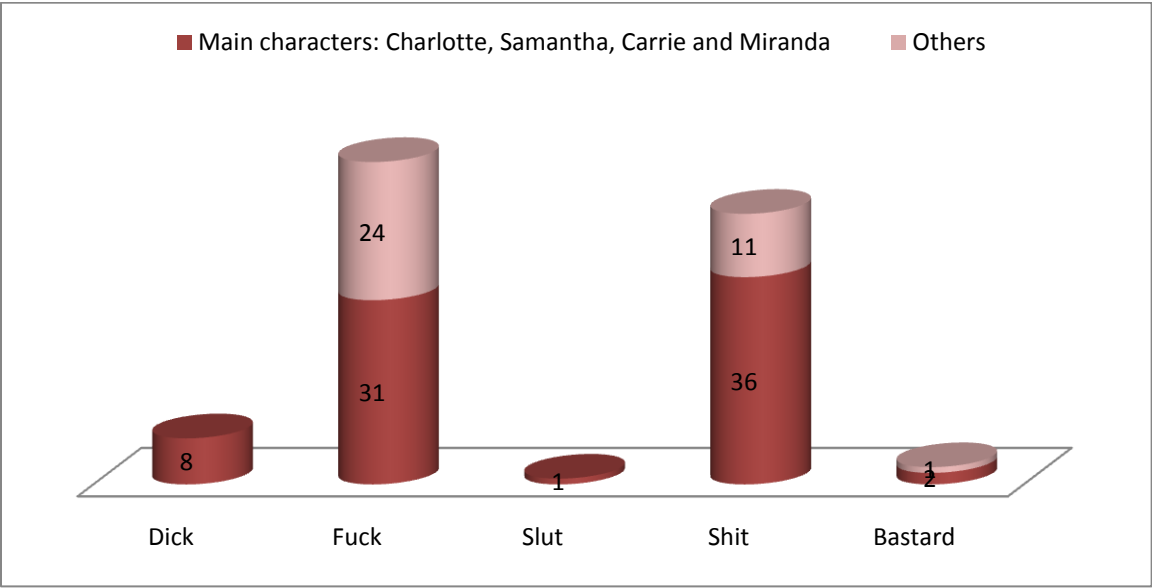
Based on the examples seen above, it can rather easily be stated that the two characters have been given such strong personality traits that they are perceived as two completely different stereotypes. However, both Charlotte and Samantha show that they possess the ability of adopting some of the personality traits which typically are related to the other character. In examples (7) and (8) Samantha even admits it to her friends, whilst Charlotte dismisses her own previously mentioned beliefs as “bullshit” in example (14).

7.2 The cursing

Whilst the previous section showed the differences in attitudes between Charlotte and Samantha, this section presents the results of the findings of the five cursing-words that were presented in section (6); *dick*, *fuck*, *slut*, *shit* and *bastard*. In the twelve examined episodes, the first and the last episode of each of the six seasons, the five selected words occur one hundred and fourteen times; *dick* eight times, *fuck* fifty-five times, *slut* one time, *shit* forty-seven times and *bastard* three times. Table 3 below presents the frequency of the cursing-words uttered, and whether they are used by either of the four main characters or by others.³

³ Mr Big, Elizabeth, baseball player, Charlotte's date, Steve, man in bar, fireman, Bill, Samantha's date, transsexual man, Richard, taxi driver, girl in bed, construction worker, Phil, Martha, Anthony, Harry, cocoa-butter-bitch, Carrie's date, man in bed.

Table 3: The cursing-words used in the twelve selected episodes by all characters



As seen in the table above, the words occur one hundred and fourteen times, but they are not necessarily used within the five cursing categories that they have been placed in for this study. As a result of searching for contexts in which the cursing-words do belong to the selected categories for this study, it becomes rather clear that most of the words are used several times in the twelve episodes without a clear classification as taboos, obscenities, vulgarities, epithets or insults. Accordingly, the word *dick* is used eight times as a taboo, *fuck* is used eleven times as an obscene word, *slut* is actually used as a vulgarity the only time it occurs, *shit* appears as an epithet a whole thirty times out of forty-seven, whilst *bastard* is used as an insult all the three times. However, the cursing-words can in most cases still be placed within a cursing-category, *fuck* is for example used as a vulgarity in statements such as “who the *fuck* cares” (1:12) and “this love stuff is a mother*fuck*er” (4:1), as Table 4 below shows.

Table 4: The cursing-words in the twelve episodes used by anyone

	Taboo	Obscene	Vulgar	Epithet	Insult	Total
Dick	8	-	-	-	-	8
Fuck	-	11	33	5	6	55
Slut	-	-	1	-	-	1
Shit	-	-	16	30	1	47
Bastard	-	-	-	-	3	3

7.2.1 Charlotte and Samantha's cursing

As opposed to the results in Table 4, Table 5 shows the number of times the five cursing-words are used by the main characters for this study; Charlotte and Samantha. The results in this section do not include whether the cursing-words are used within the categories chosen for this study or not, but are merely the times they are actually uttered by Charlotte and Samantha in the relevant episodes.

Out of the five selected cursing-words only one, *shit*, is used by both Charlotte and Samantha. Charlotte says it five times, and it is used seven times by Samantha, which shows that in terms of that particular word, the difference between the two characters' language choice is not too great. As for *slut*, the conclusion is the same as none of them used that word. However, the three remaining words; *dick*, *fuck* and *bastard* are uttered by Samantha a couple or several times, but not at all by Charlotte. Samantha uses *bastard* twice, which shows that the difference is not too big there either, whilst she uses *dick* seven times vs. Charlotte's zero times, and *fuck* a whole twenty-two times compared to Charlotte who does not say it once.

Table 5: The cursing-words used in the twelve episodes by Charlotte and Samantha

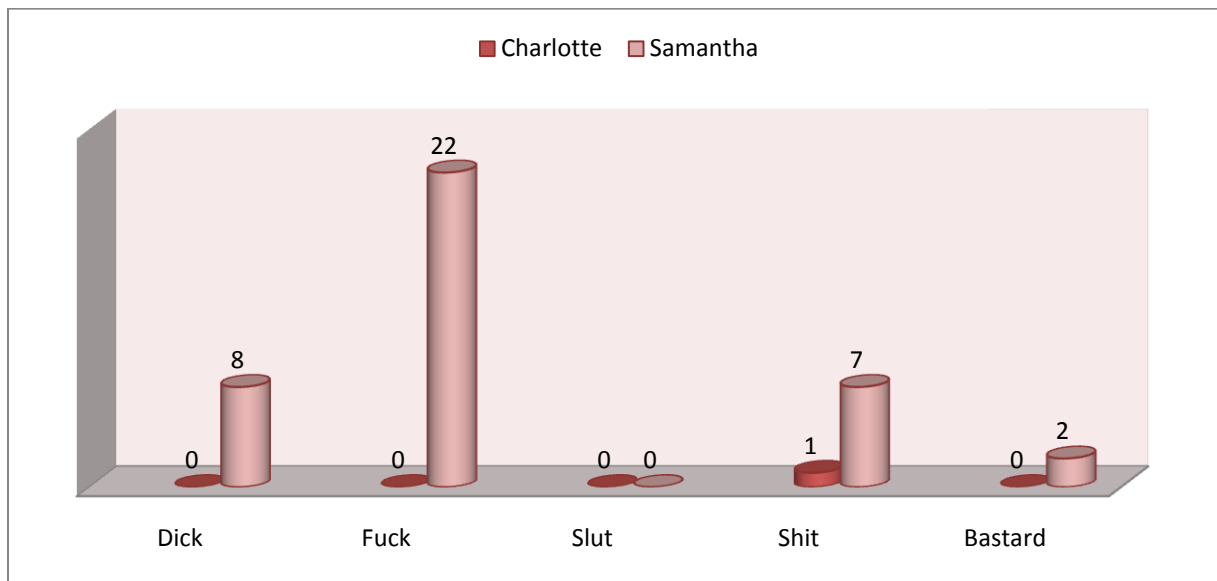
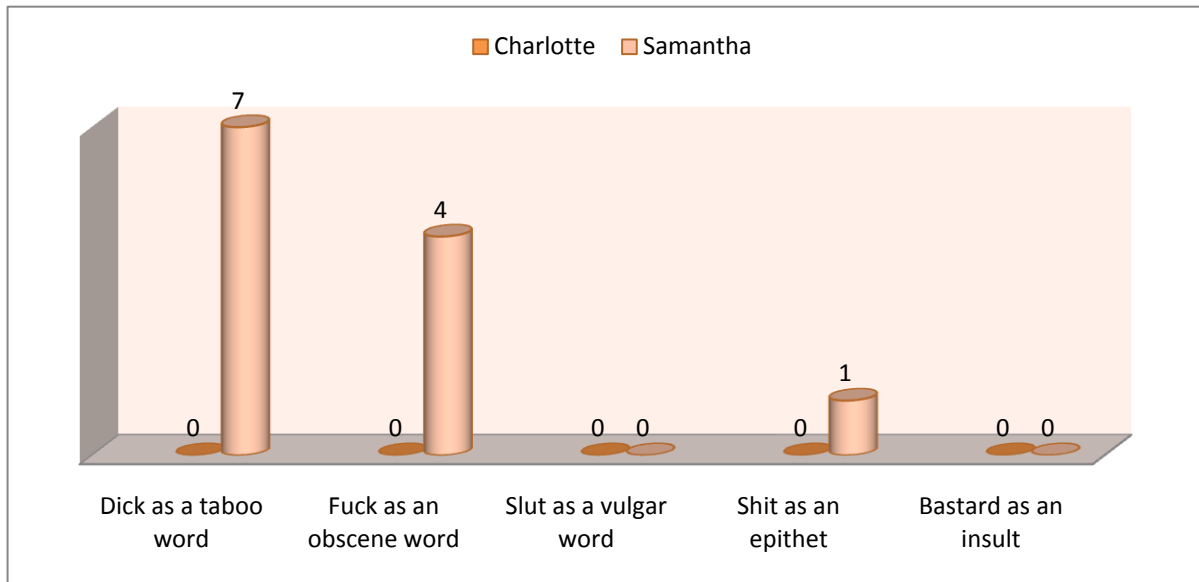


Table 5 shows how many times the two female characters use the cursing-words each, but it does not reveal how many times the words are actually used within the specific categories. Instead, it is Table 6 that demonstrates how many times they are used in a context relevant to the five chosen categories. Surprisingly or not, Charlotte does not use any of the words in the cursing sense. Samantha on the other hand does curse, but not in nearly as many cases as might have been expected due to the results in Table 5. She uses the word *dick* eight times all

together, and seven of those times are taboo. Out of the twenty-two times she uses the word *fuck*, only four of them are uttered in a situation where they would be considered to be obscene language. She does not curse using *slut* or *bastard* at all, but she does use the word *shit* as an epithet at one point.

Table 6: The cursing-words used within the selected categories by Charlotte and Samantha



7.2 shows how big the dissimilarities truly are in the area of cursing and using swear words, unlike the results in 7.1 which instead showed rather big similarities between the two characters.

8. Discussion

Naturally, it can be discussed what Charlotte York, who represents the highly traditional upper east side woman both in terms of how to dress, how to behave and how to speak, and the feisty and extremely straight-forward Samantha Jones, who sees herself as more male than female when speaking of sexual relationships, have in common. Questions such as “why are they even friends?” and “how well do they really get along?” might come into mind. Because no matter the friendship, Charlotte and Samantha are probably as distinctive as two characters can be. In section 7.1, it becomes clear that the two of them have completely opposite opinions about both love and sex. Typically, the material shows that Charlotte often speaks of dating and finding a man as something necessary, desired and intentional. She seems to be a firm believer in real love, even to the extent that she chooses to see it places where it might

not even exist. Or from another point of view, there can supposedly be two ways of looking at it, as the following quote shows:

16) Charlotte: - It's love at first sight!

Samantha: - Oh honey, this isn't love. It's two people justifying a week of non-stop fucking. (2:7)

This truly is a perfect example of the two character's distinct outlook on love. Charlotte also seems adamant that dating until you find a husband is the most important thing a woman can do in the search for love, and that the institution of marriage is something sacred, as is making love. She thinks it is so imperative for a woman to be able to attract a man and a possible husband that she in one episode states that; "[e]veryone needs a man. That's why I rent. If you own and he still rents, then the power structure is all off. It's emasculating. Men don't want a woman who's too self-sufficient" (2:5).

In contrast, Samantha is throughout the selected episodes portrayed as aggressive, forward and career-driven, and not ashamed to admit that she has sex for fun and does not have the time nor will to settle down with just one man, let alone get married or have children. She speaks of men and sex as something as natural to her basic instincts as breathing, eating and sleeping. She also highlights, throughout the studied episodes, the importance of knowing how she wants to be treated by men and that there is nothing wrong with sharing your bed with a different man every night. Whilst Samantha is ruthless in her search for sex, the same can be said about Charlotte's search for love. It became rather clear what the two characters thought of one another, when Charlotte criticises Samantha's willingness to sleep with "anyone", including Charlotte's own brother, and Samantha's description of Charlotte's hip-movements is not too complimentary either. Furthermore, not only does their language usage differ in regards to distinct attitudes in conversations, but also, as seen in section 7.2, in the way they choose to use certain words. Samantha utters the cursing-words thirty-nine times in total (see Table 5), compared to Charlotte's one, and in addition she uses them in Jay's (1992) more narrow definition twelve times, whilst Charlotte does not curse once (see Table 6).

The study also shows that Samantha thinks that female independence within the area of dating and sex is more important than Charlotte does, and that she firmly believes in the importance of being confident in your own body and in relationship to sex. For instance, the example below (17) speaks for itself:

17) Charlotte: - You know, no matter how good I feel about myself if I see Christy Turlington, I just wanna give up.
Miranda: - I just wanna force feed her lard, but that's the difference between you and me.
(All laugh)
Carrie: - What are you talking about? Look at you two, you're beautiful.
Charlotte: - Oooo I hate my thighs.
Miranda: - O come on!
Charlotte: - I can't even open a magazine without thinking "thighs, thighs, thighs".
Miranda: - Well I'll take your thighs and raise you a chin.
Carrie:- I'll take you a chin and raise you a ... (points at nose)
(All look at Samantha expectantly)
Samantha: - What?
Carrie: - Come on!
Samantha: - I happen to love the way I look. (1:2)

However, as seen in the results section, the two characters show surprisingly contrasting sides of themselves to what their stereotypes should suggest, as, for example Charlotte surprises Samantha with being a lot freer in her attitude towards sex than was expected. Yet, it can definitely be argued that the two characters are well within their typical stereotypes, both in terms of the attitude differences as well as the use of cursing-words. But even so, examples that stand out and that were not to be expected are noted in section 7.1, in which it is shown that there definitely is a little bit of Samantha within Charlotte, and vice versa. As the two characters possess incredibly distinct personality traits it is relatively easy to distinguish the dissimilarities, but also surprisingly unproblematic to notice the similarities. Even though the creators of *Sex and the City* probably wanted to enhance the differences in Charlotte and Samantha's personalities, the fact that they do resemble each other, if only in the slightest of ways, definitely makes the two women's friendship more realistic. Because despite Charlotte and Samantha being extremely different in terms of both attitudes and the way they present themselves, and despite different values, different lifestyle choices and different language usage, it shows that women can have something in common no matter their dissimilarities. The female friendships that are presented in *Sex and the City* are so strong that they overcome any bickering, obstacle or disagreement that happen to come in between, that in fact, it might be this strength that leads to what is seen in section 5.3 in regards to women being able to talk about anything and everything. In addition, it might be added that both Charlotte and Samantha socialize with other people apart from each other, which can be the reason to why they use such divergent vocabulary, as they seem to be part of an open network (also seen in section 5.3). And the fact that they can, and more than willingly do, talk about anything and

everything with each other as well as with the two remaining main characters Carrie and Miranda, can possibly be connected to the strong female friendship that arises when you find someone who understands you no matter the differences. After all, as Darren Star stated in an interview with Dave Itzkoff for The New York Times in 2008, when commenting on the fact that many people seem to think that *Sex and the City* is a TV-show about sex; “no, it's really about friendship”.

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