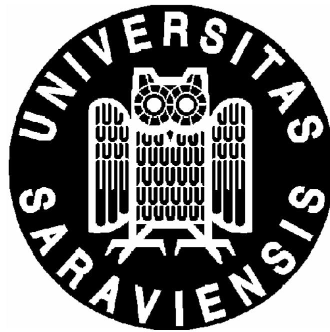
The linguistic construction of character relations in TV drama: Doing friendship in *Sex and the City*



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To my father

Friends are the family
we choose for ourselves.
(Edna Buchanan)

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Transcription conventions

My transcriptions follow the conventions established by Dressler and Kreuz (2000). Their model system is based on a survey of various transcription conventions for discourse analytical purposes.

`she's out.`	Period shows falling tone in the preceding element
`oh yeah?`	Question mark shows rising tone in the preceding element.
`nine, ten.`	Comma indicates a level, continuing intonation.
`DAMN`	Capitals show heavy stress or indicate that speech is louder than surrounding discourse.
`°dearest°`	Utterances spoken more softly than the surrounding discourse are framed by degree signs.

Symbol	Convention
says "oh"	Double quotes mark speech set off by a shift in the speaker's voice.
(2.0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate timed pauses. If the duration of the pauses is not crucial and not timed: a truncated ellipsis is used to indicate pauses of one-half second or less. an ellipsis is used to indicate a pause of more than a half-second.
ha:rd	The colon indicates the prolonging of the prior sound or syllable.
<no way>	Angle brackets pointing outward denote words or phrases that are spoken more slowly than the surrounding discourse.
>watch out<	Angle brackets pointing inward indicate words or phrases spoken more quickly than surrounding discourse.
bu- but	A single dash indicates a cut-off with a glottal stop.
[and so-] [why] her?	Square brackets on successive lines mark beginning and end of overlapping talk.
and= =then	Equals signs on successive lines show latching between turns.
H	Clearly audible breath sounds are indicated with a capital *H*.
.h .hhhh	Inhalations are denoted with a period, followed by a small *h*. Longer inhalations are depicted with multiple *h*s.
H hhh	Exhalations are denoted with a small *h* (without a preceding period). A longer exhalation is denoted by multiple *h*s.
.t	Alveolar suction clicks are denoted with a period, followed by a small *t*.
( ) (hard work)	In the case that utterances cannot be transcribed with certainty empty parentheses are employed. If there is a likely interpretation, the questionable words appear within the parentheses.
((desperate whisper))	Aspects of the utterance, such as whispers, coughing, and laughter, are indicated with double parentheses.
{*camera focuses on Charlotte*}	Voiceovers and other relevant filmic aspects are indicated within braces.

Table 1: Transcription conventions

Since Preston (1982, 1985) has shown that non-standard spelling gives readers a negative impression of the speakers, I do not represent reduced forms such as “gonna” for “going to”. These “allegro speech forms” traditionally attempt to mirror casual, relaxed speech (Preston 1985). However, as Tannen (1989: 202) points out: “because such reduced phonological realizations are standard in casual speech, representing them by a non-standard spelling misrepresents them.” If these forms are not reduced and therefore stressed in casual conversation, I use capital letters, e.g. “I’m GOING to DO this”.

I number each turn consecutively, giving the initial of the speaker to indicate who has the floor (C=Carrie; M=Miranda; S=Samantha; Ch=Charlotte). Within a turn, I

present spoken language one intonation unit (prosodic phrase) at a time. These “poetic lines” not only make the transcriptions easier to read, but also capture the natural chunking of spoken language achieved through intonation, prosody, pausing, hesitation markers and other particles (Tannen 1989: 202).

According to Chafe (1994) an intonation unit contains one new idea unit, typically a subject and a predicate. Functionally, intonation units, therefore, typically identify some referent given in the preceding discourse or the physical context of the utterance and give some new information about it. However, I found that there are also shorter intonation units containing a single word or phrase. These generally represent utterance launchers, i.e. “expressions which have a special function of beginning a turn or an utterance” and which provide the speaker with “a planning respite, during which the rest of the utterance can be prepared for execution (Biber et al. 1999: 1073). The following turn includes six intonation units which contain a new idea each and an initial intonation unit which represents an utterance launcher, the discourse marker “okay”:

SC_10.1

```
19   C    okay.
          you're driving down the road,
          you see a sign,
          it says two-headed snake.
          you pull over.
          wild Laney is having a baby shower,
          you pull Over.
```

From a prosodic point of view, intonation units begin with a brief pause and display a coherent intonation containing one or more peaks and ending in a contour interpreted as clause-final. In the case of prosodic parallelism, I transcribed words or phrases as a single intonation unit as can be seen in the following example:

SC_12.3

```
3    M    whatever.
          Catholics,
          Episcopalians,
          Buddhists,
          Shakers,
          Quakers,
          all the same,
          all designed to fuck up our sex lives.
```

The examples referred to in the text are numbered according to their occurrence in the series. SC_12.3 indicates that the above excerpt stems from the third all-female conversation of episode 12. In the case of a longer example, I give a name, which captures the key topic of the relevant conversation, such as SC_1.2 AMAZING DATE. This convention should allow for easy tracking of examples throughout the analyses sections.

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I would like to express my sincere appreciation to those who contributed in one way or another to the process of getting this dissertation written.

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Abstract (English)

This study attempts to answer the question how the audience in front of the screen knows what kind of relationship characters on screen have from overhearing their talk. Hence, it has two major focal points: dialogue scripted for the screen and the linguistic construction of interpersonal relations. Assuming a process view of friendship relations and developing a model of screen-to-face discourse, which takes Goffman's notion of the "overhearer" as a starting point and stresses the audience's central role in the co-construction of meaning, this study pins down the textual cues which lead to the viewer's formation of a relationship impression. The patterns of the interaction order commonly termed "alignments" are shown to be fundamental to the friendship process in which a balance between association and dissociation needs to be achieved. Focusing on the conversational contexts in which they accumulate, the workings of two particularly interesting and versatile alignment practices are described: familiar terms of address used in direct address and question-answer-sequences. Familiar terms of address occur in contexts characterised by a temporary suspension of some fundamental component of friendship relations and function to assuage this disequilibrium by signalling affiliation. Questions predominantly initiate and maintain extended affiliative sequences such as intimacy pursuits and humorous exchanges and have thus a more active part in friendship processes. Analyses of the complex alignment practices in the women's conversations reveal that the women shift between aligning and disaligning – often even creating temporary interactional teams – and that these shifts accomplish micro-transformations of social structure, which in turn construct social relations on the macro-level. The study shows that the flexibility of the interaction order brought about by shifting alignments allows for criticism and disagreement in a friendship group and also for an intragroup differentiation with more central and more marginal members in the sense of a *community of practice*. The study hence not only contributes to the fields of linguistic stylistics and media studies, but also to relational communication and discourse analysis, in particular through revising the concept of alignment.

Abstract (German)

Die vorliegende Arbeit ist im Bereich der angewandten Gesprächsanalyse angesiedelt und beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, wie Freundschaftsbeziehungen zwischen den Charakteren in Fernsehserien erfasst werden können. Sie fokussiert damit zum einen auf konstruierte Dialoge und zum anderen auf Beziehungsarbeit im Gespräch. Um mediale Beziehungsarbeit zu untersuchen, wird ein Modell zum *screen-to-face discourse* entworfen. Freundschaft wird als dialektischer Prozess zur Herstellung einer angemessenen Balance zwischen Assoziation und Dissoziation verstanden, der anhand von Gesprächsmustern deutlich gemacht werden kann. Zuschauer/-innen gleichen vernommene sprachliche Muster mit ihrem Wissen über das Gesprächsverhalten in bestimmten Beziehungskonstellationen ab und ziehen daraus Schlüsse über die sozialen Bande zwischen den Charakteren. Die Muster, die auf verschiedenen Gesprächsebenen Beziehung generieren, bezeichnet man als interaktionale Ausrichtungen (*alignments / disalignment bzw. affiliation / disaffiliation).* Zwei Praktiken, die solche Ausrichtungen bewerkstelligen, werden näher untersucht: Formen der Anrede und Frage-Antwort-Sequenzen. Die Adressiertheit der Rede (Kosenamen/Vornamen) häuft sich in Kontexten, in denen die Beziehung in irgendeiner Weise bedroht ist, und ermöglicht eine *affiliation* im Zuge von *disaffiliative moves*. Fragen werden hauptsächlich als pro-aktives Mittel zur *affiliation* eingesetzt und bilden das Kernstück vieler typischer Freundschaftsaktivitäten. Die interaktionalen Ausrichtungen unter den *Sex and the City* Charakteren wechseln ständig, wobei die Komplexität der Muster mit steigender Zahl der Gesprächsteilnehmerinnen steigt, bis hin zur Ausbildung interaktionaler Teams. Sich permanent verschiebende Muster der Interaktionsordnung auf der sozialen Mikroebene führen zur Aus- und Umbildung sozialer Beziehungen auf der gesellschaftlichen Makroebene. Durch die flexiblen Ausrichtungsmuster sind dabei auch Kritik und Widerspruch möglich und es kann zu einer inneren Differenzierung des Freundschaftskreises im Sinne einer *community of practice* kommen. Die vorliegende Arbeit leistet damit nicht nur einen Beitrag zur Stilistik und medialen Kommunikation, sondern auch zur soziologisch orientierten Diskursanalyse.

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning
The end is where we start from.
(TS Eliot, Four Quartets)

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This study has two major focal points: dialogue scripted for the screen and the linguistic construction of interpersonal relations. The question it attempts to answer is how the audience in front of the screen knows what kind of relationship characters on screen have from overhearing their talk. I chose to investigate screen-audience discourse from the perspective of the overhearers/eavesdroppers in front of the screen rather than that of the screenwriters, since this is a study in discourse analysis, and as such an exercise in "scholarly eavesdropping" (Abrahams 2005). I consider the overhearer in front of the screen a lay discourse analyst, listening in on characters' talk and trying to make sense of it. My study is also inspired by work in the field of stylistics, in particular by Culpeper (2001, 2002), who illuminates the issue of characterisation (predominantly) in drama from a cognitive-linguistic perspective. While he accounts for how the recipient of scripted dialogue infers a dramatis persona's character, I aim to account for how the recipient of constructed screen dialogue infers the fictional individuals' social ties.

The relationship that I focus on is friendship. This form of association differs from most other human relations in Western culture insofar as it is voluntary. Unlike family, we freely choose our friends; unlike colleagues, there is no institutional frame in which we meet them; and unlike married couples, there is no legal bond between us and our friends. In spite of this, friendship is considered a primary relationship in people's lives and has gained significance with the increase of flexibility and diversity in the construction of personal lives. For some individuals the friendship group has even

replaced the family as a social support system. Hence, friendship relations are a critical field of research in social sciences.

Investigating interpersonal relationships requires a large sample of interactions which span over longer periods of time. Since feature films are generally restricted to ninety minutes of screen time, and the development, maintenance and possible dissolution of character relations is presented in relatively brief interactions, I decided to use a TV series which depicts a stable friendship group in their everyday activities across an extended period of time. Using a long-running series has the advantage that ethnographic particulars such as the characters' personal histories are well-known and can be taken into account in the analysis (cf. Weatherall 1996: 61).[1] Several US-American and British series represent friendship groups and dyads, for example *Friends, Golden Girls, Cold Feet, Beverly Hills 90210, Seinfeld,* and *Coupling*. I chose *Sex and the City* (*SATC*), because its spotlight on a tightly knit female friendship group was emphasised in many critics' reviews, and it proved a rewarding choice. The representation of friendship amongst the four women is also appreciated by its fans. Jermyn's (2004) focus group research amongst female fans of various age groups reveals that, aside from the frank discussion of sexual issues and the trendy New York characters in ever-changing outfits, the friendship between the women is the main attraction of the show. She also reports that groups of female friends regularly meet up to watch it such that

> a correspondence exists between the empowering experience of shared talk women are depicted as having in the world of the programme, and the equally rewarding and collective experience of talk *about* the programme women share in the 'real' world. (Jermyn 2004: 208)

The fact that the series' audience, firstly, regards the relationship between the four women on the screen as an epitome of female friendship and, secondly, particularly enjoys the four protagonists' shared conversations renders it ideal data for my research project with a focus on (scripted) talk and friendship. Sprigings (2004) only partially agrees with this:

> *Sex and the City* is certainly a phenomenon worthy of academic study. But first the truth should be faced. What really induced millions of British public to stay in on Friday night were the frank sexual discussions between four close women friends; the good-looking men who were dated and dumped with impunity; and the array of expensive clothes and über-cool New York City locations on display in every episode. (Sprigings 2004)

In his *THES* review of *Reading Sex and the City*, a collection of scholarly essays analysing the sociological, cultural and educational implications of *SATC*, Sprigings (2004) cautions against "analysing scenes much more closely than the material will bear." His rejection of such analyses needs to be considered against a background of a persistent bias against popular culture, in particular against women-targeted genres such as melodrama.

This bias is closely related to the devaluation of all-female talk. Johnson and Aries (1983: 354) argue that "folk wisdom has long denigrated women's talk as 'idle chatter,' 'yackedy yack,' 'hen cackling,' 'gabbing,' and 'gossip,'" thus placing women "in the position of having nothing better to do with their time than talk and of having nothing important to talk about." Feminist linguistic research has challenged such folk linguistic stereotypes (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Holmes 1998b), however, the question as to the origin of this negative attitude towards female speech has to my knowledge not been sufficiently explored. Proverbs such as "Silence is golden," or "Talk is cheap" allow for the interpretation that the ambivalent attitude towards women's speech is only part of a tendency to devaluate and distrust (spoken) language in general. Though Holmes (1998b: 49) and Giles, Coupland, and Wiemann (1992: 219) argue that talk is highly appreciated in Western cultures, the proverbial view mirrors a certain suspicion towards language. De Caro (1987: 27) concludes that American proverbs reflect a "deep suspicion of speech because it may conflict with a strongly held value of the [US-American] culture, the desire to get things done." Norrick (1997: 282) also lists "language versus action" and "take care with language" as typical themes of proverbs on speech. Conversely, one can also reason that these negative clichés about speech

have their origin in the fact that speech is associated with women whereas action is connected with men – again reflecting society's denigration of women.

Kozloff (2000) establishes precisely this link to account for negative attitudes towards speech in the film industry. She argues that "dialogue has been continually discredited and undervalued in film because it is associated with femininity" (p. 13). Indeed, screenwriting courses and manuals are rife with anti-dialogue dicta. In Hollywood movies, we encounter the taciturn Western hero, who believes in action instead of talk – and diametrically opposed to this ideal, the garrulous screwball heroine who does not let her interlocutor get a word in edgewise, all the while babbling on incoherently. Hence, speech is trivialised, and genres which are built around talk like soap opera and sitcom are considered inferior. Not surprisingly, soap operas and sitcoms are women-targeted genres (cf. Brunsdon et al. 1997: 1).

These complex interrelations between language, gender and screenwriting render women-targeted TV genres an interesting field of research, in particular *SATC* with its focus on female talk. So, I argue that close scrutiny of the material is justified. My contribution to this endeavour will consist in a detailed analysis of the verbal interchanges between the four female protagonists from a linguistic point of view with the aim of revealing how the audience in front of the screen perceives of their relationship as an epitome of friendship. In order to do so, I will suggest a close resemblance between scripted screen dialogue and naturally occurring conversation as well as a likeness between the processes of overhearing talk on the screen and overhearing everyday talk. Consequently, this project stresses the tremendous value of talk: it is through talk that interpersonal relationships are managed, and it is through fictional talk that interpersonal relationships on the screen can be imagined and appreciated.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The study is composed of three central parts, chapters 2 to 4: In chapter 2, I present an overview of the research on my first focal point: friendship relations. I establish a set of central components and tensions of friendship ties, which are continually negotiated amongst the members of a friendship group or dyad. I therefore view interpersonal relationships as processes rather than as states; more specifically, I view friendship as a

dialectic process of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation. Furthermore, I suggest that the key locus of this dialectic process is verbal interaction, so that friendship can be established and maintained through talk. Since the data consists of talk between women friends, I present findings on female friendship groups in Western culture, distilling the crucial characteristics of this type of relations.

In chapter 3, I elaborate on the second focal point of my study: scripted screen dialogue. I describe the composition of my corpus of all-female dialogue from *SATC* and give some background information on the TV series, returning to the point made above about its controversial reception and detailing the creation of *SATC* dialogue. Furthermore, I discuss the functions and form of TV dialogue, whereby the discussion of the latter revolves around a comparison between naturally occurring conversation and scripted talk. Moreover, I develop a model of what I label "screen-to-face discourse," on the basis of which I will then give a preliminary account of how the audience infer the female protagonists' relationship. Finally, chapter 3 contains a discussion of the methodology applied in the analyses of the sitcom dialogue. I suggest an inclusive discourse analysis, which makes use of ethnomethodological conversation and membership categorisation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics as well as theories of face-work and politeness. Additionally, I argue for the application of the community of practice framework, thus anchoring my study in social constructionism and practice theory.

Chapter 4 constitutes the empirical part of the study and brings together the two focal points of friendship and scripted screen talk. It is subdivided into three sections, each presenting detailed analyses of excerpts from the *SATC* corpus. The first section introduces the overarching concept of alignments in talk, while the latter two sections focus on one particular alignment practice each: terms of address and question-response sequences. I put forward that through shifting alignment patterns friends accomplish an appropriate balance between association and dissociation. Hence, alignments in talk establish micro-relations, which in turn construct relationships on the macro-level of organisation. My analyses of alignment patterns accordingly present a detailed relational picture of the fictional friendship group, which suggests the impression the audience gains from watching the TV show.

Chapter 5 constitutes a general conclusion and outlook, where I summarise my findings and integrate the results of the analyses with the process of relationship impression formation on the part of the audience. I also discuss the implications of this study and point to new directions for research in the fields it straddles: discourse analysis, stylistics, the sociology of friendship, as well as gender and media studies.

A NOTE ON PRONOUN USAGE AND SPELLING

Insofar as the male pronouns "he" and "him" have been used generically in scholarly writing for decades, and as this is a study on the verbal practices of (female) individuals, it seems appropriate to use the female pronouns "she" and "her" generically throughout the text.

My own text follows British English spelling conventions. Quotations and references, however, are cited in their original orthography.

Notes chapter 1

[1] Kotthoff (2003: 1400fn), for example, stresses the importance of ethnographic details in the analysis of naturally occurring teasing sequences amongst friends: “only knowledge of the group enables us to decide whether or not the teasing has harmed the friendship.” The extensive corpus of a TV series provides such ethnographic knowledge.

Friendship isn't a big thing;
it's a million little things.
(Anonymous)

2 FRIENDSHIP

2.1 Introduction

The multifaceted nature of research into friendship has resulted in a myriad of concepts and definitions. Historically, conceptualisations have broadened from abstract philosophical notions of ideal friendship such as Aristotle's single soul dwelling in two bodies (*Ethica nicomachea*) to the recognition of friendship as a primary relationship in people's lives. Psychologists consider friendship a coping mechanism with friends providing emotional and tangible help as well as cognitive guidance in the event of decision-making (cf. Strickland 2001). Sociologists, on the other hand, conceptualise friendship as a social relationship based on reciprocity, equality, and obligation between otherwise unrelated individuals (cf. Marshall 1994; Reohr 1991).[1]

Furthermore, cross-cultural anthropological work has highlighted that "friendship takes different forms in different cultural worlds" (Adams and Plaut 2003: 333). In Western cultures, individuals generally freely choose their friends, and friendship relations are not under any kind of external control. Contrarily, in many non-Western cultures, interfamilial and patronage alliances oblige individuals to choose their friends from a specific network (cf. Adams and Plaut 2003), and some of these friendship ties are completely institutionalised, formally initiated by rituals in which participants vow mutual devotion and loyalty (cf. Piker 1968).

Aside from culture, there are other contextual factors which influence friendship patterns. Within Western cultures, sociologists have discovered differences between all-male and all-female friendships as well as between working and middle-class friendship relations (cf. Abercrombie et al. 1994). Naturally, large-scale changes occurring in the society such as the shift to post-modernity also affect friendship patterns (Adams and Allan 1998; Allan 1998). O'Connor (1998) argues that rising divorce rates, a falling number of children and disenchantment with traditional institutional structures render friendships more and more significant as a site for self-definition. Another factor which influences friendship patterns alongside culture, historical developments and social structure is an individual's personality disposition: while some use the label "friend" to refer to a person they share interests and activities with, others restrict the term to people they share attitudes, values and beliefs with (cf. Blieszner and Adams 1992; Strickland 2001). Furthermore, researchers have found variation with respect to some of the most generally accepted norms of friendship such as intimacy, reciprocity, trust, and equality (Blieszner and Adams 1992). In essence, "basic underlying characteristics are common in all friendships, but as they are not role relationships with specific requirements, all friendships vary somewhat" (Reohr 1991: 25).

Various authors, therefore, suggest treating friendship as a prototype concept in the sense of Rosch (1973, 1975), i.e. as a fuzzy set (cf. Bradac 1983; Davis and Todd 1985; Fehr 1996, 2004; Wilmot and Shellen 1990). This means we can compile a list of components typical of friendship but not necessarily all present in a specific friendship. The following is such a set of commonly accepted – partially interrelated – attributes of friendship relations in Western society.[2]

- equality
- similarity
- reciprocity
- intimacy
- enjoyment
- trust
- understanding and acceptance
- solidarity
- social support
- self-clarification
- being oneself
- voluntary interdependence

Rarely listed in the literature on friendship are positive affect or liking, presumably since they are hard to pin down. Svennevig (1999: 34) proposes a theory of interpersonal relationships that includes this attribute. In his framework, affect is the emotional dimension, which interrelates with the normative dimension of solidarity, i.e. the mutual rights and obligations, and the cognitive dimension of mutual knowledge of personal information. The latter he labels familiarity; in the above list this would correspond to intimacy. Svennevig (1999: 35) argues that "interpersonal relationships are constituted by mutual expectations of various amounts of solidarity, familiarity and affect" and that "different interpersonal relationships involve different degrees of solidarity, familiarity and affect." According to him, friendship requires some degree of mutual liking along with a high degree of intimacy and commitment. Contrarily, acquaintanceship requires less intimacy and less commitment, but some liking, and a romantic relationship requires a high degree of all three dimensions. However, the lines between acquaintances, friends, and lovers are hard to draw, since friendships can vary with respect to the level of solidarity, affect, and familiarity or any other attribute listed above.

Hence, when investigating specific friendship relations, it is vital to work with a fuzzy set of components, which can be adapted to the particular friends' socio-cultural background and modified to incorporate idiosyncratic features. Since the four fictional friends in *SATC* are white, middle-class, U.S.-American women, I am basing my conceptualisation of friendship on studies of friendship patterns between Western adults, specifically on studies between women friends. This will yield the basic underlying characteristics common to middle-class, Western, all-female friendships. I argue that idiosyncratic differences between friendship groups come about, because the relations between their members are negotiated in an ongoing dynamic process. Friends construct their ties through their (verbal) interaction, jointly calibrating the cultural and individual expectations of friendship they bring along through specific practices.

In the subsequent section, I will show how friendship can be conceptualised as a process rather than as a state, arguing that this process is engrained in verbal interaction. Following this discussion, I will review some of the literature on friendship between women in Western cultures, briefly discussing the components indicative of all-female friendship. The concept of friendship will be re-visited in chapter 3, where I argue that

the four friends in *SATC* can be considered a community of practice in the sense of Lave and Wenger (1991).

Sometimes in our relationship to another human being the proper balance of friendship is restored when we put a few grains of impropriety onto our own side of the scale.
(Friedrich Nietzsche)

2.2 Friendship as process

Research on friendship generally distinguishes structural and process components. Friendship processes are the interactive aspects of friendship patterns, "the overt behavioral events and the covert cognitive and affective responses that occur when people interact" (Blieszner and Adams 1992: 12). The social variables power/status and closeness/intimacy are generally considered structural features. A third structural feature, which is regarded as a crucial prerequisite of friendship, is homogeneity (cf. Blieszner and Adams 1992). These structural features, however, can also be treated as process variables. Power and intimacy can be established through interactional behaviour and are continually renegotiated throughout the course of an interpersonal relationship.[3] Likewise, homogeneity, which is defined as the similarity of the participants in terms of social background and personal constructs such as attitudes, has process qualities. Fehr (1996) draws attention to the fact that similarities shift and develop over the course of a friendship. Generally, in the early stages of a friendship, similarities in superficial domains such as hobbies, educational background, or political stance are important; but as the relationship develops towards more closeness, friends show greater similarity in terms of deeper constructs. Fehr also stresses:

> Whereas people generally are more likely to become friends with those who are similar to them, this is a reciprocal process – people are also more likely to become similar to one another once they have initiated a friendship. (1996: 102)

O'Connor, on the other hand, highlights the obverse process, i.e. "over time, dissimilarities may occur in the characteristics of friends (e.g. in the wake of widowhood, divorce, return to paid employment or to college)" (1992: 52). She points out that it is virtually impossible to find two friends who are identical in gender, social class, age, life stage, marital status, race, religious attitudes, interests, personality traits and intelligence. Hence, it is essential that – even if dissimilar – friends are accepted as being equal within the relationship (Allan 1986: 45). Reohr (1991:47) refers to this as equality of a "spiritual sort." Her discussion of equality in friendship relations is based on Simmel's notion of how sociation ("Vergesellschaftung") is achieved: it requires individuals to pretend that they are equal (Simmel 1964: 48-49). Thus, similarity and equality can be considered as socially constructed, negotiated in interaction between the friends, who devise strategies to manage dissimilarities and the inequality which may follow in their wake.

Along with similarity and equality, friends continually negotiate dialectical tensions inherent in close relationships. Simmel (1955, 1964) argues that any instantiation of sociation is characterised by ambivalence, embodying harmony and attraction as well as conflict and repulsion (cf. also O'Driscoll 1996). Individuals in groups act in "mutually conflicting ways … with others but also against others" (Simmel 1955: 155). Baxter (1990) and Baxter and Simon (1993) establish three interrelated dialectical contradictions based on this basic duality of association versus dissociation in close personal relationships: autonomy and connection, openness and closedness, predictability and novelty.

As for autonomy versus connection, they argue that individuals in a relationship sacrifice some of their independence and uniqueness, yet at the same time they aim to retain their freedom and individuality. According to Rawlins (1983a), established friendships are characterised by a working synthesis of two freedoms. Friends grant each other freedom of action as long as it does not affect the other's welfare. Simultaneously, they grant each other the privilege of relying upon one another for social support. Based on interviews with close friends, Rawlins (1983a) shows that this antagonistic tendency organises the communicative practices of friends.

Rawlins (1983b) also discusses the openness-closedness opposition as an organising principle in friendship interaction. Openness – achieved through presenting information about oneself – is considered to be a crucial element of any close relationship. However, Rawlins (1983b) stresses that it cannot be considered the hallmark of intimacy, since the revelation of confidential thoughts and feelings renders the discloser vulnerable and may be painful for the addressee. Similarly, it is important for friends to be honest with each other, but too much honesty may also hurt the other. Hence, a continued exchange of personal ideas and emotions requires a delicate management of "the persistent dilemmas of candor versus restraint"; a balancing of expressiveness and protectiveness (Rawlins 1983b: 13).

The third dialectical principle, predictability versus novelty, requires that interactants reduce uncertainty about each other while at the same time retaining some mystery, so that excessive predictability is avoided. O'Connor (1992: 51) presumes that the novelty dimension is especially influential on the interactional practices of those who expect friendships to provide fun and enjoyment. In summary, there are various interrelated tensions inherent in friendship relations. In order to establish and maintain a close relation, friends need to continually negotiate these antagonistic dimensions, striking an appropriate balance between them. This renders friendship a fragile relation, which – as Wiseman (1986: 193) phrases it – contains "the seeds of its own destruction in the cross-pressures of freedom and stable intimacy."

To conclude, even supposedly static and attributional aspects of friendship relations – intimacy, power and homogeneity – can be conceptualised as process. Consequently, process is paramount, and following social constructionist traditions (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Vygotsky 1978), I will conceptualise friendship as a socially constructed entity. In this study, friendship is considered a process in which individuals jointly negotiate the components they consider significant for their relationship with each other – driven by the need to accomplish equilibrium between the three antagonistic tensions of openness/closedness, connection/autonomy, and predictability/novelty. In essence, friendship is envisaged as a dialectic process of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation, whereby this balance varies from friendship to friendship, depending on the factors delineated above.[4]

This proceeding is in keeping with more recent research on interpersonal relations, which recognises “the importance of treating relationships, be they ties of friendship, love, parenting, or whatever, as emergent ties with their own properties” (Adams and Allan 1998: 2). Duck and Sants (1983), arguing that relationships cannot be considered states, call on researchers to investigate process rather than focusing on the predictors and outcomes of interaction. However, there is a lack of studies on the operation of subprocesses in friendship relations. In her review of the literature on friendship, Fehr (1996: 166ff.) lists the following patterns: avoidance, i.e. ignoring incidents which might change the relationship; balance, i.e. maintaining equality by keeping emotional and social support at the same level; and directness, i.e. telling the other how one envisions the relationship.

Furthermore, Fehr (1996) stresses the more implicit strategies, which are embedded in ordinary everyday talk. She follows Duck (1994: 48), who considers talk “the essence of relationship maintenance.” The fact that individuals engage in conversation – regardless of its content – already signals to the interlocutors that some relationship between them exists (Duck 1994, Fehr 1996). Bradac (1983) argues that a human relationship that does not depend on talk is difficult to conceive. There are only few relationships based on non-verbal communication such as commuters riding the same train every day and smiling at each other, but close interpersonal relationships rely on verbal interaction. As Duck (1994: 52) states: “one of the functions and consequences of everyday talk is to present to the two partners an image or impression of the relationship itself and how it may continue.” The investigation of everyday talk, therefore, can yield significant insights into friendship subprocesses such as the negotiation of power and equality, the accomplishment of intimacy – all in conjunction with the balancing of the above described dialectical tensions inherent in close relationships: connection versus autonomy, openness versus closedness, and predictability versus novelty.

Social psychologists typically focus on explicit statements about a relationship such as “Let’s bury the hatchet” or “I love you” (e.g. W. Owen 1987). Duck (1994: 48) describes these practices as creating a “rhetorical vision” of what the relationship is and will be. Moreover, talk provides friends with “a method for sharing one another’s worlds of experience” (Duck 1994: 48), thereby creating intimacy/familiarity. However, talk also entails more subtle processes. Consider a first interaction between two

unacquainted individuals. The feeling that something clicks between them is typically accounted for in terms of "vibrations" or "chemistry" (cf. Svennevig 1999: 1). In order to shed scholarly light on how such vibrations and chemistry come about, one must turn to the field of relational communication, which has extended Malinowski's (1923) rather narrow view of phatic communication to all contexts of human interaction, emphasising the ubiquity of relational work in discourse.

Seminal work on relational communication was carried out by the Palo Alto Group (cf. Bateson 1972; Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson 1967), who found that information about the speakers' perception of their relationship with each other is metacommunicatively contained in every instance of conversational interaction. According to them, individuals continually display their definition of the relationship they have with their interlocutors. Similarly, Goffman (1976: 309) finds that "no resource is more effective as a basis for joint involvement than speaking." Through speaking to each other, for example, we make ourselves known and available to the interlocutors so that a personal common ground (Clark 1996) is created, which then functions as a basis for further conversations. Once interlocutors have established a certain level of personal common ground or intimacy, there is an "obligation to update the other regarding one's own circumstances" (Goffman 1983: 13) to at least maintain, if not increase the level of intimacy.[5]

Scholars in the field of communication studies have amongst others investigated the following relational phenomena – mainly through laboratory and self-report studies: accommodation of one's speech to the listener to make oneself more acceptable (e.g. Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles et al. 1991), development of relational personal idioms (Bell et al. 1987; Hopper et al. 1981) and playful banter (Baxter 1992). Hornstein (1985) deviates from the laboratory and self-report methodology and surveys naturally occurring conversations, showing that phone calls between intimates are characterised by more implicit openings, more questions, and more complex forms of closings. Her investigation adheres to a message-extrinsic approach of communication studies, considering relationship-states as external to and constraining interactional patterns (Hopper and Drummond 1992: 186).

By contrast, Hopper and Drummond (1992) argue for a reflexive stance towards the concept of relationship, conceptualising relationship in terms of both interactional

accomplishment – micro-level processes – and social categorisation – macro-level processes. They find that telephone openings between strangers hardly ever include greetings; however, if they do, this is done to "enact transparently-motivated social gestures" (Hopper and Drummond 1992: 193), indicating that the relationship is negotiable towards more intimacy. Telephone openings between intimates, on the other hand, may consist of greetings only, accomplishing mutual recognition on the fly through voice samples (cf. Schegloff 1979; Hopper and Drummond 1992). Reflexivity hence means that conversationalists simultaneously display and accomplish interpersonal relationships. This conceptualisation allows for tying the macro-level of social organisation to the details of spoken interaction. In the case of friendship relations, this macro-level of social organisation can be considered to consist of relationship histories and their interpretation, current impressions of relationships and expectations of them.

To list just a few more studies in this tradition, Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) show that acquainted interlocutors introduce topics by displaying prior experience, whereas unacquainted interlocutors revert to question-answer sequences, which focus on categorisations of the recipient. Maynard's (2003) extensive investigations into the telling of good and bad news corroborates Goffman's (1983) assumption that, in personal relationships, there is a reflexive relation between telling the news and the intimacy of the interlocutors. The telling of news or the catching up with somebody's life is closely related to the establishment of personal common ground (cf. Clark 1996) – one of the key features of communication between acquainted or even closely related interlocutors. Svennevig (1999) finds two strategies for establishing personal common ground in pursuit of acquaintanceship: either participants solicit self-presentation and develop this basis of personal common ground into topics which are more mutually involving; or else, they establish mutually involving topics that only require common encyclopaedic knowledge, eliciting or providing personal background through side-sequences, whenever needed.

Mandelbaum (1987) and Norrick (2004) demonstrate how interlocutors display and accomplish being a married couple through joint storytelling. Mandelbaum (2003) investigates how conversational repair and tit-for-tat moves function as interactive methods for constructing relationships. Another key method is humour, as Norrick

(1993, chapter 3) extensively demonstrates. With regard to friendship groups, Branner (2003) shows how adolescent female friends do relational work through humorous narratives and teasing sequences, and Straehle (1993) focuses on the establishment of teasing frames, which contribute to differing macro-level relationships between friends.

Finally, there is work on involvement strategies by Deborah Tannen (1984, 1989). She defines involvement as "an internal, even emotional connection individuals feel which binds them to other people as well as to places, things, activities, ideas, memories, and words" (Tannen 1989: 12). These emotional connections can be established in discourse through the following communicative patterns: fast speaker shifts, tolerance for overlap, participatory listenership, abrupt topic shifts, preference for personal topics, preference for narrative, expressive pronunciation, marked shifts in pitch, amplitude and voice quality, fast rate of speech, repetition, indirectness, ellipsis, and dramatisation (cf. Tannen 1984: 30-31; 1989: 17).[6]

Tannen's seminal article on the relativity of linguistic strategies (1993), however, cautions that the same linguistic detail such as indirectness or interruption can be ambiguous and, for example, signal both power and solidarity. She stresses that the relational meaning of a linguistic device is jointly negotiated between addresser and addressee. Her books *That's not what I meant* (1986) and *I only say this because I love you* (2001) elucidate for the general public how relational metamessages impact on ties between family members, friends and colleagues; how the interpersonal relations in families, work or friendship groups in fact "are a web of alliances drawn and redrawn by talk" (Tannen 2001: 31).

In summary, in the past decades, conversational interaction has been shown to be a crucial or even the essential tool for the establishment, maintenance and termination of human relationships, and its investigation has helped shed light on how interpersonal relations such as friendship ties can be conceived of as process. Still, some scholars advise against equating talk with relationship. Sigman (1995: 192), for example, argues that social relationships "may depend on, but are analytically distinct from, face-to-face interaction." He distinguishes social relationships from interactional relationships and illustrates the difference with the help of the concept of continuity (cf. also Sigman 1991). The opening of a conversation may not represent the beginning of a new relationship and leave-taking rituals rarely terminate the interpersonal relation between

the interlocutors. Still, investigating how interactional relationships in Sigman's terms are negotiated at the micro-level of conversational interaction yield insights into what kind of relationship is constructed at the macro-level of social order.

With respect to the social tie of friendship, the most substantial body of work on how talk furthers the construction of social relations at the macro-level has been produced by Jennifer Coates (1991, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 2000, 2001, 2003; Coates and Sutton-Spence 2001). Her research is based on ethnographic interviews and conversational data of various groups of male and female friends – some of it collected in longitudinal studies. Drawing on this extremely rich data, she argues that "knowing how to be a friend is a crucial part of our communicative competence" (1996a: 267). She shows how interlocutors construct friendship through the telling of stories, hedging, questions, repetition and the establishment of a collaborative floor, on which utterances are shared and cooperative overlap abounds (cf. Coates 1996a, 2003). However, she cautions that employing all these linguistic devices is not sufficient for the establishment and maintenance of a friendship relation.

As I have mentioned above, these devices may be ambiguous, and friends cooperatively establish norms and conventions for their use so that they become practices of a specific friendship group. In cognitive terms, interlocutors jointly develop an interpersonal script, "an expected pattern of interaction, derived through generalization from repeated similar interpersonal experiences" (Baldwin 1992: 462). These expected patterns may include fairly general rules applying to friendship or kinship interaction, as well as narrow scripts applying to interactions with specific interlocutors such as a certain circle of friends.

Coates (1996a) argues that the specialized communicative competence for doing friendship through talk is revealed when things go wrong. For instance, when interlocutors excessively complete others' utterances, this behaviour may be perceived as obtrusive or irritating. Another convention Coates (1996a) discusses is the amount of talk: according to interviews she conducted with female friends, both talking too much and talking too little are problematic. In the following, I will present an overview of Coates' (1996a) study of female friendships and supplement her ethnographic study by psychological and sociological perspectives.[7]

Female friendships that work are relationships in which women help each other to belong to themselves. (Louise Bernikow)

2.3 Friendship between women

While the preceding sections applied to the concept of friendship in general, I will now focus on ties between female friends. Up until the 1970s, female friendships had been "systematically ignored, derogated and trivialized" (O'Connor 1992: 9). When they finally attracted scholarly attention it was mainly in comparison with men's friendships. Furthermore, conceptions of female friendships were still based on the popular stereotype that "women are naturally incapable of forming bonds with each other," because "they are competitive and distrustful," while men "bond naturally with a sense of inborn camaraderie" (Jerrome 1984: 710). Pseudo-scientific publications argued that women were not genetically programmed to bond with one another or that hostility between women is inevitable due to sexual jealousy and desire for male approval (cf. O'Connor 1992: 11).

More recent publications have debunked the suggestion that women in all-female relations behave essentially jealous, hostile and "bitchy" as one of the tenets of patriarchism, which considers women's relationships with their husbands and children more significant (e.g. O'Connor 1989, 1992). Naturally, the secondary status given to women's friendships is unjustified, in particular, when one looks into all-female contexts as varied as the Edwardian wash-house and 19th century epistolary exchanges as well as teenage bedrooms and 'lasses nights' of the present day (cf. Coates 1996b; Green et al. 1990; O'Connor 1992). Since the rise of cultural feminism, female friendship has been idealized as a model for good human relationships and as a liberating force (Hunt 1991; Raymond 1986).

However, O'Connor (1992: 18) notes that friendships are not without costs and that providing social and emotional support as well as practical help also requires time, energy and resources. La Gaipa (1990) argues that women with a large number of close friends are liable to experience greater emotional strain than women with only a few close friends. This phenomenon may be related to what Raymond (1986) and O'Connor (1992, 1998) describe as the tendency of all-female friendships to retreat into "shared victimisation" or "therapism," which Raymond (1986: 155) defines as "a tyranny of feelings where women have come to believe that what really counts in their life is their 'psychology.'" This focus on feelings may lead to palliative coping, i.e. the manipulation of one's emotional state rather than changing the situation (cf. O'Connor 1992: 31), and thereby perpetuate existing inequalities.[8] Men's friendships, on the other hand, are said to generally revolve around sharing fun activities, especially watching and playing sports and hence cause little emotional strain.

In essence, female friendships have been studied mainly in comparison to male friendships, and research paradigms have shifted from considering them inferior to male friendship to regarding them as superior, though some scholars caution that they may be damaging to mental health. These value-judgements are inevitable, considering the binary nature of the study of male versus female friendship relations. Even if research purports to be neutral and based on empirical evidence, it may still imply an evaluation and fuel the debate on gender differences. The literature generally reports that there is variation with respect to the amount of time spent with friends, activities engaged in, conversation topics, degree of intimacy and amount of social support (cf. Fehr 1996, chapter 5). Although these studies tend to paint an essentialist and thus arguable picture of gender and friendship relations, I will give an overview of these four dimensions of difference for the purpose of highlighting the essential components of all-female friendship relations. The community of practice approach outlined below will put these essentialistic descriptions of female friendships in perspective.

Considering the amount of time spent with friends, there seems to be no significant difference, except for the time spent talking to friends on the phone: women typically have many and long telephone conversations with female friends (Aries and Johnson 1983; Fehr 1996). This suggests that for women friends talk is a crucial element of their relationship and one of the main activities they engage in. In fact, it has been argued that

"talk is the substance of women's friendship" and that, even while women friends are engaged in some other activity such as shopping, talk remains central (Johnson and Aries 1983: 354; cf. also Coates 1996a). Men, on the other hand, are said to spend time with their friends doing things such as attending sports events, watching a movie or playing billiards (cf. Fehr 1996). These findings led to the categorisation of men's friendships as "side by side" relations and women's friendships as "face to face" relations (Wright 1982). More recent research, however, challenges this view, arguing that men talk more than is assumed and women engage more in non-verbal activities than prior research has shown (Walker 1994).

Aside from the amount of talk, the content of conversations between all-male and all-female friends has been shown to vary. Aries and Johnson (1983), for example, report that women tend to converse more frequently about intimate topics and daily activities. They also indicate that women talk about personal and family matters in greater depth, while the main topic that male friends talk about in depth is sports. Aside from sports, men were also more likely to talk about hobbies and shared activities. This stereotypical behaviour pattern has been confirmed by various other studies (cf. Fehr 1996, chapter 5), but since all these studies depend on participants' self-reports or laboratory settings, their validity is questionable. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 123) caution that a focus on difference can have the effect of erasing similarities and point out that many topics are in fact shared.

Coates' (1996a) extensive ethnographic study combining women's self-reports and analyses of naturally occurring conversations yields the following typical all-female topics: work, family and other interpersonal relationships, domestic issues, health problems, fashion, books and films. These topics can be summarised as catching up with each other's lives; sharing the mundane events such as buying Christmas trees as well as the adventures they had. Another type of topic the women mention and which also occurs in the corpus of conversations is what Coates (1996a: 53) subsumes under the heading "discussion of ideas." This includes more intellectual and less personal topics. Still, Coates' (1996a: 55) conversational data shows that even in discussing topics such as child abuse or the Gulf War, the women always link the general and the personal, and that such topics often arise from a personal narrative.

Some authors (Branner 2003; Coates 1996a, 2000; Green 1998) also stress the subversive potential of conversational topics in all-female friendships such as marital dissatisfaction, the frustrations of motherhood, and sexuality. As Green (1998: 181) phrases it: "women-only company affords women the chance 'to let their hair down' and 'behave badly,' i.e. outside the limits of 'normal, acceptable, womanly behaviour.'"[9] Coates (2000) shows how adult women express negative attitudes towards children, clearly challenging the dominant discourses of femininity which incorporate the image of the nurturing mother.[10] She accounts for this phenomenon in terms of Goffman's (1971) concept of "backstage talk." In his theatre metaphor, backstage talk – as opposed to frontstage talk – is where a performer "can relax, he [sic] can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character" (Goffman 1971: 115). Backstage talk entails all aspects of "being oneself," which may clash with one's public persona such as watching soap operas or indulging in gluttony, and thus it renders all-female talk a crucial site of identity construction. The opportunity to "be oneself" is one of the most highly valued aspects of female friendships in Coates' (1996a: 24) ethnographic interviews – to quote one of her interviewees: "we all see each other's warts, that's the whole point, I know what your warts are and you know what mine are."

Another topic-related phenomenon, which is stereotypically associated with all-female talk, is gossip. In its popular usage, gossip is defined as derogatory or scandalous information about the lives of others, but scholarly investigation generally considers any information exchange about non-present individuals – positive or negative – as gossip. Gluckmann (1963: 308), for example, defines gossip as a "general interest in the doings, the virtues and vices of others." While popular stereotypes frequently depict women as gossips in the negative context (cf. Guendouzi 2001), empirical research proves not only that both men and women gossip, but also that male and female gossip contains the same amount of negative and positive references to others (Levin and Arluke 1985). However, there seems to be a difference with respect to gossip targets: while men retain psychological distance by gossiping about celebrities and distant acquaintances, women focus on individuals who are members of their social network such as friends and family (Levin and Arluke 1985). This is in line with the generally more personal content of all-female conversation.

Jones (1980: 194) reclaims gossip as an overall positive feminine genre, "a way of talking between women in their roles as women, intimate in style, personal and domestic in topic and setting, a female cultural event which springs from and perpetuates the restrictions of the female role, but also gives the comfort of validation." Coates' (1998) detailed analyses of gossipy sequences in all-female talk are in keeping with this approach, stressing the positive outcomes of gossip. Eggins and Slade (1997) show that gossip is a distinctive interactive genre, which functions to establish and maintain group membership, but they note that it is also used to exert social control, in both all-female as well as male-female interaction. Guendouzi (2001) thus takes a critical stance towards all-female gossip, considering how gossip helps perpetuate the traditional gender identities – which Jones (1980) was well aware of as the above quote shows. Following Eckert (1993), Guendouzi stresses that gossip, more specifically the malicious type of gossip, serves to increase women's social capital, which is thereby defined as "moral worth," "physical appearance," and "social behaviour" (Guendouzi 2001: 31). Furthermore, she points out that by claiming social capital at the expense of other members in the social network, malicious gossip also constitutes a competitive element of all-female talk, which has been largely ignored by research into gender and talk. This competitive edge of all-female talk fits in with the above described dialectical tensions found in any close social network or dyad, since it functions in the negotiation of the autonomy/connectedness dialectic.

Conversation topics also link up with another area of presumed difference between male and female friendship: degree of intimacy. Any friendship is characterised by gradually progressing towards a certain degree of closeness or intimacy, which is achieved through discussing more areas of information and through revealing deeper, more intimate material (cf. Aries and Johnson 1983) – an activity labelled "self-disclosure." Social penetration theory, which aims to describe the formation, maintenance and dissolution of close relationships, sees this activity as the *sine qua non* of the development of closeness (Altman and Taylor 1973). Yet, Svennevig (1999: 4) cautions that though self-disclosure is a useful theoretical construct, it does not seem to correspond to any recognisable conversational activity – ranging from a confession to a priest to telling one's business partner in a restaurant what one is going to eat. Furthermore, Svennevig (1999: 22-23) criticises that the term self-disclosure presumes

an attributional view, i.e. that individuals possess specific attributes, which they disclose to others. A social constructionist view, however, considers the self as socially constituted, constructed in interaction. Since the term is ubiquitous in the literature on friendship, I will use the term "self-disclosure" for any revelation of personal information, but given my social constructionist point of view, I consider this activity part of the interactionally achieved construction of identity. Through self-disclosure then, individuals offer up an image of themselves for negotiation.

Social psychologists also regard self-disclosure "a deliberate invitation to the other to know and share the speaker's experience" (Pearce and Sharp 1973: 421). These experiences also require negotiation in conversational interaction in order to accomplish a self or an identity. Amongst female friends, the outcome of these negotiations seems to be highly satisfying. As noted above, women typically feel that amongst their female friends they can "be themselves" and "let their hair down." Along with the higher degree of personal topics such as health issues or problems with boyfriends or husbands, laboratory studies report that women are more likely to engage in self-disclosure than men (Jourard 1971), especially to same-sex partners (Dindia and Allan 1992). Women's friendships have thus been considered more intimate than friendships between men (cf. Reisman 1990). Recordings and transcriptions of naturally occurring all-female conversation reveal that self-disclosure indeed has a central position in these groups and close analyses of such data show how it contributes to the construction of female identities and the negotiation of friendship relations (Branner 2003; Coates 1996a).

Close analyses of all-female conversational interaction also take responses to self-disclosing moves into consideration. These are crucial to determine what kind of self is being interactionally accomplished, but they also constitute a window to social support processes, another parameter in which male and female friendships are claimed to differ. When asked about the essential components of friendship, the women in Coates' (1996a) ethnographic interviews most frequently listed mutual support. They referred to situations in which female friends helped them overcome personal difficulties and boosted their self-confidence. Overall, women receive more social support, especially more emotional and informational support from friends than men do and display a greater willingness to support a friend in distress (cf. Fehr 1996, chapter 5).

The appropriate form of support in response to an intimate self-disclosure amongst female friends is a mirroring self-disclosure, which signals that the speaker is not alone in having had a painful or embarrassing experience. Mirroring self-disclosure also indicates that reciprocity is vital in female friendships (Coates 1996a: 167). In the case of a self-deprecating disclosure such as an embarrassing moment in a woman's life, emotional support can also take the form of sympathetic laughing along (Coates 1996a: 166). Aside from these emotional forms of social support, there is also informational support, which includes more practical advice-giving and sharing knowledge. Coates' (1996a) analyses of all-female talk, however, indicate that women are reluctant to play the expert and typically use hedges or other softening strategies to avoid the impression of inequality. This also indicates that equality – or the pretence of equality – is an essential feature of female friendships.

Harrison's (1998) qualitative study of middle-class female friendships indicates that crises in women's lives such as leaving or reconciling with a husband or boyfriend are typically accompanied by some amount of consultation from their close female friends. Her ethnographic interviews and recordings of women's interactions also point to the fact that friends do not always agree with each other's behaviour. Through debating a range of possible options, all-female talk contributes to self-clarification (cf. Fehr 1996: 121). Though Coates (1996a: 26) shows that "challenging and exposing" is not always welcome, she stresses that female friendships are not "superficial or even saccharine" and one of her female friends states: "I think if we were a little bit worried about something, well, which way to go or whatever, we'd talk about it, because you'd be confident that you'd be told if you were going to make an idiot of yourself." Harrison (1998: 102) refers to this debating and challenging as "identity work," which helps "to assemble multiple images of 'self.'"

> Analysing events, reflecting on incidents, making sense of subtle injustices and challenging interpretations – all of these occur in women's conversations and are worked through with their friends. Support given through talking and listening, which can lead to differing and, occasionally, contradictory positions being taken through discussion and

> debate, helps to challenge beliefs and values and interrogate collective identities. (Harrison 1998: 102)

From an ethnomethodological perspective, conversational practices which entail social support can be subsumed under the term "troubles talk" (Jefferson 1980, 1984, 1988; Jefferson and Lee 1981). Jefferson (1988) considers this kind of talk a "big package," i.e. a relatively long sequence of talk, consisting of various recurrent elements, which do not take a fixed segmental order. Given the tension between the attention to business as usual and the attention to troubles at hand, such talk requires careful negotiation.

The complexity of troubles talk can also be accounted for by taking into consideration the notion of "face," an individual's interactionally constructed positive social value, which consists of two different social claims: a certain self-image and a certain territory (Goffman 1967). Individuals depend on others in their construction of face, i.e. they can present a certain demeanour which displays the self-image they want to convey, but this needs to be ratified by others through showing respect and avoiding imposition as well as through enhancing this self-image through acknowledgement tokens. This dependence on others for giving face puts individuals in the double bind of simultaneously wanting to preserve individual integrity and requiring communion with others, "a constant dialectic between presentational rituals and avoidance rituals" (Goffman 1967: 76). This dialectic is clearly interrelated with Simmel's (1955, 1964) duality of association and dissociation. Consequently, the three antagonistic tendencies which accrue from association/dissociation are also intertwined with the face dialectic: autonomy, closedness, and novelty can be seen to correspond to the need for integrity, which is generally accomplished through a display of differences, while connection, openness, and predictability link up with the need for communion, typically established through manifestations of agreement or similarity. Face and the balance between those tendencies are at stake, whenever friends impose on each other by revealing sensitive information which may cause emotional strain as well as by giving advice and criticising each other's behaviour. They are also at stake through the vulnerability that talk about troubles entails for the discloser.[11]

These complexities entail potential for conflict, and, indeed, conflict has been shown to be an integral part of friendship relations. Generally, friends appear to "manage

conflict more amicably and less aggressively than … siblings, parents or romantic partners" (Canary et al. 1995: 97). However, due to the fact that conflict data is "by its nature sensitive and difficult to capture as arguments often arise spontaneously" (Leung 2004), little is known about how friends really deal with conflict. Conflicts in female friendships seem to be less overt than in male friendships and women seem to work harder to avoid conflicts (Fehr 1996: 163ff). Coates'(1996a: 26-36) ethnographic interviews confirm the fact that conflict is difficult for women, but she stresses that for the sake of friendship, they are prepared to negotiate compromise and change in attitudes. She also reports that women feel proud of and often closer to their friend after successfully negotiating a conflict, supporting Davis and Todd's (1985) finding that weathering a storm creates a stronger bond. While Coates' (1996a) interviews contain various stories of conflict between female friends, her conversational data of adult women does not contain any examples of conflict.[12]

Aside from this and the fact that conflict is a sensitive issue, research may also yield less evidence of conflict in friendship relations, because it is not an essential component and is eclipsed by more significant outcomes. As Canary, Cupach, and Messman (1995) argue: "in friendship the levels of enjoyment were higher than the level of conflict, whereas in other relationships the reverse was often true." The prominence of enjoyment also holds for female friendships: aside from giving social support through troubles talk and doing identity work, all-female interaction also caters to pleasure and recreation, as for instance O'Neill's (1993) interviews with female Londoners of all backgrounds reveal. As Green (1998: 181) states, "having a laugh with the girls" is "a jealously guarded leisure highlight." Jerrome's (1984) study of a female friendship group, dubbed the "Tremendous Ten," also reveals a considerable amount of joking, laughing and giggling.

Some of the amusement women draw from their get-togethers with female friends can be attributed to the cathartic effect of subversive humour, but some of it also derives from more frivolous topics and the poetic character of women's talk (Coates 1996a). Coates (1996a: 118) rephrases a definition of the musical term "jam session" to describe the nature of all-female talk as follows: "A meeting of women friends for the spontaneous and improvisatory performance of talk, for their own enjoyment." This complements Raymond's (1986: 238) philosophical contemplation on the achievement

of happiness in women's lives: "Female friendship gives women the context in which to be 'life-glad.' It creates a private and public sphere where happiness can become a reality." According to O'Connor (1992) this component of female friendships is a fairly recent phenomenon. She writes:

> In the past five to ten years, groups of women have come to see each other as acceptable partners in fun. Thus they run or drink or eat or walk together – sometimes in dyads, but often as a group. (O'Connor 1992: 181)

To conclude, research on female friendships has shown that talk is a central element of women friendships. In their conversations, women mainly discuss personal topics and engage in intimate self-disclosure. By talking through their troubles women give each other emotional and informational support. Furthermore, the openness and trust of women's friendships allows for free self-expression and backstage talk, through which women can try out alternative identities or be themselves. However, all-female talk may also perpetuate traditional gender roles, in the case of palliative coping or in the case of gossip revolving around moral worth, physical appearance or social behaviour. Such topics may also involve competition and tension, constituting one source of conflict between female friends. Other potential sources are the dialectics and double-binds described above, especially the openness-closedness dimension. Block and Greenberg (1985: 77) compare these tensions to those inherent in a dance:

> The intimacy of women's friendships is like a dance. If one partner becomes indifferent to the music or totally dependent on the other to lead the way for a substantial period, the equilibrium is damaged. Each dancer must be responsible for herself while interacting with the other. Sustained periods of heavy dependence and fierce independence threaten the partnership.

Women generally find conflict in friendship difficult, but research also shows that they negotiate through differences in order to maintain friendship relations, typically

achieving closer and stronger relations through this joint effort. In self-reports by women friends conflict behaviour plays a marginal role, since the overall outcome of female friendship is enjoyment and happiness.

In the preceding sections, I have drawn a rough picture of female friendships, which shows that almost all of the set of Western friendship components established above (section 2.1) are reported to be part of friendship ties between women: women voluntarily choose their friends on the basis of similarities in attitudes and interests and strive for equality in their relationships. They act in the spirit of reciprocity, exchanging intimate experiences as well as various forms of support. This implies solidarity, trust and the opportunity to be oneself. Finally, female friendships provide women with happiness and enjoyment.

To what extent these components and outcomes are significant in a specific group of female friends, however, is regulated through continual negotiation between the members of this group driven by the need to calibrate an appropriate balance between association and dissociation. Aside from Branner (2003), Coates (1996a), Harrison (1998), Hey (1997) and Jerrome (1984), detailed studies of specific friendship groups are rare. A shift in the social sciences towards informing the general through the study of the particular and from essentialist categories to community-based practices calls for such analyses (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Schatzki et al. 2001). I will thus apply Lave and Wenger's (1991) framework of the community of practice to the fictional friendship group, as discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: "What! You, too? I thought I was the only one." (C. S. Lewis)

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the conceptualisations of friendship in the social sciences. I have shown that friendship is best treated as a fuzzy set. For friendship ties in Western cultures, the following partially interrelated attributes emerge: equality, similarity, reciprocity, intimacy, enjoyment, trust, understanding and acceptance, solidarity, social support, self-clarification, being oneself, voluntary interdependence, and (positive) affect. Not all of them are necessarily present in a specific friendship and some may be more significant than others. Idiosyncratic deviations depend on factors such as the friends' age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, social background and individual preferences.

The presence or absence of these attributes is continually negotiated in friends' interactions. Since negotiating always implies process, I conceptualise friendship as a process rather than a state. This process is rooted in friends' persistent effort to accomplish equilibrium between the antagonistic tendencies of autonomy versus connectedness, closedness versus openness, and novelty versus predictability. The degree of intimacy in a friendship relation, for example, is negotiated along the openness versus closedness dialectic and the degree of similarity is based on the equilibrium between the novelty versus predictability tension. In essence, friendship is a dialectic process of calibrating an appropriate balance between association and dissociation, and hence all friendship ties are in a constant state of flux.

I have argued that the key site for the negotiation of friendship – and in fact any other interpersonal relationship – is conversational interaction. Micro-analytic research in relational communication has succeeded in connecting relationship components such as intimacy and power to details of conversation, pinning down exactly how participants in a conversation “do relationship”. Still, there is no one-to-one connection between specific verbal or paralinguistic details and social ties; all language and paralanguage structures are ambiguous and their metacommunicative meaning is jointly accomplished.

I have then focused on female friendship relations, outlining the characteristics typically accorded to them. Female friends highly value talk as an activity, conversing about personal topics, with a high percentage of intimate self-disclosure. Through talk, women also provide informational and emotional support. A related verbal practice of female friendship is backstage talk, which allows women to experiment with alternative definitions of self. Female friendships are also a key site for gossip, which feminist scholars have reclaimed as a positive genre of talk. This needs to be viewed critically, since gossip may also perpetuate traditional assumptions of women’s moral worth, physical appearance and social behaviour.

Factors such as moral worth and physical appearance as well as knowledge may function as symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1978) in female friendship groups, gaining importance in conflict situations in which the dialectic tensions inherent in close human relationships are (re)negotiated. However, research claims that conflict plays a minor role in female friendships and that the overall focus is on happiness and enjoyment. To avoid such essentialist patterns in my investigations of the fictional friendship circle, I apply the community of practice framework. This framework along with other theoretical constructs and the methods I use will be presented in the next chapter.

Notes Chapter 2

[1] For an overview of the sociological approach to friendship see Allan (1989). For a psychological perspective see Duck (1990).
[2] The set summarises attributes which recur in the following publications: Allan 1989; Blieszner and Adams 1992; Bradac 1983; Coates 1996a, 1996b; Davis and Todd 1985; Duck 1990, 1991; Fehr 1996, 2004; O'Connor 1992; Reohr 1991, Wilmot and Shellen 1990.
[3] For a discussion of how power is interactively established see Spitz (2005); for the social construction of intimacy see Zinn and Eitzen (2004).
[4] Evidently, this dialectic process can be found in other interpersonal relationships. The aim of this study is to exemplify how this process is realised through conversation with respect to a specific friendship group rather than measure the outcome and compare this to other friendships or other types of relationship.
[5] Sacks (1992a: 702) also notes that if kinsmen and friends keep news to themselves, this behaviour is complained about.
[6] Further studies, which have revealed linguistic patterns typical of close relationships, will be reported when relevant, in the following chapters.
[7] I draw on work by Aries (1976), Aries and Johnson (1983), Fehr (1996), Harrison (1998), Johnson and Aries (1983), and O'Connor (1992, 1998).
[8] This is related to a shift in value-judgements about male and female conversational styles, which is critically reviewed in Cameron (1999). She notes that recently good communication has come to be associated with female conversational style. An adoption of this presumably female style, however, does not benefit women in actual interactions, since it tends to reproduce existing gender inequalities.
[9] Hence, Jones (1980: 245) argues that in spite of its alleged triviality women's talk is at the same time considered a threat so much that women have been prevented from interacting with each other for fear its subversive power. This is confirmed by Harrison's (1998: 98) study of the friendships of married middle-class women. She reports that one of the rituals of the female friends' meetings was to begin by exchanging stories "of how they had all 'managed to escape'" in spite of their husbands' attempts to prevent them from doing so.
[10] Similarly, Cook-Gumperz (2001) shows how little girls interactionally probe conventional gender identities. In her data, girls playing with their dolls are talking about boiling babies until their skins fall off, thereby rejecting the image of the nurturing mother and adopting an oppositional stance.
[11] This will be discussed in more detail in the section on methods (3.6.2.2.4).
[12] However, Coates' (1996a) conversational data of 13-year old female friendship groups contains a few confrontational challenges. Likewise, Hasund and Stenström (1996) find dispute amongst adolescent girls, more specifically, playful disputes amongst working-class girls and serious dispute aimed at conflict resolution amongst girls from middle-class backgrounds. This stresses the necessity of avoiding generalisation and of focusing on more localised sites for research such as communities of practice.

We should trust in language.
(John Sinclair, Trust in text)

In the study of languages,
one can safely assume nothing.
(Edward T. Hall, The silent language)

3 ANALYSING SCRIPTED DIALOGUE FROM *SEX AND THE CITY*: DATA AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I have established friendship as a dialectic process of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation, which results in the presence or absence of specific relationship components such as equality, intimacy and reciprocity. I have also argued that this process is located in communicative interaction and I have reviewed some of the research in relational communication which connects macro-level social relationships to micro-level communicative behaviour. In this chapter, I will present my own corpus of fictional friends' communicative behaviour and the theoretical concepts and methods I apply to investigate how the audience infers that the four friends of *SATC* are friends by drawing on their dialogue.

As the corpus consists of transcribed conversations from the U.S. American TV sitcom *SATC*, I will first provide some background information on the series. Furthermore, I will give a short overview of the form and function of screen dialogue and an overview of the process of dialogue creation. I will then focus on the production and comprehension of screen dialogue, developing a model of what I label *screen-to-face discourse* based on Goffman's (1976, 1979) concept of "the overhearer" and Clark's (1996) notion of "common ground" or "shared world knowledge." Based on this model I will then give a preliminary theoretical account of how the audience infers that the four female protagonists are close friends.

3.2 *Sex and the City*

SATC premiered on the pay TV channel HBO in June 1998 and has drawn record ratings for six seasons (94 episodes).[1] The series was created by Darren Star, who has created, produced, and written several highly popular TV dramas such as *Melrose Place* and *Beverly Hills 90210*. The sitcom is loosely based on a best-selling book by Candace Bushnell, a collection of columns she wrote for the *New York Observer*. It revolves around the dysfunctional love lives of Bushnell's fictional alter ego, *New York Star* columnist Carrie Bradshaw and her female friends – all independent women in their thirties: public relations executive Samantha Jones, corporate lawyer Miranda Hobbes, and art dealer Charlotte York. This set-up fits nicely into the new television genre identified by Marshall and Werndly (2002: 49) as "'thirty-something' drama or modern 'comedies of sexual manners'", which is concerned with "the lifestyles, interpersonal relationships, careers and rites of passage anxieties of middle-class young professionals." Darren Star's aim was to create "a comedy about sex from a female point of view" (Sohn 2004: 14); this is accomplished by showing a single woman in her thirties writing about relationships and using her column as a tool of self-discovery about her own life supported by her female friends with whom she explores the issues at hand.

The series starts out with a thirty-something birthday party for Miranda, at which the four women discuss whether there is still a need for Mr Right or whether women should start having sex like men do. This initial conversation determines the main plotline for the complete series. Throughout the six seasons the four women negotiate a conflict between sex and romance, and Di Mattia (2004: 19) argues that the absence of Mr Right is the driving narrative force. In their quest for Prince Charming or for pleasure, the women have various short- and long-term affairs and one-night-stands, but essentially they all stay single up until the final season. At various points, the women realise that they can get by without men, but they cannot get by without their female friends as Carrie's most important break-up rule states: "No matter who broke your heart or how long it takes to heal, you'll never get through it without your friends." (Season 2, Episode 13 *Take me out to the ball game*; see below). In another episode, Carrie says: "Did you ever think that maybe we're our own white knights? We have to save ourselves?" (Season 3, Episode 31 *Where there's smoke*). Yet, at the end of the show

they are all happily married (Miranda and Charlotte), have regained the love of their life (Carrie), or discovered that there is more to a man than sexual attraction and entered a steady love relationship (Samantha).

Although the quest for Mr Right is the main plotline, there are other developments: Miranda accomplishes senior partnership in her law firm, buys an apartment in Manhattan, and copes with being a single mother; Charlotte contracts various artists for her gallery, quits her job when she gets married, struggles with infertility, has a divorce, converts to Judaism, and marries a second time; Samantha stages several triumphant PR campaigns, battles with her employees and overcomes breast cancer; and Carrie struggles through financial bottlenecks due to a predilection for expensive shoes and is finally saved from ruin when her past columns are turned into a book. Since Carrie is the main protagonist and since the complete narrative is told from her point of view, it is not surprising that her character development is most dependent on the main plotline: the quest for Mr Right, more specifically the quest for Mr Big, whom she meets in the very first episode and who "rescues" her in the final episode, taking her back to New York after an unhappy stay in Paris.

The series sparked controversy due to its frank treatment of issues such as anal sex and vibrators, and it also earned divided criticism with respect to its representation of women. As noted above, the protagonists are independent single women, following third-wave feminist tenets such as allowing for multiple identities and rigorous individuality, obliterating binary gender categories, embracing sexual desire and expression, and having the power to make choices (cf. Tannert 2003).[2] As such they have been celebrated and featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, illustrating a society section on *Single by choice* (cf. figure 1).

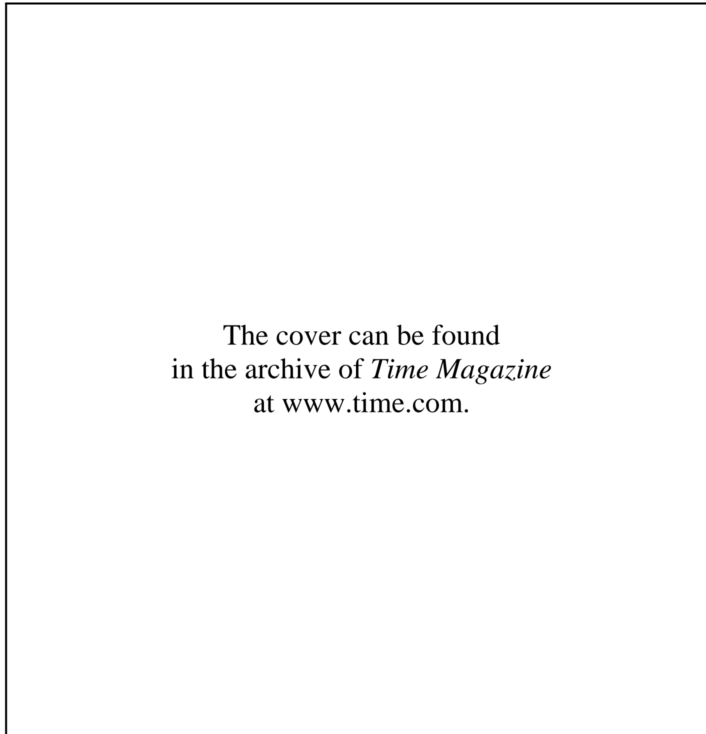

Figure 1: Cover of *Time* magazine, August 28, 2000 Vol. 156 No. 9

However, feminist media critics caution that third-wave feminist tenets are appropriated and commodified in TV shows like *SATC* or *Ally McBeal* as well as other mediated sites of popular culture such as the lyrics of Alanis Morisette with highly contradictory presentations of female identities and Calvin Klein advertising with models like Kate Moss blurring the boundaries between male and female (Shugart et al. 2001). The recent media trend of “ladette culture” with female celebrities “behaving badly” is juxtaposed with “restricted images of femininity, which require women to live up to social ideals such as the ‘good mother’, ‘looking young’ and having the ‘ideal body shape’” (Guendouzi 2001: 31) so that overall the “norms of conventional – hegemonic – femininity are still in place” (Coates 2000: 242). Both the British ladettes, discussed by Coates and Guendouzi, and their American counterparts in *SATC* correspond to conventional beauty standards, and their “bad behaviour” does not challenge all aspects of the hegemonic presentation of femininity that persist in the media. Furthermore, Kim (2001: 319) argues that the single women of *SATC* and *Ally McBeal* are presented as faced with a dilemma: “too many choices, too much freedom, and too much desire has led to a never-ending searching and even to depression and dysfunction.” Shulevitz

(2000) considers the four women “angst-ridden clotheshorses” and Whelehan (2000: 139) criticises:

> Both *Ally McBeal* and *Sex in the City* focus on the lives of single professional women and both clearly indicate that the primary ambition of these women is to realise themselves through a meaningful and lasting relationship. In both series, female power is celebrated through the depiction of professional success, but this is often undercut by showing the same women spinning out of control emotionally.

Hence, such representations of women, who professionally have it all but are still unhappy, since they cannot find a suitable man for partnership, offer a backlash discourse in the sense of Faludi (1991), which runs[3]:

> women have achieved so much yet feel so dissatisfied; it must be feminism’s achievements, not society’s resistance to these partial achievements, that is causing women all this pain. (Faludi 1991: 77)

Interestingly, the production team at times pre-empts this flaw by including utterances such as the following from season 2, episode 13 (*Take me out to the ball game*), where Miranda loses patience with her friends and complains that they only ever talk about their problems with men:

```
SC_13.3 SEVENTH GRADE WITH BANK ACCOUNTS
 39  M   okay,
         ... that’s it.
         .. I’m out of here.
         .. all we talk about anymore is Big,
         or balls,
         or small dicks,
         how does it happen that four such smart women,
         have nothing to talk about but boyfriends?
         it’s like seventh grade with bank accounts.
         what about us?
         what we think,
         we feel,
         we know,
         CHRIST.
         does it always have to be about them?
```

```
          just,
          you know,
          give me a call,
          when you're ready to talk about something besides men for a
          change.
```

In the light of all this, it is surprising to find positive reviews of *SATC* from a feminist point of view. What saves the show from complete condemnation is the representation of the four characters' friendship. Kim (2001) compares *SATC* to *Ally McBeal* and finds that while Ally is forever miserable, Carrie, Charlotte, Samantha and Miranda are presented satisfied with their lives at the end of almost each episode. This is mainly due to their friendship network, "a true sisterhood" (Kim 2001: 330), which allows the characters to discuss their perspectives and experiences and to come to resolutions about their problems or questions such as Charlotte's choice to quit her job or Carrie's break-up with Big. After Miranda's outbreak, mentioned above, episode 13 thus ends with the following reconciliatory exchange between her and Carrie.

SC_13.4 MEETING THE EX

```
1    C    hi.
          (6.0){sits down at the table and takes her jacket off}
          I saw Big and I completely fell apart.
          and I know you want me to be over him.
          I just [don't]
2    M    [I'm a jerk.]
          ... it's my stuff
          it's not you.
          (3.0) I saw Eric on the street today,
          and I hid, ((nervous laughter))
          after two years,
          (2.5) I forgot how hard it is.
          you just take all the time you need,
          okay?
3    C    ((nods))
          (8.0){eats from Miranda's French fries}
          these are cold.
4    M    (2.0){eats a fry}
          so?
5    C    (1.0)((laughs))
6    M    ((laughs))
7         {voiceover Carrie: and finally, the most important break-up
          rule. no matter who broke your heart or how long it takes
          to heal, you'll never get through it without your friends.}
```

Akass (2004) even argues that *SATC* has accomplished a re-evaluation of female friendship and the talk of female friends. This perspective stresses the necessity of

investigating the friendship relations between the four friends and how they are established in and through the characters' talk.

> *There once was a time in this business when I had the eyes of the whole world. But that wasn't good enough for them, oh no. They had to have the ears of the whole world too. So they opened their big mouths and out came talk, talk, talk.*
> (*Norma Desmond in Sunset Boulevard, Billy Wilder, 1950)*

3.3 Dialogue in *Sex and the City*: function and form

Like Akass (2004) and Kim (2001) I perceive *SATC* to revolve around conversations between women friends. The audience listens in on the talk of the four friends in various locations, mostly in public places; and all the events depicted in an episode are talked through in the friends' conversations. Usually, the audience encounters either all four of them or a dyad made up of Carrie and one of her friends at a trendy New York restaurant or coffee shop. In fact, the scenes of all four women sharing meals took such a prominent role in the filming process that the production team accorded them a special term: "chat-and-chew" (Sohn 2004: 102). The chat and chew scenes present the friendship circle as a surrogate family, since catching up with each other during shared meals is a typical family activity (cf. Blum-Kulka 1997; Keppler 1994). Apart from eating together, the women share various other activities like having their nails done at beauty parlours, playing cards, strolling across a flea market, or watching TV. All of these joint activities, however, are dominated by their talk and hence settings for the presentation of all-female dialogue.

Before going into the function and form of the type of dialogue presented, I will briefly sketch how it comes into existence, giving a background to the data I use in this project. Aside from Darren Star, various producers, directors, story editors and writers are involved in the creation of the show and thus the construction of the dialogue (cf. Sohn 2004). The writing staff determines the plotline for a season, before single episodes are assigned to writers and writing teams. Detailed outlines are presented to the TV channel executives before filming starts. The episodes are then shot, two scripts at a time with a single director. In the course of filming, the original script may be

modified by directors and ad-libbing actors. In post-production, a director's cut is edited and then re-edited by the executive producer. This version is submitted to HBO programming executives who produce a final cut, which is then broadcast. This process clearly entails multiple authorship, which is rendered even more complex by the fact that the TV series is based on a collection of Candace Bushnell's newspaper columns.

In spite of the impression that talk between the four women is paramount, only roughly 20% of the broadcasting time in any given episode of *SATC* consists of all-female conversation. The impression of the prevalence of all-female talk may be due to the fact that the dialogue establishes a frame within which an episode's plot develops. Typically, the dialogue introduces the episode's theme, which is also the theme of Carrie's weekly newspaper column, e.g. "To be in a couple, do you have to put your single self on a shelf?" (Season 4, Episode 62, *All that glitters…*). Aside from supplying the episodes' themes, the dialogue serves a variety of functions typical of talk in narrative film and TV drama (cf. Kozloff 2000, ch. 1). It characterises the four women by displaying their opinions on a theme; in particular, it helps construct their female identities (cf. Bubel 2004, 2005). Furthermore, the dialogue provides narrative causality by relating the women's experiences: often, conversational storytelling functions as an anchor for flashbacks, and the audience then travels back into the conversationalists' presence for the resolution and evaluation of the story. Finally, the dialogue of the four friends provides the main source of the sitcom's humour and is rife with witty repartee and sarcastic remarks like Samantha's "It's slim pickings out there. You can't swing a Fendi purse without knocking over five losers" (Season 2, Episode 25, *Games people play*). Lines such as the above show that sitcom dialogue is highly scripted and differs from everyday speech. The high percentage of witty repartee, for example, requires a particularly fast rate of utterance delivery for large parts of the conversations. In the next section, I will give an overview of how screen dialogue is different from and yet similar to naturally occurring conversation in order to sketch the linguistic form it takes.

Generally, verbal interactions on the screen – even in sitcoms – are designed to evoke an illusion of the real so that the viewers are under the impression of actually overhearing private conversations. In order to get a feeling for what everyday talk sounds like, students of screenwriting courses are advised to record and listen to

naturally occurring conversations. Syd Field, one of the most prominent U.S. American screenwriting teachers, recommends:

> Tape a conversation with a friend or acquaintance. Play it back and listen to it. Notice how fragmented it is, how quickly thoughts come and go. If you want to see what "real" dialogue looks like, type it up in screenplay form. Listen for mannerisms, and inflections, find the style of speech, the phrasing. Then think about your character speaking in those "rhythms," or in that "language." (Field 1984:70)

The imitation of reality, which holds not only for language but for all elements of the film text, is typically achieved with the help of specific filmic conventions, and is referred to as the "code of realism." This code has gained more and more importance in Western filmmaking, which has clearly influenced the way screen conversations are scripted. Compared to current narrative films and TV series, dialogue in the early talkies sounds stilted and non-verbal cues seem grossly exaggerated, since the presentation of conversation was still under the influence of silent movies and the theatre. Aside from historic developments, there are also different dialogue conventions depending on the genre – with higher artificiality characterising genres such as the Western and screwball comedy (cf. Kozloff 2001).

Although current narrative films and TV drama are characterised by realistic dialogue, they still follow some conventions of stage dialogue and contain stock lines which the audience accepts "according to the terms of the cinema, not of reality" (Berliner 1999: 3). An exchange like "Darling, what's gotten into you? You're not yourself." "Yes, I am…for the first time in my life." is immediately recognised as film dialogue and would sound strange in everyday conversation (cf. Berliner 1999:3). Furthermore, there are limitations to the realism of screen dialogue with respect to intelligibility, redundancy and dramatic function. Any feature of naturally occurring conversation, which makes dialogue hard to overhear such as false starts and any feature that results in redundant talk such as repair sequences is avoided. Likewise, abrupt topic shifts and repetition, massively found in everyday interaction, are rare, since they do not advance the plot and do not comply with the economy maxim, which

requires that dialogue is kept to a minimum (cf. Kozloff 2000: 6ff.). Marshall and Werndly (2002: 81) also point out that verbal interaction on the screen is characterised by a low percentage of minimal responses. All this also holds for the dialogue in *SATC*.

A detailed study on screen dialogue is Kobus (1998). Comparing dialogue in novels and their film adaptations, Kobus focuses on various phenomena of verbal interaction to show how realism is accomplished. For film dialogue, she finds that some features such as discourse markers (e.g. "well", "you know") and utterance prefaces (e.g. "listen the point is") occur frequently with the sole function of making dialogue appear less scripted, while others simultaneously serve to mark specific aspects of the speech situation. Hesitations and pauses, for example, often occur within turns to mark a state of mind such as embarrassment or confusion. In turn-initial position, on the other hand, they demarcate turns and align utterances with shifting camera angles.

Some filmmakers, however, place greater emphasis on realistic dialogue, not shying away from redundancies, unintelligibility, and verbal affluence. Writer-directors such as Mike Leigh, Woody Allen and John Cassavetes carefully construct dialogue to sound like everyday talk – or have their actors improvise dialogue to sound like everyday talk. Berliner (1999) describes Cassavetes' realism as:

> an alternative form of realism to the kind one normally finds in American movies, a realism created not by concealing one's art but by revealing the similarity between the act of creating art and the act of living. (p. 9)

He argues that Cassavetes considered real life as a performance and that his films exploited the resonances between the presentation of self in drama and the presentation of self in reality. This is reminiscent of Goffman's (1959) theory of the presentation of self, which uses theatrical metaphors to account for the social construction of identities. Goffman (1959) distinguishes the self-as-performer, a psychobiological organism with moods and impulses, from the self-as-character, the mask an individual wears in social situations. This juxtaposition of everyday performance and theatrical performance raises the question how the act of observing everyday performances and the act of observing theatrical performances compare. This will be addressed in the following section, in

which I argue that the processes involved in the comprehension of screen dialogue are identical to those involved in making sense of conversations overheard in everyday life.

3.4 Screen-to-face discourse

Screen-to-face discourse is a type of mediated discourse found whenever people go to the cinema, or watch TV, video, DVD etc. Several theories have been developed that account for mediated discourse, but they are frequently based on a message or container model of communication reducing communication to the encoding of a message through a sender and its decoding through a receiver.[4] Mass media studies, in particular, rely on this simplified mechanistic model (cf. Klemm 2000: 83; Scollon 1998: 17). As a consequence, these theories neglect the fact that the audience actively co-constructs meaning (cf. Duranti 1986). The media studies concept of the active audience implies that the audience is always an active participant and that media content is always open to interpretation (cf. Klemm 2000: 102-105; Morley 1994).

3.4.1 Models of mediated discourse

In this section, I will present three established models, which account for various types of mediated discourse: cinema, TV, radio, and drama texts. Firstly, Burger (1984: 44ff.) argues that participants in TV or radio talk shows not only speak to each other but always with respect to the TV or radio audience. He therefore distinguishes two communication circles: an "inner circle," in which the dialogue is taking place ("primary situation") and an "outer circle" constituted through the relationship between the participants in the dialogue and the audience in front of the TV or radio ("secondary situation"). Burger applies his model mainly to talk shows or interviews on TV and radio, and includes an optional third circle for the case of a studio audience being present (1984: 44). The distinction between inner and outer circle entails multiple addressing, i.e. the participants simultaneously address recipients in the inner and the outer circle, which has a qualitative effect on the nature and the course of a conversation (Burger 1991: 7).

Similar to Burger's metaphor of one communication circle within another, Short (1981, 1989, 1994) describes dramatic discourse in terms of embeddedness. The playwright addresses the audience and embedded in this level is another one, on which character A addresses character B. The embedded level is part of the message that the playwright communicates to the audience. Short (1994) argues that this embedded

discourse allows for effects such as dramatic irony and characterisation: "When we listen to two characters talking on stage we are meant to deduce, through what they say, what the author is telling us about them" (Short 1994: 950).

Neither Burger's nor Short's model can be fully applied to screen-to-face discourse. As for Burger's model, the inner circle consists of the action on the screen and the outer circle consists of the audience decoding what happens on the screen. However, for scripted film or TV dialogue, the model's participation framework needs to be extended, adding the film production crew which designs, films and edits the dialogue of the inner circle for the participants in the outer circle.

As Betten (1977: 360) states, film has more levels of communication and there is no direct link between the message of the screenwriter/director and the audience, since there are cameras and the process of editing to be taken into account. Short (1989: 149) concedes that there can be more than two levels, but only within the structure of the play, for example, when one character relates to a second character the words of a third. Neither his nor Burger's model are intended to integrate factors involved in the production of a play except for the playwright and the recipients: the director, for example, is not taken into account.

Furthermore, as noted above, both models seem to be based on a simplified message model of communication, where A addresses B and B decodes the meaning of the message sent by A. The fact that the participants negotiate meaning – on both levels or in both circles – is not taken into account. The role of the listener in the co-construction of meaning of the interaction is thus neglected. Although the audience does not visibly participate in the interaction – with the exception of premieres of movies when the audience applauds the present filmmaking crew and may ask questions and give comments – it is still taking an active part in the construction of overall meaning:

> interpretation (of texts, sounds etc.) is not a passive activity whereby the audience is just trying to figure out what the author meant to communicate. Rather, it is a way of making sense of what someone said (or wrote or drew) by linking it to a world or context that the audience can make sense of (Duranti 1986: 243-244).

Hence, the comprehension of screen dialogue relies not only on the author's/production team's adroitly communicating narrative elements through dialogue, but also on the audience and the author/production team sharing world knowledge or context.

Clark's (1996) theory of layering in discourse is more suitable to explain the complexities of screen-to-face discourse. His model resembles Short's insofar as he distinguishes several levels of discourse on which events take place. These levels are called layers or domains of action, and they are characterised by the participants, their roles, the place, the time, the relevant features of the situation, and the possible actions (Clark 1996: 355). The layers in Clark's model are recursive and allow for more complexity. For TV drama this layering would take the following form illustrated in figure 2.

Layer 3	Characters interact
Layer 2	The production team, the actors and the audience jointly pretend that events in layer 3 take place.
Layer 1	The audience in front of a TV and the TV station jointly realise layer 2.

Figure 2: Layering in TV drama

Comparable to Short's notion of embedding one level within the other, Clark (1996: 355) argues that layer 1 is the foundation or base, and consequently, the participants of this layer are the primary participants. The higher layers are like theatrical stages created on top of the first layer. The audience, however, does not pay most attention to the basic layer, but instead to the topmost layer. Clark accounts for this phenomenon by distinguishing two principles that hold in layered actions: imagination and appreciation. He defines the two principles as follows:

> Principle of imagination: In layered actions, the primary participants are intended to imagine what is happening in the highest current layer of action.
>
> Principle of appreciation: In layered actions, the primary participants are intended to appreciate the instigator's purposes and techniques in creating the highest current layer of action. (Clark 1996: 359)

Imagining the topmost layer is what engrosses the audience. One effect of TV drama (or film in general) is that it transports the audience into the realm of the story and through that evokes emotions and suspense. Imagination is central to human cognitive activities and "is needed for even the simplest descriptions" (Clark and Van der Wege 2001: 774). Since imagination entails the audience's linking what is presented on screen with their own world knowledge, this concept also takes into consideration the role of the audience in the co-construction of meaning.[5]

Appreciation is another concept that shows how the audience is involved in the co-construction of meaning. It comprises what the audience accomplishes on the lower, more obscure layers. On these layers the audience recognizes how screenwriters and film directors, camera and editing staff achieve certain effects, such as flashbacks. The principle of appreciation also accounts for scenes in which, in Kozloff's (2000) terms, there are thematic messages, authorial commentary or allegories. The inclusion of these

> breaks the illusion that viewers are merely overhearing characters talking to one another; it makes plain that the dialogue is addressed to the audience. This both violates the suspension of disbelief and 'catches' the viewer in the act of eavesdropping. (Kozloff 2000: 57)

In *SATC* – especially in the early episodes – Carrie sometimes turns away from a conversation and directly addresses the audience. In SC_1.2 AMAZING DATE, for example, Carrie talks away from telephone receiver and to the audience in order to account for what is left unsaid in this conversation.

SC_1.2 AMAZING DATE

```
    1    C    {answering the phone}
              hello?
    2    Ch   hey Carrie.
              it's Charlotte.
    3    C    hey sweetie.
    4    Ch   hey,
              look,
              I can't meet you guys for dinner tomorrow night?
              because I have an amazing date?
    5    C    with who?
    6    Ch   Capote Dunkin.
              he's supposedly some big shot in the publishing world,
              do you know him?
```

```
               {Carrie puts hand over receiver and addresses audience: did
→              I know him? he was one of the city's most notoriously un-
               gettable bachelors.}
               wait wait.
               don't .. even answer that question.
               because frankly?
               I don't care.
               and .. another thing,
               ... I'm not buying into any of that women having sex like
               men crap.
→   7    C     {Carrie takes receiver down and addresses audience: I
               didn't want to tell her about my afternoon of cheap and
               easy sex and how good it felt}
               all right fi:ne.
               listen.
               have a good time.
               and promise to tell me everything.
    8    Ch    o:h,
               if you're lucky.
               bye:
    9    C     all right.
               bye.
```

Carrie's asides in turns six and seven here clearly break the illusion and prompt the viewer/listener to shift from imagination to appreciation. The focus in my project, however, is on the level of imagination rather than appreciation, more precisely the imagination of a friendship between the four women.

3.4.2 A cognitive model of screen-to-face discourse

So far, I have presented three models that can be used to explain the workings of mediated discourse. I consider the approach of layeredness or levels useful to explain some phenomena of screen-to-face discourse, for example how characterisation works through verbal interaction between the protagonists or how the audience imagines and appreciates media products. In this section, I will integrate this notion into a cognitive approach to screen-to-face discourse, which attempts to explain the processes of producing and comprehending screen dialogue. This is in line with the call for a cognitivist film theory (cf. Bordwell 1989, Giora and Ne'eman 1996). I argue that the cognitive processes in screen-to-face discourse are generally parallel to the processes we experience when we overhear conversations or design conversations to be overheard in everyday life. To illustrate the processes we experience in everyday life, I will first

present the concept of "overhearing" as sketched by Erving Goffman (1976, 1979) and developed by Clark and Carlson (1982), Clark and Schaefer (1992) and Clark (1996).

3.4.2.1 The spectator as overhearer

The key concept to an understanding of the workings of screen-to-face discourse is overhearing[6]. I claim that the cognitive processes while listening to dialogue on screen are parallel to those that occur in everyday life when we take on the role of an overhearer – whether the conversation we are overhearing is designed for us or whether the conversationalists are unaware of our listening in.

Goffman (1976, 1979) distinguishes three main listener roles: Firstly, overhearers, whose unratified participation can be intentional or not and can be encouraged or not. Secondly, ratified participants, who – in the case of there being more than two interlocutors – are not specifically addressed by the speaker. Thirdly, addressees, who are oriented to by the speaker in a way that suggests that her words are directed specifically at them. The relevant role for a description of screen-audience discourse is that of the overhearer, divided in Clark's (1996) framework into bystander and eavesdropper (cf. figure 3).

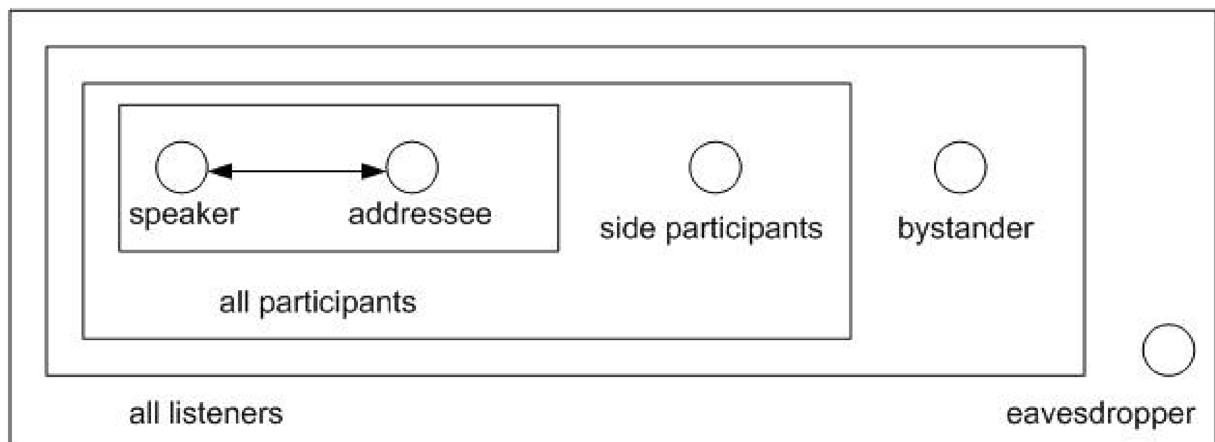

Figure 3: The participation framework (Clark 1996: 14)

Bystanders are openly present, but not part of the conversation, for example when a couple has a conversation on a bus, and there are people sitting opposite in hearing distance of what is said. Eavesdroppers, by contrast, listen in without the speakers'

awareness, for example, someone listening behind a door to a conversation going on inside a room. According to Clark (1996: 14), the roles of bystanders and eavesdroppers, however, form a continuum, as there are in-between varieties of overhearers; for example, if in the bus scenario overhearers sit behind the conversationalists, they are not as openly present as the ones sitting opposite. I will therefore use the term overhearer to denote a listener anywhere on a continuum between bystander and eavesdropper.

Short (1989) as well as Holly and Baldauf (2002) point out that spectators in the theatre or in front of the screen cannot be considered overhearers in the sense of Goffman, because “the situation is arranged to be overheard on purpose” (Short 1989: 149). Thus, spectators count as ratified participants (Holly and Baldauf 2002: 55). However, I argue that they can still be treated as overhearers, because, firstly, there are everyday situations in which the conversationalists want overhearers to glean certain information from what they are saying without them actively participating in the conversation; and secondly, it is not the characters on the top layer who design the talk for the overhearer in front of the screen, but the production team on the overlaying layers, so that in Goffman’s terms

> the words addressed by one character in a play to another (at least in modern Western dramaturgy) are eternally sealed off from the audience, belonging entirely to a self-enclosed, make-believe realm. (Goffman 1979: 13)

Consequently, listening to dialogue on the screen is no different from overhearing dialogue in everyday situations, when the talk is also sealed off, as it concerns the ratified participants' world that usually only incidentally overlaps with the world of the overhearer. This corresponds to Scollon’s (1998) concept of “a watch,” defined as “any person or group of people who are perceived to have attention to some spectacle as the central focus of their (social) activity” (p. 92). He argues that no matter whether there is mediation – for example we see a couple arguing in a movie, or not – we see a couple arguing in the street, there is a “barrier” between the spectacle and the watchers (Scollon, 1998: 93).[7]

In the following passage, I will summarize Clark and Schaefer's (1992) theory of how unratified participants make sense of overheard conversations. One of the key concepts of their theory is common ground, i.e. the shared background between participants to a conversation. This shared knowledge or common ground is distinguished into communal common ground and personal common ground. Communal common ground – also labelled shared encyclopaedic knowledge – is all the knowledge and all the beliefs held in the communities that the participants share membership of. Personal common ground, on the other hand, is all the mutual knowledge and all the mutual beliefs which the participants share from personal experience with each other including the present interaction. Depending on whether participants to a conversation have common ground or not, they either make sense of the interaction through "recognizing" or through "conjecturing" (Clark and Schaefer 1992: 259ff.).

Ratified participants generally recognize what speakers say by making inferences from conclusive evidence based on the common ground between the conversationalists. Overhearers, on the other hand, frequently can only make conjectures about what the interlocutors mean, i.e. they draw inferences about it from inconclusive evidence, unless they fully share knowledge with the ratified participants. Even if overhearers share the communal common ground and some personal common ground, they are unlikely to have taken part in all the participants' shared experiences, and thus there is always some inaccessible part. The process of conjecturing entails reconstructing the common ground which the speaker presupposes. For example, if we overhear a young woman saying to a young man: "Sociolinguistics was really interesting yesterday, wasn't it?", we may reconstruct the following common ground: the two are students in the same course, namely linguistics, and they attend a seminar or lecture titled *Sociolinguistics*, which took place the day before. If that is part of the common ground between the ratified participants, our reconstruction is consistent with theirs, and the utterance makes sense to both ratified and unratified participants.

Considering that knowledge is generally organised in so-called "idealised cognitive models" (G. Lakoff 1987) or "cognitive frames" (Tannen 1979; Hedges 1991), overhearers retrieve stored cognitive models or frames prompted by the utterance they pick up. These models or frames are compared to what is said, and if they do not fit,

other models with a better fit are retrieved. The cognitive models which stand up to the comparison constitute the part of the common ground referred to in the utterance. In the case of no matching model, the new information is fitted into existing knowledge structures, expanding and combining these or establishing new cognitive models. This process then also enables imagination.

Models or frames which spectators retrieve while overhearing screen dialogue, however, also encompass knowledge patterns acquired through the experience of watching other movies (Hedges 1991: xiv) or watching TV (Holly and Baldauf 2002: 52). These patterns are as much part of our world knowledge as real world experiences. As noted above, movie dialogue obeys its own conventions and while much of it is close to reality, there are certain stock lines that have a well-defined additional meaning. A change in character, for example, can be indicated by the following utterances "I can't take it anymore" and the line "It's quiet. Too quiet" means that something is going to happen soon (Berliner 1999: 3). Holly and Baldauf (2002: 52) also argue that the spectator has expectations of the characters specific actors impersonate or of storylines typical of certain broadcasting stations[8]. This kind of world knowledge is activated in the process which Clark (1996) labels "appreciation."

In essence, overhearers have no rights and no responsibilities in a conversation. This has consequences for the process of understanding insofar as overhearers draw inferences based on a limited amount of common ground. Nor do they have the option of negotiating meaning with ratified participants in what Clark and Schober (1992) label "grounding process". Schegloff (1984: 50) refers to this as "overhearer's problem":

> an overhearer, getting a snatch of a conversation, or even all of it without knowing the "what-is-being-talked-about" independently of the talk he is hearing about it, can hear ambiguities in the talk that are not there for the ratified participants (to use Goffman's term) in the conversation.

Due to this overhearer's problem, troubles in understanding due to wrong conjectures may easily occur and can accumulate in screen-to-face discourse. This renders the design of successful screen dialogue a complex challenge for the production team.

3.4.2.2 Overhearer design

In order to explain how screen dialogue is designed for the implied recipients, it is again helpful to compare screen-to-face conversation to everyday overhearer situations. Clark and Schaefer (1992) distinguish four attitudes towards overhearers. Firstly, there is indifference, i.e. the speaker can design her utterance as if the overhearer were not present.[9] Secondly, the attitude may be disclosure, i.e. the conversationalists want the overhearer to gather certain information from the conversation, providing the overhearer with enough evidence to make correct conjectures. These conjectures are based on the conversationalists' common ground. The less common ground between overhearer and conversationalists, the more difficult it is to disclose information to an overhearer.[10] Thirdly, there is concealment, i.e. conversationalists make use of a lack of common ground to deprive the overhearer of enough evidence to infer correctly what they mean, for example by switching to a language the overhearer does not know. The less common ground between the conversationalists and the overhearer the easier it is to conceal. Finally, Clark and Schaefer (1992) distinguish an attitude that they label "disguisement". In this case, the conversationalists want the overhearer to arrive at the wrong conclusions without her noticing, consciously providing her with cues that result in incorrect conjectures.

In summary, more or less common ground is opened or closed to overhearers, depending on the attitude conversationalists take towards them. If a conversationalist wants to conceal what is said from the overhearer, she will try to base her utterances on information closed to the overhearer, typically on personal common ground shared between the ratified participants that the overhearer cannot access. Utterances like "You-know-who told me" for example allow no correct conjectures, no reproduction of common ground to which this utterance would be a meaningful addition. If, on the other hand, ratified participants want the overhearer to glean information from what they are saying, they must design their utterances in a fashion that allows an interpretation against those parts of their common ground that are open to the overhearer.

The latter is essentially the proceeding in the design of screen discourse: the default attitude here is that of disclosure.[11] Utterances are designed with overhearers in mind, on the basis of an estimate of the audience's world knowledge and knowledge of the characters gleaned from already overheard and observed interactions. This process is

the screen-to-face equivalent of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) concept of "recipient design" in face-to-face conversation. They define recipient design as:

> a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are co-participants. (Sacks et al. 1974: 727)

Correspondingly, the audience in front of the screen is oriented to, i.e. the overhearers' knowledge structures are anticipated. Every utterance is tailored to them. The difference between recipient design in face-to-face communication and overhearer design in screen-to-face conversation is that the anticipation of the overhearer's knowledge is indirect, established in "hypothetical intersubjectivity" (Ayaß 2002: 149, my translation) and consequently more tentative.[12]

If relevant information is considered closed to overhearers, it must be included in the utterance so that correct conjectures can be made, even though this information might be redundant for ratified participants on the character layer. Imagine, for example, two characters in a science fiction drama, talking about a technological gadget which is standard equipment in their world but does not exist in the world of the audience: they will have to include information on how it functions and what its purpose is, although they both know. They make this information available to the overhearer who does not share their common ground, but who can make sense of what they are talking about by making the correct conjectures based on the additional information.

To recapitulate, screen dialogue has to take into account the disadvantages of screen-to-face discourse, making up for a lack of common ground and an inability to negotiate ground. Finding common ground open to any audience, however, may be difficult, considering the vastly different backgrounds and experiences of the many viewers. Each viewer, resorting to individual experience and knowledge patterns, may come up with a different interpretation of a line in a movie. The fundamental law of screen-to-face discourse – as for all mass media texts – is that there is variability in interpretation (cf. Eco 1967: 152).[13]

In summary, if character A and B interact on the screen, the audience makes conjectures about what they mean, i.e. they draw inferences on the basis of their world knowledge, which partly overlaps with that of the characters' common ground. The process of conjecturing is facilitated by overhearer design, i.e. the tailoring of utterances based on an estimation of the audience's world knowledge. This means the production team and the actors aim for overlap between the characters' common ground and the audience's knowledge in a mediated grounding process. Overhearer design includes that the characters do not mumble, speak in a variety of language unintelligible to the overhearer, nor refer to events, people and sentiments unknown to the viewer. Overhearer design is a co-operative achievement by the production team, although the actors' involvement seems more direct than the rest of the production team's. The audience certainly is more aware of them than of the producers, directors, cutters etc., who are merely mentioned in the titles at the beginning and end of a screen event. The actors enunciate the characters' utterances clearly, but they choose the phrases, sentences as well as paralinguistic and non-verbal elements in cooperation with story editors, scriptwriters and the director (see figure 4)[14]

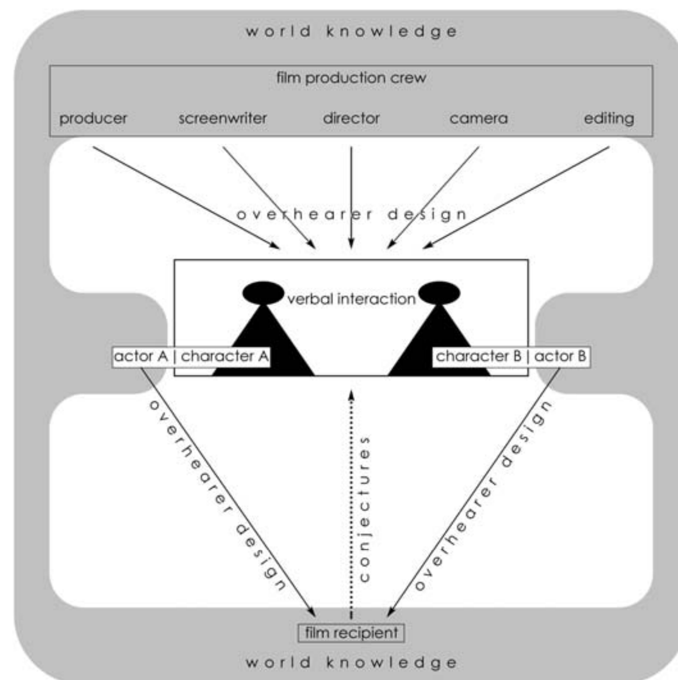

Figure 4: A model of screen-to-face discourse

In this task, all of the participants rely on their own intuitions about and expectations of how conversation works. Intuitions about how conversations between characters work stem from first-hand experiences as well as from listening in on other's conversations – as I have already noted above, this is a common practice by screenwriters. Cindy Chupack, one of the writers for *SATC*, explains: "Every restaurant you go to seems like a possible set, and you overhear great conversations, and you can't help getting ideas because they are all around you" (HBO 2003).

Once these ideas are realised as scripted dialogue, verbal interactions between actors/characters are shot by the camera team, with the camera focusing in on the face of the speaking or listening actor/character and sometimes all of the conversationalists. The filmed material is then edited in a joint effort by cutters, directors, and producers. Through the choice of camera angles in the editing process, dialogue can be structured and emphasised; close-ups, for example, are chosen, if a conversation becomes more emotional or an argument reaches its climax. Knee shots on the other hand are preferred, if the dialogue is of little importance to the plot of the film (Straßner 2001: 1095). Another issue relevant to film dialogue that is decided upon in the editing process is the length of shots: generally, short shots are preferred for emotional dialogues, clearly structuring the conversation through cutting from speaker to speaker, whereas long shots are favoured for less emotional dialogue (Straßner 2001: 1096).

All of this process is relevant in the design of utterances for the overhearers so that the co-construction of meaning in screen-to-face discourse is a joint effort of the audience in front of the screen, the actors, the directors, the screenwriter, the story editors, the producers, the camera team and the cutters involved in the editing process. Both the members of the production team and the members of the audience make use of their world knowledge to design/interpret conversations between characters, the overlap between their individual world and story world knowledge constituting their common ground (cf. figure 4).

This overlap in world knowledge between the producer and the overhearers as well as the characters also constitutes the basis for the design/interpretation of the characters' relational communication, i.e. their negotiation of the social ties between them. This in turn allows for the imagination of character relationships, a process that I label "relationship impression formation."

3.5 Scripted dialogue and relationship impression formation

The cognitive process of relationship impression formation is analogous to the process of character impression formation described by Culpeper (2001, 2002). Both involve "the interaction between the text and the interpreter's background knowledge" (Culpeper 2001:28). The text can be defined broadly as the complete audiovisual event on the screen or narrowly as the dialogue between the characters. Both senses of the term "text" are relevant in the perception of character relationships. As I have noted in the preceding chapter, the fact that individuals interact already signals that some relationship between them exists. Based on that knowledge, the frequency with which the four female protagonists in *SATC* are seen to converse is interpreted as them being in close relationship. Furthermore, the frequency of the various constellations in which they interact points to what kind of close relation they have with each other. The most frequent dyadic constellation in *SATC*, for example, is Carrie plus Miranda, suggesting that these two characters are closer to each other than they are with Charlotte and Samantha.

Aside from the frequency and exclusivity of their meetings, I argue that the women's verbal behaviour in each other's presence, i.e. the text in the narrow sense of the word, is the key source of textual cues on their friendship relation. This argument is in keeping with the discursive turn in the investigation of interpersonal relations described in the preceding chapter. Since conversation is considered the most important tool in the construction of relationships in real-life, it is feasible that the scripted dialogue between characters is the most important site for the co-construction of their interpersonal relationships by the film production team and the overhearing audience and thus for the process of relationship impression formation.

When for example overhearers of a screen conversation identify terms of endearment in an interaction between two characters, they integrate this textual cue with their prior knowledge of people in relationships – real-life and fictional – who display this feature. On the basis of this knowledge they draw inferences such as that the characters like each other and are close. Furthermore, the process of character impression formation is cyclic, so that the viewer's prior knowledge affects the perception of textual cues (Culpeper 2001). If the viewer knows a relationship that has the qualities of the relationship on the screen, she is more likely to recognise specific

textual cues.[15] This then entails a larger amount of overlap in the world knowledge of the recipient and the film production team.

This line of argument is all the more justified, if one takes into account that significant research has been done on the basis of overhearers' intuitions about recorded naturally occurring conversations played to them (e.g. McGregor 1990; Fox Tree 2002). Sally Planalp, in particular, conducted a series of experiments, in which native speaker judges were asked to differentiate between the conversations of friends and those of acquaintances on the basis of listening to them (Planalp and Benson 1992; Planalp 1993; Planalp and Garvin-Doxas 1994). The judges guessed correctly in about 80% of the cases. Their choices were primarily based on the conversationalists' display of mutual knowledge, for example, through definite reference to people, places and events. One aim of the present study is to reveal other bases on which interpersonal relationships can be judged.

Some research uses the opposite procedure, i.e. scholars have someone write conversations between specific types of interlocutors. These constructed conversations then yield insights on speech stereotypes, such as male and female linguistic behaviour (e.g. Popp et al. 2003). This type of research also makes use of the fact that individuals have expectations of conversations between specific types of interlocutors based on former experiences. These social-cognitive processes correspond to those involved in the construction of screen dialogue, which can be considered a more conscious mutation of this phenomenon: the film production team constructs screen dialogue on the basis of their world knowledge and the world knowledge they anticipate their implied audience to have. In the case of relational communication components of screen dialogue, they base the textual cues they give on that part of world knowledge which concerns prototypes of interpersonal relations, as described in the preceding chapter. Aside from knowledge of real world relationships and prevailing stereotypes, the film production team is also influenced by prior knowledge of other fictional relationships such as the friendship relations between the protagonists of the TV sitcoms *Friends* or *Ally McBeal*.

In essence, the film production team makes use of the fact that recipients draw on their expectations of what real conversation is like and draws on the same expectations to achieve specific effects. One caveat here is that, as I have already noted above, screen talk is not like real conversation, but rather "a canonical approximation of spontaneous

talk in interaction" (Boxer 2002: 18). Writers and actors do not mirror all features they expect of real conversation. As already noted above, stylistic analyses of scripted talk showed that some structural features such as overlapping speech and repair sequences are rarely found, and this may be due to the constraints of the media or to the fact that some features of conversation are less obvious and thus not part of world knowledge. However, stylistic analyses also show that in other respects constructed talk is very close to natural dialogue, in particular with respect to the pragmalinguistic level of conversational organisation. Pratt's (1977) seminal work on literary dialogue reveals that speech acts in constructed and naturally occurring conversation are alike; and Rose's (2001) comparative study on compliments indicates that film language is representative of real talk with respect to compliment topics, syntactic formulas and response patterns. On the basis of this pragmalinguistic consistency, various scholars (Bubel and Spitz forthcoming; Hall and Daniels 1992; Murphy 1977; Tannen and Lakoff 1994) argue that it is worthwhile to investigate constructed dialogue in order to advance the understanding of the internalised model of communicative competence, the "schema for the production of conversation" (Tannen and Lakoff 1994: 139).[16]

This warrants the procedure I suggest, i.e. a focus on the relational aspects of constructed dialogue to gain insights into the schema for the interactional construction of interpersonal relationships and to account for the process of relationship impression formation in the recipients of screen dialogue. Just as discourse analysis reveals the negotiation of social ties in naturally occurring conversation, it can yield insights into how these ties are established and comprehended in artefacts such as TV sitcoms or literary texts. A detailed analysis of *SATC* dialogue can yield insights into how friendship relations are established and maintained and accordingly explains how the recipient knows what kind of friendship relations the four women have. Fine (1981: 98) argues that for soap opera, "as in life, the larger patterns are created through conversations which form the foundation of social relationships." I maintain the same for *SATC* dialogue.

Authors such as Burton (1982), Tannen and Lakoff (1994) and Spitz (2005) have investigated constructed dialogue with respect to its evocation of interpersonal relationships. Burton (1982) uses the tools of discourse analysis to account for the fact that a large number of recipients respond similarly to specific effects in plays. She

investigates Harold Pinter's *Dumb Waiter*, focusing on how an adult-naughty child relationship is negotiated between a hit man and his junior partner through what she labels "transaction management." Her detailed linguistic analysis serves to refine a first, impressionistic gloss of the drama dialogue and reveals how the relationship impression is evoked. Tannen and Lakoff (1994) reveal the use of specific pragmatic patterns in the conversations of a married couple, using Bergman's *Scenes from a marriage*; and Spitz (2005), analysing plays by women writers, focuses on the negotiation of mother-daughter relationships through verbal conflict. As far as I have been able to establish, no studies have so far been conducted to illuminate the evocation of more voluntary interpersonal relationships such as friendship through scripted dialogue.

3.6 Analyses at the character level

In order to elucidate the process of relationship impression formation in *SATC* screen-to-face discourse, I repeatedly watched all six season of the series and put together a corpus of conversations of the four women friends. In a second step, I conducted detailed linguistic analyses, drawing on various discourse analytic approaches and treating the data as if it was naturally occurring conversation. In the following, I will give a short overview of the composition of the corpus and the methods used to analyse it.

3.6.1 The corpus

I collected the interactions from the first two seasons (episodes 1-30), because these two seasons have established the four characters and their friendship relation and therefore constitute the most significant part of the series from my point of view. Since audio-visual recordings are extremely complex and impossible to be fully grasped in real time, "they are not sufficient by themselves for the systematic examination of interaction" (J. Edwards 2001: 321). Detailed linguistic analyses require transcriptions, which provide "a distillation of the fleeting events of an interaction" (J. Edwards 2001: 321). Like all recent popular TV shows, *SATC* has been partially transcribed by fans, and some of these transcriptions are available on the internet. However, since not all episodes are available and since the available transcriptions do not include the detail necessary for a linguistic investigation, I prepared my own. Together with a student research assistant I produced rough orthographic transcriptions rendering the contents of the characters' utterances. I then refined these transcriptions, including paralinguistic and sequential information as well as non-verbal elements of conversation. These transcriptions of 122 all-female interactions constitute the core corpus.

The following four seasons of *SATC* are only partially included in the corpus, since they mainly refer back to the characterisations of the friendship relationship established in the first two seasons. Still, I studied them by watching and re-watching the all-female interactions of each episode and I transcribed representative interactions of each of them, including them in the corpus in order to incorporate story developments. The additional interactions stem from episode 39 of season three, episode 55 of season four, episode 72 of season five, and episode 92 of season six. All in all, the corpus consists of

127 conversations of varying length – ranging from two up to 65 turns. Some of these conversations take place on the telephone, but most of them are face-to-face. In the latter case, I have also transcribed non-verbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions and the women's body posture, especially if they replace a verbal turn. I have also included Carrie's asides, which sometimes occur in the middle or at the end of the conversations and typically contain either background information or comments on the events discussed (see SC_1.2 AMAZING DATE quoted above). The transcription conventions follow Dressler and Kreuz (2000), Chafe (1994), Preston (1982, 1985) and Tannen (1989) and are outlined in the appendix below. Since any transcription is only ever an "approximate and partial rendition of the recording on which it is based" and since transcribing data already entails a process of selection and interpretation (Stubbe et al. 2003: 353, cf. also J. Edwards 2001), I have used the transcriptions as a basis for analysis and then verified my interpretation by looking at the original audio-visual data excerpt.

As I have already noted, the series includes conversations between all four women, but also some between just three and several between two women. For the first two seasons, we find the following distribution: in 41% of the 122 conversations all four women participate; 42% of the talk is dyadic (half of which are interactions between Carrie and Miranda); and in 17% of the interactions three women are present. This distribution is roughly the same in the following seasons. The conversations between four women – mostly chat-and-chew scenes – are generally longer than the dyadic interactions, so that in spite of a higher number of dyadic constellations, the amount of talk done in four-party interactions is larger. Out of 122 conversations only three brief dyadic interactions do not have Carrie as a participant. Of the five additional interactions from seasons three to six, two interactions have all four women and three are dyadic conversations, one without Carrie. As noted above, these participant distributions already evoke specific character relations, with Carrie being the central person in a friendship network, who has closer relations to Charlotte, Samantha and especially Miranda than the latter three have amongst each other. The goal of this study is to reveal how these character relations are negotiated in the women's dialogue, i.e. in the series' text in the narrow sense of the term. The frameworks and methods used to achieve this goal are presented in the subsequent sections.

Analysis of discourse is like riding a bicycle … There is no mechanical procedure for producing findings from an archive of transcripts. … The skills required are developed as one tries to make sense of transcript.
(Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, Discourse and social psychology)

3.6.2 Methods

In this section, I will first sketch the theoretical concept of "the community of practice" and demonstrate that Carrie, Miranda, Samantha, and Charlotte can be considered a fictional version of such a community. Following this discussion, I will present the approach to discourse analysis developed to investigate the conversational interactions of this fictional community of practice, i.e. the interactions at the character level of audience-screen discourse.

3.6.2.1 The *SATC* characters as community of practice

The community of practice framework was developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger as a means of describing situated learning processes based on observations of different apprenticeships, ranging from U.S. Navy quartermasters to non-drinking alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous (Lave and Wenger 1991). Their focus is not so much on the acquisition of certain forms of knowledge as on the social relationships which establish a suitable frame for learning. Wenger (1998: 45) explains that human beings continually engage in enterprises ranging from securing physical survival to seeking intellectual stimulation. In the definition and pursuit of these enterprises, individuals interact with and attune to other individuals and the world. This can be considered collective learning, which over time results in practices reflecting both the pursuit of specific enterprises and the concomitant social relations. These practices can then be regarded as the assets of a kind of community, hence called community of practice. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), communities of practice are everywhere and people are generally members of several of them. Membership can be central or marginal, with novices constituting a marginal group.

The theoretical construct of the community of practice is rooted in practice theory, which sees the social world as a set of practices.[17] In Wenger's (1998: 47) terms:

> The concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do. In this sense, practice is always social practice. Such a concept of practice includes both the explicit and the tacit.

It subsumes a community's tools and documents, images and symbols, well-defined roles and codified procedures as well as tacit conventions and rules of thumb, underlying assumptions, and shared world views. Various approaches within practice theory also incorporate language as a social practice (e.g. Bourdieu, de Certeau, Ortner; cf. discussion in Bucholtz 1999), paving the way for the introduction of the community of practice into language studies through Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992) seminal article *Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as community-based practice*. They define a community of practice as:

> an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992:464)

Eckert (2000) stresses that identities, social relations, activities and meaning are mutually constitutive in these communities. She argues:

> Social relations form around the activities and activities form around relationships. Particular kinds of knowledge, expertise, and forms of participation become part of individuals' identities and places in the community. (p. 35)

Hence, the community of practice framework focuses on the co-construction of individual as well as community identities. Considering that friendship is a community identity, the concept is thus well suited to investigate how friendships are constructed.

Groups of female friends can be considered communities of practice insofar as they regularly meet up to talk about their lives in the pursuit of social support, self-

clarification and happiness. Over time, the women develop practices such as shared ways of talking, of dressing, and of thinking; a repertoire which is the "result of internal negotiations" and carries the accumulated knowledge of the community (Meyerhoff 2001: 528). An example, given by Meyerhoff (2001), is a group of women from different workplaces who meet up once a week for a drink, thereby talking things through and giving each other a fresh perspective on current workplace issues.

Eckert (2000) finds that the friendship clusters that make up the social network of a Detroit suburban high school constitute communities of practice in which social meaning is actively negotiated and individual and group identities are co-constructed. These friendship clusters constitute a social continuum that ranges from totally school-oriented to totally party-oriented groups as reflected in their attitudes, their activities, their style of clothing, and the language variables they use. While Eckert's (2000) goal is to show how linguistic practices arise in social aggregates of individuals, my focus is on how linguistic practices contribute to the social relations amongst individuals in social aggregates.

Like Eckert (2000), Bucholtz's (1999) study of the practices of a friendship group of six nerd girls focuses on sociolinguistic variation and identity construction, but she also illuminates some of the interpersonal processes at work. She shows how the six girls claim and refute knowledge, thereby negotiating the marginality and centrality of the members in the group. Since communities of practice originate in joint enterprises, which entail collective learning, it is not surprising that knowledge is disputed symbolic capital (cf. Bourdieu 1978) in many of them and functions to define the core and the more peripheral ties in the community. Bucholtz' (1999) community of practice, for example, consists of four central and two more marginal members, which has repercussions on their interpersonal ties.

The existence of peripheral and central members in communities of practice accords with the composition of friendship networks, which describe the structure of friendship relations beyond the dyad (cf. Blieszner and Adams 1992: 10f): individuals may have radial networks, in which none of the friends know one another or interlocking networks, in which everyone knows one another. However, even in interlocking networks, the ties between some members may be closer, typically distinguishing central friendship dyads and more peripheral members. Networks of friends with

varying degrees of connectedness also allow for better emotional support, since friends can choose who to confide in without the risk of having the whole network involved and thus with less risk of being challenged or opposed (cf. O'Connor 1992). Thus, aside from knowledge, the negotiated level of intimacy as well as the level of constructed similarity or equality may determine the centrality or peripherality of members in friendship groups or communities of practice and thus their interpersonal relations with each other.

After having dealt with the general applicability of the community of practice framework to female friendship groups, I will now focus on the fictional friendship group under analysis and look into their mutual engagement, joint enterprise and practices. The four women make up an interlocking friendship network, i.e. everyone knows everyone else, but some members are closer to each other whereas others are more peripheral, as is typical of such friendship networks. Their mutual engagement can be gleaned from their regular meetings, in pairs, as a group of three or all four of them; their varying degrees of connectedness can be concluded from the fact that Carrie is the central character, so that dyadic interactions typically consist of conversations between Carrie and any one of her friends, most frequently interactions between her and Miranda. Most indicative of their mutual engagement is their regularly having meals together – Saturday mornings, during lunch breaks and in the evenings, constituting them, as I have already noted above, as a surrogate family.

Their joint enterprise is to spend leisure time together, having fun and discussing their lives, especially to mutually exchange information and consolation with respect to romantic or sexual entanglements and other issues which concern them as single professional New York women in their thirties. Knowledge of intimate heterosexual relationships is clearly symbolic capital amongst them and attitudes and claims in this field are regularly challenged, which renders them a less harmonious friendship group than the literature would generally predict. However, the analyses of their talk will reveal linguistic devices through which they continually renegotiate equality in the effort of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation. These linguistic devices can be considered practices in the sense of Wenger (1998). Other social practices relate to their shared taste in clothes and food; for instance, they are

frequently seen drinking the same type of cocktail, and they agree on fashion infringements such as wearing hair scrunchies.

In summary, the community of practice framework can be successfully applied to the four fictional friends in *SATC*. The four women display mutual engagement, pursuit of a joint enterprise and various shared practices acquired in this pursuit. The practice approach allows for a conceptualisation of friendship as a process and avoids an essentialist conceptualisation of female friends, revealing the idiosyncrasies of this particular relationship and intra-group differentiation. As I have already mentioned, this circle of friends is more confrontational than female friends depicted in the literature. Another obvious difference can be found in their choice of topics: while sexual concerns were considered rare topics in some studies of all-female conversation (Aries and Johnson 1983), they take up a large amount of talk amongst the four friends in *SATC*.

Both of these blatant divergences may, however, be attributed to the constraints of the medium. Television drama generally thrives on conflict and too little of it may render a show tedious. Conflict is also an essential part of comedy, in so far as screen comedies are typically based on repartee and a contest of wit (cf. Kozloff 2000: 147). Consider also that one episode (46) of *SATC* is titled *Frenemies*, a blend of the words "friends" and "enemies," which clearly indicates that the screen writers are aware of the conflict potential of friendship groups and exploit it for sitcom dramaturgy. Likewise, the open discussion of sexual matters may attract viewers to the show, and the title of the show commits to some representation of sex. Still, the analyses in chapter 4 reveal more subtle differences and idiosyncrasies, which cannot be attributed to the constraints of the medium. The tools deployed in these analyses are outlined in the following passages.

3.6.2.2 An inclusive approach to discourse analysis

My approach to discourse analysis is inclusive, drawing on various analytical frameworks and considering all levels of conversational organisation, from the phonological to the pragmatic. This proceeding is in line with Robin Lakoff's (2001: 200) call for an "inter-, cross-, and multidisciplinary approach for discourse analysis,"

following a general "move toward recognizing the strengths of different approaches and the possibility of drawing on more than one approach within the same project" (Wood and Kroger 2000: 24-25). This is also borne out by Stubbe et al. (2003), who compare various frameworks through the analysis of a single interaction from different perspectives, revealing their strengths and weaknesses. Including several analytical perspectives allows for multiple meanings and ensures that the analysis takes into consideration both the large abstract entities such as speech events and situations and their building blocks, the small entities such as words, phrases and turns. Hence, this procedure also constitutes a union of

> the two contrasting approaches of nose-to-data (micro)analysis that disregards the larger context, on the one hand, and top-down (macro)analysis that is disengaged from empirical, language-focused work, on the other hand. (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 2004: 187)

Such inclusive discourse analysis, which aims at linking the micro and the macro, is also the research policy of discursive psychology. This strand of psychology subscribes to a social constructionist view and considers linguistic forms windows on social psychological issues such as identity and interpersonal or intergroup relationships. However, as far as I was able to establish, work in this field is predominantly concerned with how people construct interpersonal relationships in their descriptions of them – for example in marriage counselling sessions (D. Edwards 1995) – rather than focusing on how such ties are negotiated in real time between the individuals in that relationship.[18] My work is thus not in the tradition of social psychology, but may point to fruitful directions of research in the study of interpersonal relationships.

Whichever approach one chooses, discourse analytic work starts with a close inspection of the data. Reading and rereading the transcriptions, patterns emerged, most of which can be described in terms of ethnomethodological conversation and membership categorisation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and Goffman's notions of "face" and "the interaction order." In the following, I will therefore briefly sketch these frameworks focusing on those notions that have enriched my findings.

3.6.2.2.1 Ethnomethodological conversation analysis

Ethnomethodological conversation analysis (CA) is a sociological approach to the analysis of spoken discourse. It was developed by Harvey Sacks and his collaborators Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson in the 1960s, in the wake of Harold Garfinkel's development of ethnomethodology – a research policy which stipulates the bottom-up study of common-sense reasoning in everyday activities. Although CA proper insists on a strictly micro-level approach, it still lends itself to the investigation of how micro-level processes in conversation shape macro-level social order, a procedure that has been labelled "applied CA" (ten Have 1999: 162, chapter 9).[19]

CA considers communication a joint activity and focuses on sequence and structure to reveal how this collaborative enterprise is accomplished. While initial studies were concerned with "how conversation works" (Sacks 1984: 26), the scope has been extended to any type of speech exchange system (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), ranging from telephone conversation to aerobics instructions. CA practitioners thus refer to their object of study as "talk-in-interaction" rather than just "conversation" (cf. Cameron 2001: 87). CA reveals how each utterance in talk-in-interaction is a step in the participants' collaborative activity, resulting in a jointly negotiated sequence of actions. Actions are locally occasioned, occurring in response and relevant to a prior action, in CA terms they are "conditionally relevant" (Schegloff 1968). The course of an interaction depends on the interpretation of a current speaker's turn by the next speaker, who displays this interpretation in some way; an answer, for example, displays that the previous turn was interpreted as a question.

My own analyses are geared to sequentiality, finding evidence for meaning in the display of next speaker interpretations, an analytic procedure also labelled "next-turn proof procedure" (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 15). Furthermore, I use the closely related CA notions of conversational repair and preference organisation to account for some of my findings. Repair is used in CA as a generic term to cover various phenomena, which range from corrections to mending problems in the way participants take turns at talk such as overlapping speech (Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998: 57). Since my data is scripted TV dialogue, where overlap is avoided to guarantee easy understanding, I am mainly concerned with the repair of problems outside the turn-taking system.[20] In naturally occurring speech, this covers phenomena such as slips of

the tongue, incorrect word choice, mishearings and misunderstandings. All these phenomena can be mended with the help of a repair mechanism described in Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977). The repair mechanism consists of an initiation, the act of indicating a source of trouble, and the repair itself. Initiation and repair can be done by the speaker who produced the trouble source or by the recipient. Consequently, there are four types of repair: self-initiated self-repair, other-initiated self-repair, self-initiated other-repair and other-initiated other-repair. The notion of repair will be discussed further in the sections on questions and responses (4.4).

Preference is another structural property of talk-in-interaction – discussed by Pomerantz (1978, 1984) and Sacks (1987). It characterises “conversational events in which alternative, but non-equivalent, courses of action are available to the participants” (Atkinson and Heritage 1984: 53). Preferred alternatives such as accepting an invitation are generally performed directly, while dispreferred alternatives such as declining an invitation are delayed, softened or rendered indirectly. CA scholars stress that the ranking of preferred and dispreferred alternatives is not subjective and psychological but institutionalised; even an undesired invitation will thus be declined with considerable delay and expressions of regret. The notion of preference will be explored in more detail in the sections on alignment patterns (4.2).

The relevance of these paradigms and concepts for my analyses lies in their potential to reveal how interpersonal relationships are sequentially accomplished in talk-in-interaction through turn-by-turn negotiations of situated identities and relations, in which participants establish “who each is for the other?” (Maynard 1989: 109).

3.6.2.2.2 Membership categorisation analysis

Membership categorisation analysis (MCA) is another strand of ethnomethodology, which has its origin in the later work of Harvey Sacks (1972a, 1972b, 1992a&b). While CA focuses on the sequential aspects of talk-in-interaction, MCA investigates the categorisational aspects of social interaction. The goal of MCA is to reveal

> the use of membership categories, membership categorisation devices and category predicates by members, conceptualised as lay and

> professional social analysts, in accomplishing (the sociology of) "naturally occurring ordinary activities." (Hester and Eglin 1997: 3)

Membership categories, as defined by Sacks, are classifications or social types used to describe persons, e.g. "mother," "DJ," or "geek." The notion has since then been extended to include non-personal objects as well as collectivities such as "a Cosmopolitan," "the legal system" or "the middle class." Membership categories can be grouped together by so-called membership categorisation devices (MCDs), for example, "family" groups together "mother," "child," "sister," "grandfather," etc. The use of the term "device" emphasises the constructive nature of talk: the act of collecting such categories is considered an active accomplishment situated in talk-in-interaction.

The relevance of MCA for my research lies in the notion of "category predicates," i.e. activities, rights, entitlement, obligations, knowledge, attributes and competencies which are conventionally assigned on the basis of a given membership category (Watson 1978: 106). Membership categorisations and membership categorisation devices are thus inference-rich labels for persons or collectivities; the category "mother," for example, allows for the inference that this person nurtures someone. Membership categories and MCDs thus constitute "a locus for a set of rights and obligations" (Sacks 1972a: 37). Sacks illustrates this with respect to what he labels "standardised relational pair," a specific type of membership categorisation device, which consists of pairs of categories such as "husband-wife," "parent-child," "stranger-stranger," and of particular interest for my research "friend-friend." Explicitly addressing someone as "my friend" thus creates the "rhetorical vision" of a friendship relationship (Duck 1994), noted in the preceding chapter. Sacks (1972a) shows that in calls to a suicide prevention centre helpline, the callers' search for help is organised in terms of such relational pair categories, i.e. the caller goes through a subset of pairs, in which members are conventionally expected to provide support. Being a locus of rights and obligations, membership categories and MCDs can also play a crucial role in social phenomena such as blamings, accusations and mitigations (cf. Potter and Wetherell 1987).[21]

Overall, membership categories provide individuals with a crucial resource for making sense of their social world. Hence, the investigation of how individuals use

membership categories, MCDs, and predicates yields insights into the locally invoked and organised common sense knowledge of social structures which individuals are oriented to in their dealing with everyday affairs and therefore complements conversation analysis:

> the production of particular types of sequential items is informed by an orientation to the membership categories of the speakers, just as these items contribute to the categorisation of the speakers. (Hester and Eglin 1997)

Still, these two ethnomethodological approaches are not sufficient to fully account for how the patterns discovered in my data contribute to the *SATC* are close friends. Restricting my analyses to the ethnomethodological perspective would inevitably conceal other meanings, in particular since ethnomethodology has a very restricted understanding of context, which will be discussed in the following section.[22]

3.6.2.2.3 Interactional sociolinguistics

Interactional or interpretative sociolinguistics (IS), a school of discourse analysis founded by John Gumperz, is rooted in anthropology, sociology and linguistics. It seeks to reveal how linguistic and cultural diversity impact on individuals' lives and the relations between different groups in society (Gumperz 1999: 453).[23] Grounded in earlier work in Hymes' (1962) ethnography of communication, IS concentrates on situations of speaking, more specifically on speech events (Gumperz and Hymes, eds., 1972).[24] Speech events are defined as "stretches of interaction bounded in time and space" (Gumperz 1992a: 44), which are "directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech" (Hymes 1974: 52). They include communicative activities as varied as a casual conversation between guests at a wedding reception and a police interview with a suspected murderer. Speech events thus are not isolated sequences, but situated interactions. Hymes investigated the components of such situated interactions and grouped them in the mnemonic SPEAKING, which consists of Situation, Participants, Ends (outcomes and goals of the interaction), Act sequence (message form and content),

Key (tone and manner), Instrumentalities (form and channel), Norms (of interpretation and of interaction) and Genre (e.g. Hymes 1974). The composition of this research grid indicates that extralinguistic context plays a crucial role in Hymes' framework, and it continues to do so in Gumperz' interactional sociolinguistics (cf. Gumperz 2001: 215). Unlike CA, IS is based on the assumption that interactions are affected by their socio-cultural and situational context, and IS scholars take this socio-cultural and situational background into account, for example by conducting ethnographic interviews with the participants of the conversations they analyse.

Still, IS is not a purely macro-analytic approach. It focuses on "communicative practices," which "constitute an intermediate and in many ways analytically distinct level of organization" (Gumperz 2001: 216). In this procedure, IS draws on Erving Goffman (1983), who introduced the concept of the "interaction order" as a distinct domain of research. This notion also influenced CA research. However, while traditional CA scholars argue that conversation is separate from both linguistic entities and from macro social structures and must be analysed in its own terms, Goffman himself and IS use the interaction order to bridge the linguistic and the social. Goffman (1983: 13) claims that the link between social relationships and the interaction order is very close. As an example of this intense interrelatedness, he cites the obligation of closely related individuals to update each other, which I have already briefly discussed in the preceding chapter. According to Goffman, this obligation "does at least as much for the organization of encounters as it does for the relationship of the persons who encounter each other" (1983: 13).

It is precisely this spotlight on the intermediate level – the bridge between the linguistic and the social – which renders interactional sociolinguistic methodology rewarding for my research on how talk, i.e. the linguistic, shapes interpersonal relationship, i.e. the social. While practice theorists in the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu regard (communicative) practices as determined by the macro-level – more specifically as shaped by "habitus," i.e. the collection of embodied dispositions to act and perceive the world which mirrors macro-societal forces and conditions; a constructionist perspective views our social worlds as sculpted by communicative practices and demands an investigation of these localised interactive processes. In the case of CA, the only (social) issues deemed relevant are those which participants themselves orient to in

talk. Contrarily, IS attempts to take into consideration both macro- and micro-perspectives and regards (communicative) practices as "the everyday-world site where societal and interactive forces merge" (Gumperz 2001: 218), a notion which is in line with linguistic research in the community of practice framework as described above.

IS thus reveals both how social organisation is cooperatively constructed at the micro-level and how it is related to pre-existing, macro-level structures, such as participants' social background and interactional history. In Giddens' (1976) terms, the external context – such as participants' age, ethnicity, gender, relationship histories, and the interactional setting – is "brought along" and may or may not be "brought about" in talk-in-interaction (cf. also Auer 1992). For instance, if a conversationalist addresses her interlocutor with a pet name and the interlocutor does not object to this, a degree of intimacy which was established in previous interactions – i.e. brought along to the current interaction – is re-produced, i.e. brought about in the current interaction. Since this then becomes part of the interactional history, external and immanent contexts can be said to be reflexive. The pet name functions as a contextualisation cue, accomplishing one definition of situation, i.e. the relationship between the interlocutors (Glenn 2003: 168).

In sum, IS is a social constructionist approach, but further down on the micro-macro continuum than CA. It incorporates sequential analysis at the micro-level à la CA, but it builds from there, integrating functional aspects of talk-in-interaction (Schiffrin 1994). The goal of IS is to reveal how participants use communicative practices to arrive at situated, context-specific meanings and thereby negotiate social identities and relationships. In Gumperz' words IS shifts "the analysis of conversational forms or sequential patterns as such to the necessarily goal-oriented interpretive processes that underlie their production" (1992b: 306). Central to the investigation of these goal-oriented interpretative processes is the notion of contextualisation, which Gumperz defines as

> speakers' and listeners' use of verbal and nonverbal signs to relate what is said at any one time and in any one place to knowledge acquired through past experience, in order to retrieve the presuppositions they

> must rely on to maintain conversational involvement and access what is intended. (Gumperz 1992a: 230)

The verbal and non-verbal signs are termed "contextualisation cues" and can be found at all levels of conversational organisation: prosody, paralinguistic signs, lexis, syntax, code, sequential organisation and non-verbal behaviours (Gumperz 1982; Schiffrin 1996). Speakers use these cues to evoke a specific context in which their utterance and actions are to be interpreted, and listeners draw on these cues to make situated inferences about the speakers' utterances and actions, which in turn enable them to make relevant contributions to the current conversation. Relevance is determined by participants' expectations linked to the activity they believe they are engaged in, the speech activity:

> a set of social relationships about a set of schemata in relation to some communicative goal. Speech activities can be characterized through descriptive phrases such as 'discussing politics,' 'chatting about the weather,' 'telling a story to someone,' and 'lecturing about linguistics.' Such descriptions imply certain expectations about thematic progression, turn taking rules, form, and outcome of the interaction, as well as constraints on content. (Gumperz 1982: 166)

Speech activities are thus evoked through contextualisation cues and this enables the recipient to respond appropriately. If, for example, a participant uses a formulaic story opener such as "Have I told you about Miriam's trip to London?", this contextualises a storytelling activity and sets up the expectation that the other participants will take on the role of the story recipients and encourage the telling.

Such situated inferences are based on participants' world knowledge of the type of activity they are engaged in, including knowledge of the interlocutors' identities and interpersonal relations. If this knowledge is shared between participants, two related levels of meaning can be inferred: the literal content of the utterance and the (meta)communicative force inherent in the utterance. In the example above, the utterance "Have I told you about Miriam's trip to London?" literally functions as a

simple yes/no question, but if participants recognise the formulaicity of the utterance, another level of interpretation is unlocked, namely the initiation of a storytelling. Similarly, an utterance like "you're crazy" may be interpreted differently, if it is accompanied by laugh tokens. These function as a contextualisation cue, signalling that an utterance is to be taken as humorous – even if the conventional meaning of the utterance is insulting.[25] If world knowledge is not shared, interpretations may differ and miscommunication may arise, which can lead to disordered interpersonal relationships at the macro-level and thus impact on future interactions.

The notion of shared world knowledge, also referred to as contextual presupposition, constitutes the bridge between macro and micro – between pre-existing knowledge of activities, social structures and conventions on the one hand and specific instances of talk-in-interaction on the other. This notion also results in a highly differentiated and flexible notion of context as simultaneously brought along and brought about. Due to this sophisticated notion of context, IS lends itself to the critical analysis of interactions in complex contexts, in particular those characterised by power and status differentials, by conflicting goals and tension; for example workplace settings in which lay participants and experts are involved (e.g. Gumperz 1982; Gumperz 1999; Gumperz and Roberts 1991). However, it has also been applied to contexts in which power differentials are not foregrounded: Tannen (1984) for example investigates dinner conversations amongst friends and Schiffrin (1984) studies how sociability entails arguing. My own project follows this latter strand of IS: rather than investigating how diversity can lead to miscommunication and disturbed interpersonal relationships, I attempt to show how tight social bonds can be constructed in spite of diversity, more specifically how four very different characters accomplish friendship.

3.6.2.2.4 Face and politeness theory

The notion of "face" and politeness theory is another widely used framework in discourse analysis. Since it links socio-cultural variables and language use, it has also been used by scholars working in interactional sociolinguistics. I have already introduced face in the preceding chapter and will now give a more detailed account of how it can be adapted to the type of analysis required by this project.

"Face" is a folk term used in expressions such as "losing face" and "saving face." The expression was taken up by Erving Goffman (1967) as a technical term for an individual's positive social value consisting of two different social claims: self-image and territory. Each individual depends on others for giving face and is thus caught in two dilemmas: firstly, of simultaneously requiring contact with others and wanting to preserve individual integrity, and secondly of having to cater to both the wants of their own face and those of the other. Face, according to Goffman (1967: 10), does not reside in the individual but is bestowed from the outside – "on loan … from society."

Goffman's description of this complex situation has been adapted by Brown and Levinson (1987).[26] Based on Goffman's (1967: 76) notion that "there is an inescapable opposition between showing a desire to include an individual and showing respect for his privacy," they distinguish two related aspects of face, defined as follows:

> negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. freedom of action and freedom from imposition
> positive face: the positive consistent self-image or "personality" (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants. (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61)[27]

Certain actions such as requesting a favour or apologising intrinsically threaten the face of the interactants. A classification of speech acts which threaten either the positive or the negative face of either the speaker or the hearer has been attempted by Brown and Levinson (1987), but is not always possible. Complaints, for example, threaten the positive face of the addressee by signalling that the speaker has a negative evaluation of some aspect of the addressee or her behaviour, but it also threatens the addressee's negative face by restricting her freedom of action with respect to the complainable action. There are also some actions which simultaneously threaten speaker and addressee: as discussed above, self-disclosure threatens the negative face of the addressee, since it imposes on her freedom of action and simultaneously threatens the positive face of the speaker through the display of weaknesses and vulnerability.

Brown and Levinson (1987) show that speakers universally select from a range of verbal or non-verbal strategies to avoid or mitigate face-threatening acts or to otherwise

attend to their interlocutors' face. It is these strategies that they refer to as politeness. Positive politeness strategies attend to the addressee's positive face wants and range from giving someone a bunch of flowers to avoiding disagreement (Brown and Levinson 1987: 102ff.); negative strategies attend to the addressee's negative face-wants and span from a deferential bow to conventional indirectness (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129ff.). The use of certain linguistic entities such as hedges, questions, indexicals, and intensifying modifiers thus can be linguistic realisations of politeness.

Aside from linking linguistic entities to negative and positive politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson (1987) also link linguistic entities to the socio-cultural context, in particular to the relationship between the interlocutors. They argue that the choice of politeness strategies and thus of linguistic entities is constrained by the weight of imposition, which is in turn determined by the potential offensiveness of the act (asking someone for a light versus asking someone to help move house) as well as by the perceived social distance and power differential of the interlocutors. More specifically, they suggest that individuals behave more politely towards superiors and strangers and less politely to those considered equal and familiar. Since negative politeness strategies in their framework are rated as more polite than positive politeness strategies, relative power and social distance also impact on the choice of politeness strategies: the closer the interactants' and the smaller the power differential, the higher is the proportion of positive and the lower the proportion of negative politeness strategies. According to them negative politeness is "at the heart of respect behaviour, just as positive politeness is the kernel of 'familiar' and 'joking' behaviour" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 129).

The use of politeness strategies thus can be indicative of the social relationship between the interlocutors. This indexical function of politeness strategies renders them a useful tool for my research project. However, while Brown and Levinson (1987) consider variables such as power and distance as well as intimacy and solidarity as stable and given, I follow scholars who take a more social constructionist perspective such as Janet Holmes (1997, 2003), Kotthoff (1996b) and Norrick (1993), whose studies of naturally occurring complimenting and joking behaviour show that these variables are in fact created through the use of these linguistic strategies.[28] Furthermore, while Brown and Levinson (1987) in stressing face wants conceive of face as psychological and bestowed prior to interaction, I follow Goffman in considering face as social and

co-constructed in interaction (cf. O'Driscoll 1996). This entails that the notion of politeness varies across speech situations. Watts (2003: 131) argues that there are certain interaction orders "which sanction or neutralise face-threatening and face-damaging behaviour," for example in conversations between intimates such as family members and close friends. In these interaction orders, participants tend to orient not so much towards their public image represented by Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face as towards affection and continued contact. It is not surprising that Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory cannot really account for this, since their starting point is a rational model person, which precludes emotion and idiosyncratic variation.

Consequently, the analysis of intimate talk-in-interaction requires a redefinition of the concept of face. Brown and Levinson's (1987) simple equation of the closer and more equal the more positive politeness and the less negative politeness does not account for all the phenomena of intimate talk-in-interaction. As I have already noted above in the section on friendship, the dialectic between association and dissociation inherent in any human interaction and mirrored in Goffman's (1967) presentational and avoidance rituals and Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive and negative face wants respectively is realised in friendship ties in three related tensions: autonomy/connection, closedness/openness, predictability/novelty (cf. Baxter 1990; Baxter and Simon 1993; Rawlins 1983a; Rawlings 1983b). The interaction order of friendship groups requires that members orient towards these tensions and strive for balance. Hence, linguistic patterns, which Brown and Levinson (1987) a priori define as face threats or politeness strategies are closely inspected in my data of fictional intimate talk-in-interaction to reveal firstly, whether they affect the balance between the three dialectical tensions and secondly, whether they can be considered a practice for restoring the balance of the interaction order, which renegotiates the social relationship at the macro-level.

The effort of striking an appropriate balance between these three tensions can also be accounted for in terms of Watts' (1989, 2003) notion of politic behaviour. Watts shifts the focus from an orientation towards face as an individualistic concern towards an orientation towards upholding "the perceived fabric of interpersonal relationships within the social group" (Watts 1989: 133). He originally defines politic behaviour as:

> socio-culturally determined behaviour directed towards the goal of establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group, whether open or closed, during the ongoing process of interaction. (Watts 1989: 135)

Although he later rejects the notion of equilibrium, because it cannot be defined in general terms, but depends on the setting and participants of the social interaction (Watts 2003: 21), I argue that it is suitable for my purposes, since my research is restricted to one specific community of practice and aims at investigating one specific social relation. The state of equilibrium mirrors the balance in the three tensions inherent in friendship relations and along with this an orientation towards the components of friendship deemed vital in the particular friendship group. In essence, politic behaviour is all relational work deemed appropriate in a specific community of practice in a specific speech situation. Contrarily, (im)polite behaviour is any behaviour perceived as beyond what is appropriate and may be evaluated positively or negatively (cf. Watts 2003).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the data and methods used in the investigation of the audience's impression formation of character relationships in *SATC*. First of all, I have given some background to the TV show under analysis, detailing some of the plotlines and discussing the contradictory reviews it received. Next, I have briefly sketched the functions and form of its dialogue, resorting to the use and patterns of film dialogue in general. In particular, I have pointed out how screen dialogue is similar to and different from naturally occurring conversation.

A close analysis of how *SATC* dialogue is scripted and filmed has revealed that television drama, in particular if adapted from another text, is characterised by an extremely complex authorship situation, involving original authors, producers, directors, screenwriters, storyboard editors, cutters, camera and actors. *SATC's* multiple authorship – together with the show's popularity with countless viewers worldwide and the contradictory reviews by media critics – render the show a socio-cultural nexus and as such an ideal site for investigation.

The linguistic investigation of scripted screen-dialogue necessitates an underlying model of communication. Since existing models of mediated discourse ignore cognitive aspects of dialogue comprehension and the fact that dialogue is co-constructed by all participants involved, I have developed my own model of screen-to-face discourse. This model is based on Goffman's (1976, 1979) concept of the overhearer and cognitive accounts of communication, in particular Clark's (1996) notion of common ground. My model focuses on how the audience in front of the screen comprehends the dialogue on the screen. I consider the processes in the spectator's mind to correspond with those in everyday overhearer situations, for instance when listening in on a conversation between people sitting near on the bus. Overhearers can only make conjectures about what they listen in on, as they do not fully share the participants' common ground. To be intelligible, film dialogue has to be carefully designed for overhearers so that they can reconstruct the participants' common ground. Consequently, the film production crew has to design the dialogue on the basis of knowledge patterns they expect the future audience to share with them. This implies that meaning in film discourse is co-constructed in a joint effort of recipients and the production crew – all drawing on their

world knowledge, in particular on their knowledge of communicative processes in everyday situations.

Relevant for my investigation of how the audience infers that the four women in *SATC* are friends are those aspects of screen-to-face discourse that can be subsumed under the term relational communication. Patterns of relational communication can be found at the level of character interaction, placed by the production team as cues for the audience on the basis of an assumed shared knowledge of friendship relations. Adapting Culpeper's (2001, 2002) work on character impression formation, I have described how the audience uses these textual cues to infer character relationships, a process I label relationship impression formation. This process is made possible through the consistency of naturally occurring conversation and scripted talk at the pragmalinguistic level. The audience in front of the screen can resort to their underlying communicative competence and knowledge of relational communication to make inferences on the type of relationship the characters on the screen are negotiating. Therefore, I have argued that discourse analysis can reveal both the mechanisms of establishing and maintaining friendships in naturally occurring conversation and in scripted talk.

The methods of discourse analysis I use to achieve this goal as well as the corpus on which my analyses are based have been introduced in the final sections of this chapter. Since the main question is how relationships are constructed through verbal practices, I draw on the framework of the community of practice. The four female *SATC* protagonists' mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared practices, allow for their consideration as a fictional version of such a community. My conceptualisation of practice as a site where societal and interactive forces merge, furthermore, allows for a combination of practice theory with social constructionism, in particular ethnomethodological conversation and membership categorisation analysis as well as interactional sociolinguistics. Aside from these approaches I also refer to theories of face-work and politeness, since these are indicative of social relations and intertwined with the dialectic of association and dissociation so central to close interpersonal relationships. This array of analytic approaches facilitates the investigation of both micro- and macro-discoursal patterns and allows for multiple meanings.

In the following chapter, I will concentrate on the verbal practices of the fictional community of four women to reveal how their social relationship is continually

(re)constructed. First of all, I will focus on alignment practices, which will yield a more detailed picture of how the four women relate to each other at the micro-level and subsequently, I will describe two specific alignment practices, which have been traditionally associated with relational communication, namely direct address by familiar terms of address and question-response sequences.

Notes Chapter 3

[1] Detailed information on the series is available at the HBO webpage (http://www.hbo.com/city/)
[2] Representatives of third-wave feminism, new feminism or postfeminism, are Naomi Wolf (e.g. Wolf 1993), René Denfeld (e.g. Denfeld 1995), and Camille Paglia (e.g Paglia 1992). The latter is explicitly mentioned in the series, when Carrie, Miranda and Samantha are discussing the relationship of sex, money and power (Season 1, Episode 5 *The power of female sex*):

SC_5.3 SEX IS POWER

```
9    S    what are you getting so uptight about?
          I mean money is power.
          SEX is power.
          therefore getting money for sex is simply an exchange of power.
10   M    don't listen to the dime store Camilla Paglia.
```

[3] Some authors such as Faludi (1991) and Kim (2001) equate postfeminism with backlash and antifeminism. I follow Shugart et al. (2001) who differentiate between what they label third-wave feminism and its appropriation by the media and popular culture.
[4] For a critical discussion of this model see for example Arundale 1998; Akmajian et al. 1980; Krauss 1987; Levinson 1988; Reddy 1979.
[5] For a detailed study of how human imagination works in the most fundamental activities see Morrow and Clark (1988). They document how people create imaginary representations to interpret a single word.
[6] In spite of the general claim that the visual takes priority in film, the central role of overhearing has been recognized by film scholars. Weis (1999: 84) for example draws on psychoanalysis to argue that the adult eavesdropper recapitulates the primal scene of overhearing one's parents making love and identifies with either of the parents or the overhearing child. She thus suggests that "overhearing is a fundamental experience with profound implications for films."
[7] Goffman (1979) himself uses the term audience to refer to spectators in a theatre, distinguishing this kind of participation framework from that of a conversation. He also extends audience to include spectators and listeners in front of the TV, in which case talk is addressed to "imagined recipients" (1979: 12). He argues that audiences generally are not a feature of speech events, but of "stage events" (1979: 13). Nevertheless, I prefer applying the concept of the overhearer rather than a totally different participation framework for screen-to-face discourse, because this procedure illuminates the similarity of the processes involved in overhearing conversations in everyday life and overhearing conversations on screen.
[8] They find evidence for these processes in their corpus of TV talk. One viewer for example comments: "I like her; she always plays the part of a real bitch" (Holly and Baldauf 2002: 52; my translation).
[9] However, the speaker is still bound by politeness responsibilities; for example, you might refrain from using strong expletives and shouting when having a conversation on a bus across from a well-dressed elderly couple.
[10] This attitude blurs the boundaries between the overhearer-addressee distinction, as the overhearers to a certain extent can be considered addressed by the conversationalists. However, the conversationalists do not want the overhearers to actively participate in the conversation.
[11] Note that on some occasions the attitude towards the viewer is indifference, especially at the beginning of movies when the audience stumbles into the lives of the characters and at first has to make the transition into the realm of the story. On other occasions, screen dialogue aims at concealment and disguisement, in particular in the creation of suspense. In this case it helps if the audience is not able to piece together a common ground, and fragments are disclosed in a way that delays this process.
[12] A similar sounding concept is Bell's (1991) "audience design". However, his concept is limited to a stylistic accommodation to the recipients of radio and TV shows.
[13] Complicating matters even more is the fact that film dialogue is used to provide a source for predictive inferences (Magliano et al. 1996). For the audience to generate the predictions that movie makers intend them to, it is first of all necessary that they make the correct conjectures and arrive at the meaning the movie makers intended with a character's utterance. Magliano et al. (1996: 205) give an example from the movie *Moonraker* (Lewis Gilbert 1979): James Bond uses the negatively valenced words 'obsessed' and 'conquest' in a comment on Hugo Drax's interest in space exploration. Bond's negative tone generates the

inferences that he mistrusts Drax and that Drax will turn out to be his main antagonist. In order to arrive at these inferences, however, the audience first has to draw on their background knowledge to interpret 'obsessed' and 'conquest' as negatively valenced words.

[14] By contrast with recipient roles, I do not employ the Goffmanian terms for the production format (animator, author, principal), since they cannot be strictly differentiated here. An actor may at first sight appear an animator, but we do not know how much improvising is involved and thus to what extent the actor is not only the animator, but also an author and maybe even a principal, i.e. "someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken" (Goffman 1979: 17).

[15] This hermeneutic circle is also known as analyser's paradox in sociolinguistic studies. Hay (1996), for example, cautions that expectations about gender differences affect the analysis of conversation so that the results show gender differences, which then again feed into preconceptions about gender differences. Viewer and analyser are subject to the same social-cognitive processes.

[16] Although both scholars of film and scholars of human communication have pointed this out, few people have pursued this suggestion systematically. Film scholars, on the one hand, have had recourse to linguistic theories to make up for the lack of scholarly treatment of film dialogue in their own field (Kozloff 2000). Linguists, on the other hand, have had recourse to film dialogue as data for speech events that are otherwise not accessible to them (e.g. Tannen and Lakoff 1994; Hopper and Le Baron 1998; Weatherall 1996).

[17] For an overview of practice theory see Reckwitz (2002).

[18] See D. Edwards and Potter (1992) and Potter and Wetherell (1987) for overviews.

[19] For an extended overview of the goals and methods of ethnomethodological conversation analysis see Heritage (1984b), Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998), Levinson (1983), Pomerantz and Fehr (1997), Psathas 1995, and ten Have (1999). A collection of pioneer CA work is Lerner (ed., 2004).

[20] Not only is there no significant overlap, there are also hardly any repair sequences caused by a silence – what Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) refer to as a "gap" in the turn-taking (e.g. SC_10.9 OVARY OVERLOAD, analysed in section 4.2.6.1).

[21] Such features of categorisation have also been identified by social psychologists, who describe similar processes with the help of prototype theory. While I used the notion of prototype in the preceding chapter to illuminate the conventional notion of friendship, I prefer the framework of MCA to reveal how such prototypes are negotiated and called upon in actual talk-in-interaction, since the latter framework was developed specifically for the investigation of talk-in-interaction.

[22] Criticism of CA is mainly rooted in this restricted understanding of context, argued in particular by Emanuel Schegloff (e.g. 1987a, 1992, 1997). For an overview see Titscher et al. (2000); cf. also Bourdieu 1990; Cicourel 1992; Goffman 1981; Gumperz 1982; Kotthoff 1994, 1998b).

[23] For a discussion of IS methodology see Cameron (2001), Gumperz (1999, 2001), Kotthoff (1996a, 1998b), Schiffrin (1994, 1996). For an overview of the issues it covers, see the Cambridge University Press series called *Studies in interactional sociolinguistics*, which presents research on topics as varied as interethnic communication, AIDS counselling and the news interview.

[24] Due to its interrelationship with the ethnography of communication, IS is sometimes called "microethnography."

[25] The notion of contextualisation cues is essentially identical to Bateson's (1972) concept of metacommunication, which he developed based on observations of animals playfully pretending a fight. These animals were able to distinguish between mock fight and real fight, which led Bateson to the conclusion that actions can be framed as either serious or non-serious by metamessages accompanying them. Goffman (1974) built on Bateson's concept of frames to explain how situated meaning is created in interaction. His notion of frame has also influenced the development of interactional sociolinguistics and has been incorporated in IS research (cf. Tannen, ed. 1993).

[26] Though Brown and Levinson's framework (1987) is the most influential, it is not the first pragmalinguistic approach to politeness. Robin Lakoff (1973b) was the first linguist to examine politeness from a pragmatic perspective basing her framework on Grice's (1975) cooperative principle. She defines politeness as "a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange" (R. Lakoff 1990: 34). Robin Lakoff established a politeness rule which complements Grice's maxims and accounts for the fact that the maxims are never strictly followed in conversation. Lakoff's (1973b: 298) rule is realised through three strategies: distance (Don't impose), deference (Give options), and camaraderie (Make addressee feel good, be friendly). Her framework is of special interest to research into intercultural communication, since she links specific strategies to certain cultures: European cultures tend to use more

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distancing strategies, Asian cultures are more deferential, and modern American culture lean towards camaraderie.

[27] For an extended discussion of Goffman's (1967) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of face see Watts (2003).

[28] For extended critical evaluations of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory see also Sara Mills (2003); Stubbe et al. (2003); Watts (2003).

The study of language will be the ground where science gains its first foothold in the understanding and control of human affairs.
(Leonard Bloomfield, Linguistics as a science)

4 DOING FRIENDSHIP THROUGH TALK

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have stressed that social relationships such as friendship can be conceived of as processes which are constituted through talk-in-interaction. More specifically, I argue that friendship ties are established and maintained through the conversational negotiation of a set of components considered significant to friendship by the members of the friendship group such as equality, reciprocity, intimacy, and social support. These negotiations are motivated by the sociation-inherent dialectic of association and dissociation (cf. Simmel 1955, 1964), realised in friendship in three antagonistic tendencies: autonomy/connection, openness/closedness, as well as predictability/novelty. I have argued that an inclusive analysis of talk-in-interaction can connect these negotiations to the details of talk, pinning down how friendship is done in conversation.

In this chapter, I will present detailed, qualitative analyses, which show how the four women in *SATC* do friendship and what patterns of friendship emerge from their behaviour, thereby connecting the macro-level of social organisation to the micro-level of talk-in-interaction. As already mentioned above, I consider the macro-level to encompass relationship histories and their interpretation, current impressions of relationships and expectations of them. This conception of macro-level structure may appear ethereal, but unlike other social relations, friendship is not institutionalised in Western cultures and thus less clearly manifest in social structure. By contrast, the micro-level is tangible through specific interactional practices, which orient towards and

simultaneously negotiate the components of friendship deemed appropriate in a specific group, resulting in retrievable patterns in the interaction order, so-called "alignments."

I argue that through shifting alignment patterns the four protagonists of *SATC* continuously re-negotiate their interpersonal ties at the macro-level. After clarifying the concept of "alignment" and presenting detailed analyses that give a first impression of the nature of friendship ties between the four women and of how these ties are accomplished, I will concentrate on two specific alignment practices: direct address by first names and endearments, and question-response sequences. While the first can be considered a practice at the word-level and the second at the sequential level, neither of them can be described as isolated phenomenon, and their functioning can only be revealed through turn-by-turn analyses of extended stretches of talk, taking into consideration what led up to and what followed the respective practice. Hence, my analyses also show that various levels of conversational organisation are involved in the establishment of alignments and the construction of macro-level social relations.

Due to the consistency of naturally occurring conversation and scripted talk on the pragmalinguistic level, which I have discussed in the preceding chapter, the patterns of relational communication which emerge from this analysis serve as textual cues for the audience in front of the screen, which by season two of *SATC* have inferred what kind of relations exist between Carrie, Samantha, Miranda, and Charlotte based on their underlying communicative competence, in particular their knowledge of relational communication.

Talk is the invisible thread bonding our society.
(Anonymous)

4.2 Alignment patterns

4.2.1 Introduction

In the following sections, I will show that the moment-by-moment displays of alignment are a crucial locus of social negotiation at the micro-level (cf. Glenn 1995: 54). I will first give an overview of the origin of the concept "alignment" and its usage in the literature on talk-in-interaction. Based on the review of the literature, I will distinguish three planes of alignment and show that alignment practices are located at several levels of conversational organisation, some functioning retroactively and others proactively. I will also discuss the role of participant numbers in the establishment of alignment patterns, considering interactional teams. The turn-by-turn analyses, which follow the theoretical sections, serve to give a general impression of how alignment work is accomplished in *SATC* and establish a relational picture of the four women, which will be refined in the subsequent sections on direct address and question-response sequences.

4.2.2 Alignments in human interaction

The concept of "alignment" originates in symbolic interactionism and pertains to the orientation of the self towards others and the situation (cf. Blumer 1969; Goffman 1974, 1978, 1979; Stokes and Hewitt 1976). This orientation can simultaneously have various coordinates such as self-presentation and cultural membership (cf. Morris and Hopper

1987). Aligning processes are central to social interaction and can be described as follows:

> Social interaction is conceived as a process in which people orient their conduct toward one another and toward a common set of objects. In this mutual orientation of conduct, an effort is made by participants to *align* their individual acts, one to another, in the creation of joint or social acts. (Stokes and Hewitt 1976: 843, authors' stress)

Stokes and Hewitt (1976) distinguish two senses of alignment. The first concerns the lining up of participants' utterances and moves, which is necessary to achieve intersubjective understanding and create joint or social acts (cf. Nofsinger 1991: 112). I will refer to this sense of alignment as "conversational alignment." The second phenomenon to which the concept can be applied is the relationship between ongoing interactions and culture, which I label "cultural alignment." Of special interest for the study of cultural alignment are interactions in which participants perceive a discrepancy between what is happening and their cultural expectations, i.e. the "recognized and preferred ways of thinking, feeling and acting" (Stokes and Hewitt 1976: 843).

This normative component of alignment is also relevant with respect to communities of practice, which are more localised units of culture based on mutual values and beliefs. The following excerpt shows how misalignments with respect to friendship norms and components are attended to in the community of practice under analysis.

SC_7.1 WOMEN WE HATE

```
  1    C   {answering the phone}
           hello?
  2    M   hi,
           I'm trying to get hold of a Miss Carrie Bradshaw?
           she used to be a friend of mine?
  3    C   eah.
           good morning.
  4    M   wait,
           I think I recognise that voice.
  5    C   god,
           I can't believe it's been so long.
           I've been I've been meaning to call you,
           I've just been ..
  6    M   fucking your brains out?
  7    C   yeah well that's the least of it.
```

```
          .. you know what,
          I don't think that I have been hit this hard since,
          ... no you know what?
          I'm not going to compare it to anything else,
          because everything else has always ended.
8    M    so will I actually get to see you some time?
9    C    yeah absolutely.
          how about tonight?
10   M    yeah tonight'll work.
11   C    all right.
          so I'll call Charlotte and Samantha and see if
          they're free,
          cause Big's got this dinner thing,
          so you know we didn't have any plans anyway,
          and I'll [(come)]
12   M    [go:d.]
          will you listen to yourself.
13   C    .. yeah I know.
          I've become one of those women we hate.
14   M    yes you ha:ve.
          I can't talk now,
          I'll call you later.
          okay?
15   C    all right.
          bye.
```

This excerpt consists of a phone call between Carrie and Miranda. Carrie has spent much time with her new boyfriend, Mr Big, and has not seen her female friends for a while. This is indicated in Miranda's first turn (2): "hi, I'm trying to get hold of a Miss Carrie Bradshaw? she used to be a friend of mine?" This "switchboard request" (Schegloff 1979) is typical of situations in which the caller does not know the person called and therefore does not recognise the minimal voice sample offered, in this case Carrie's "hello." Miranda thus pretends to have been out of touch with Carrie for such a long time that "hello?" does not suffice as a recognition resource. Carrie orients to this playful reproach with a sound of disgust ("eah"), but then proceeds to business as usual with a greeting ("good morning", turn 3). Miranda, however, does not let her get away with this, and shifts back to the play frame (Bateson 1972) she established in her first turn: "wait, I think I recognise that voice." (turn 4).

In the following turn, Carrie addresses the implied criticism of her absence from the friends' social life with an expletive: "god" (turn 5). This is followed up by a formulaic utterance expressing surprise at the passing of time: "I can't believe it's been so long." These moves, which downplay her offence, are supported by an account of the structure: "I was going to do X, but Y." The dysfluency at the beginning of this move

and the hesitation at the end of Carrie's utterance display a negative affective stance towards what has happened: "I've been I've been meaning to call you, I've just been ..". Miranda exploits Carrie's hesitation for an other-completion, projecting a Y on the basis of the first part of Carrie's utterance and her knowledge of Carrie's private life: "fucking your brains out?"(turn 6).[1] The rising intonation on the completion indicates that this is Miranda's best guess at what Carrie has been doing. In turn 7, Carrie partially accepts her friend's assessment ("yeah well that's the least of it.") and goes on to elaborate on the feelings she has for Mr Big.

After Carrie's declaration that she does not want to compare the relation with Mr Big to any previous relationship, Miranda shifts the topic with the help of the discourse markers "so" and "actually" (turn 8; "so will I actually get to see you sometime?").[2] Carrie accepts this shift in perspective, and in the following turns (9-11), the women negotiate when to meet up. In turn 11, Carrie volunteers to find out whether Charlotte and Samantha can join them, thereby reinforcing her commitment to their arrangement. In order to extend her turn, Carrie uses the discourse marker "cause," which introduces a justification for her compliance with Miranda's wish to meet up (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 207-208): "cause Big's got this dinner thing, so you know we didn't have any plans anyway, and I'll [(come)]". Miranda reacts to this activity by interrupting Carrie's utterance with an expletive and a partially formulaic directive, which is typically used to attract somebody's attention to something, in this case Carrie's attention to her own words: "[go:d] will you listen to yourself." (turn 12). The expletive signals a negative affective stance, which is supported by what follows: an indirect corrective device in the shape of a directive. This device is evocative of other-initiated repair mechanisms in the sense of Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977): Miranda triggers a correction of Carrie's behaviour without spelling out her friend's wrongdoing. On the interpersonal plane, the indirectness of Miranda's utterance shows that she attends to her friend's face, both her desire for approval and her desire for freedom of action (Brown and Levinson 1987).

The object of Miranda's criticism can be deduced from the content of the utterance she interrupts, i.e. Carrie's completely gearing her plans towards the activities of her boyfriend. This kind of behaviour is obviously not tolerated in the community of practice under analysis and allows for membership categorisation, i.e. the labelling of a

person or collectivity, made explicit in Carrie's following turn: "women we hate" (turn 13). Such labelling is possible, because membership categories are inference-rich, conventionally associated with specific activities or characteristics. Widdicombe (1998: 53) explicates:

> category terms may be used to invoke activities or other attributes which may be expected or considered appropriate for people to whom the category term is applied (by themselves or others). Conversely, a description of someone's activities may be used to invoke their category membership.

The latter happens in the excerpt above. The behaviour displayed in Carrie's utterance (turn 11) invokes in Miranda the category "women we hate." By way of implicature (Grice 1975) her directive makes the category relevant in the conversation. This interpretation is then supported by Carrie's explicit mentioning of the category: " .. yeah I know. I've become one of those women we hate." (turn 13). This admission of guilt is preceded by a pause, which displays Carrie's negative affective stance to what she has done. In the following turns, Miranda emphatically confirms this categorisation, thereby ratifying the friendship norms of the community of practice: "yes you ha:ve" (turn 14). She then cuts their conversation short, but promises to call later. This promise is a consolidatory move in the sense of Laver (1981) ensuring a continuation of their relationship in spite of the sudden closing and Carrie's misdemeanour.[3]

This analysis shows how Carrie's behaviour is misaligned with the expectations and norms of female friendships subscribed to in the community of practice and how this is mirrored in the conversational behaviour of the two friends. Stokes and Hewitt elaborate: "Much that is problematic with respect to the alignment of individual conduct is so, because participants in interaction interpret another's acts within a cultural framework" (1976: 843). Through playful distancing behaviour at the beginning of the exchange and the correction device in turn 12, Miranda makes relevant the fact that Carrie has not been in touch with her friends for a while, and that she is subordinating herself to Big's schedule. Carrie orients to this criticism with dysfluencies, accounts and an admission of guilt, working towards realigning with her friend.

While Stokes and Hewitt (1976) focus on aligning actions in problematic circumstances,[4] Goffman (1974, 1979) describes how alignment pervades any interaction. In his theory, alignment is a somewhat vague notion, which is closely related to his concepts of "footing" and "framing." The former is Goffman's metaphor for the interlocutors' orientation in conversation or in social groups. It concerns "the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (Goffman 1979: 5). Alignment thus has metacommunicative functions and establishes an interpretative frame (Bateson 1972, Goffman 1974); for example, by aligning as doctor and patient, participants interpret utterances in the frame of a medical consultation.[5]

Following symbolic interactionist writings, in particular Goffman (1974, 1979), the term "alignment" has been used to describe processes at various levels of human interaction and conversational organisation. Since the wide variety of processes discussed in terms of alignment in the analyses of talk-in-interaction renders the concept difficult to grasp, I will distinguish two types of conversational alignment. Firstly, there is alignment on a structural plane, i.e. along the lines of Goffman's (1979) participation framework: For each utterance, participants align as ratified speakers, addressees, and side participants. Secondly, there is alignment on the interpersonal plane, establishing affiliation or disaffiliation. Affiliation and disaffiliation are micro-level processes intertwined with face-work/politeness and politic behaviour as described above (Brown and Levinson 1987; Goffman 1967; Watts 1989, 2003; cf. also Ylänne-McEwen 2004). Affiliation presumes that participants have a protective orientation towards the interlocutor's face and towards maintaining a state of equilibrium. Threatening the interlocutor's face and disturbing the equilibrium, on the other hand, leads to disaffiliation.[6]

The reason for not clearly distinguishing between the structural and the interpersonal plane is certainly rooted in the fact that alignments on the structural plane have repercussions on the interpersonal plane. This interrelation typically shows in cases of disalignment. Nofsinger (1991) considers responses one of the most obvious indications of how participants align to each other:

> the occurrence of an acceptance (or a rejection!), for example, can be taken as evidence that the speaker is orienting to another participant's utterance as having been an offer, an invitation, or some other related action. (Nofsinger 1991: 113)

If the participant does not respond at all and thus disaligns on the structural plane, the questioner may take offence. The disalignment on the structural plane may therefore cause disaffiliation on the interpersonal plane, disturbing the equilibrium between the interlocutors and threatening the fabric of their macro-level relation.

In summary, there are three interrelating planes of alignment, which pervade any interaction. The cultural plane can have repercussions on the conversational plane, while conversational alignment can simultaneously shape cultural expectations. Conversational alignments are organised on two different planes, the structural and the interpersonal, which frequently interrelate. Alignments on all three planes establish micro-relations, which in turn constitute macro-relations such as friendship (cf. Figure 5).

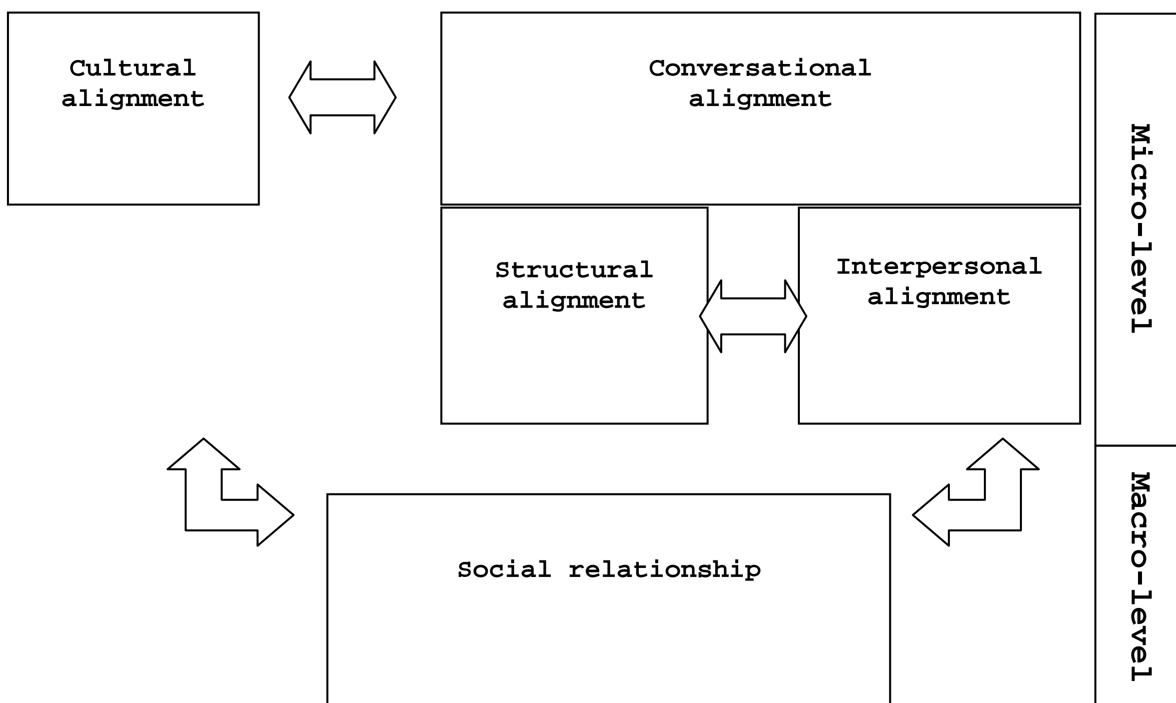

Figure 5: Alignments and social relationships

The various planes of alignment can be illustrated further with the help of the excerpt analysed above (SC_7.1 WOMEN WE HATE). We have already discussed cultural alignments in this sequence; now, I will focus on the organisation of conversational alignments. First, Miranda pretends not to recognize her friend's voice. Thereby, on the structural plane, she cancels out the typical sequential order of telephone openings between friends (cf. Hopper and Drummond 1992; Schegloff 1979). This has repercussions on the interpersonal plane: Carrie indicates that she perceives Miranda's turns (2 & 4) as disaffiliating moves and attempts to realign in turn 5.

Second, Miranda refuses to affiliate with Carrie by completing her friend's turn with a different orientation to what is said (turn 6). Antaki, Díaz and Collins show that "completions are evaluated by the original speaker for their fidelity to the participant status in which the original utterance was given" (1996: 154). Consequently, conversationalists can accept the content of a completion, but reject the interlocutor's suggested authorial stance to it. In this case, Carrie does not accept Miranda's suggested stance, which reduces her relationship to having sexual intercourse. This is accomplished by shifting back to what is more important to her, the emotional involvement. In this co-constructed turn, structural and interpersonal alignments diverge. While the completion is disaffiliating on the interpersonal plane, on the structural plane, utterance completions generally achieve alignment (cf. Lerner 1991). In order to function as an affiliating move, the completion – it seems – has to be made taking the same authorial stance to what is expressed.

Finally, there is another major disruption on both planes of organisation in turn 12. On the structural plane, Miranda interrupts Carrie. On the interpersonal plane, this move is disaffiliating, because it silences Carrie, which according to Brown and Levinson (1987) threatens both her negative and positive face. Her freedom of action, more specifically of speech, is restricted; and simultaneously, her friend signals that she is not interested in sharing what Carrie is about to relate. Moreover, Miranda implies that Carrie is momentarily excluded from the friendship circle, because she does not adhere to its norms.

To conclude, any conversational exchange displays alignments on three interrelating planes – structural, interpersonal, and cultural. These alignments may run parallel, but they may also diverge as in the case of Miranda's utterance-completion with the wrong

authorial stance. In the following section, I will give a general overview of alignment practices found in studies on talk-in-interaction.

4.2.3 Research on alignments in talk-in-interaction

Research on alignments in talk-in-interaction has revealed several practices employed by participants. On the structural plane, we find second pair-part practices, which according to Nofsinger (1991: 111) "keep conversation 'on track.'" Assessments, newsmarks and change of state markers, for example, indicate that a participant aligns as a recipient of news or information. Backchannel signals typically suggest that a participant aligns as a recipient of an extended turn. Formulations in the sense of Heritage and Watson (1979) foster alignment by displaying understanding of preceding talk.

A further source of structural alignment is conversational repair, a practice "which keeps participants updated on what meanings they are conveying, what actions they are taking toward each other, and the stances from which they are operating" (Nofsinger 1991: 132; cf. also Zahn 1984). Aside from responses and repair Nofsinger (1991: 132) considers what he labels "pre-positioned alignment devices." These include prefaces and presequences, which put emphasis on what is to follow, and ensure the other's availability. The latter leads us into structural alignment practices at conversational boundaries, i.e. openings and closings of conversations. These can only be accomplished through adroit negotiation of all participants, who align as being available for communication or as having nothing more to say. If these alignment devices are not successfully deployed, interactional and interpersonal consequences follow.[7]

While Nofsinger (1991) mainly describes structural alignments, Tannen (1999: 224) clearly extends the term to include what I label interpersonal and cultural alignments: "By talking in particular ways, speakers display their attitudes toward interlocutors, the situation, and the material being talked about." Likewise, Schiffrin (1993: 233) considers participant alignments as being "related to the way interactants position themselves relative to one another, for example, their relationships of power and solidarity, their affective stances." Tannen and Schiffrin's conception of interpersonal alignment corresponds to Davies and Harré's (1990) notion of "positioning," through

which context and relationship amongst speakers are created. In order to distinguish their concept of "positioning" from the traditional sociological concept of "role", Davies and Harré stress that it helps "focus attention on dynamic aspects of encounters" (1990: 43). Though they predominantly investigate positioning practices to reveal how identities are (re)constituted, their concept also lends itself to the investigation of how relationships are (re)established.

Davies and Harré (1990) critically review Goffman's notion of alignment. They see his theory as constrained by role theory, because – according to them – his writings suggest that alignments exist prior to speaking. This entails that in conversation participants realise their "conceptions of the personae engaged in talk" (1990: 55) as actual relationships between them. Consequently, alignment shapes the interaction rather than the other way around. Davies and Harré (1990), contrarily, state that in their framework of positioning, "alignments are actual relations jointly produced in the very act of conversing" (1990: 55).

I subscribe to this latter view of alignment as interactionally accomplishing relations at the micro-level, which simultaneously construct social relations at the macro-level. However, I would not deny that the macro-level also impacts on the micro-level, because participants have certain conceptions of the persons engaged in talk and their relationship before they start talking to each other, even if this is the very first conversation they are having. The interrelationship of pre-existing conceptions, i.e. social structure existing independently of talk, and interactionally produced social facts, i.e. social structure accomplished through talk, has been discussed at length with respect to the notion of identity. Günthner (1997), for example, using Giddens' (1976) notion of communication external and communication immanent context, argues that participants "bring along" conceptions of gender identity, which can be "brought about," i.e. made relevant, in the interaction or not. As pre-existing conceptions are irrelevant unless they are somehow introduced into the interaction, and since they can be renegotiated and reshaped in the course of an interaction, I consider the turn-by-turn accomplishment of identities or interpersonal relations through alignment work at the micro-level paramount.

Consider a first interaction between a doctor and a patient. Having a specific conception of doctor-patient relationships, the patient will respond to the doctor's

inquiry "how are you?" with a detailed description of the medical condition she is suffering from. With this response, she structurally aligns as a recipient of a question, interpersonally aligns affiliatively by cooperating with the doctor and culturally aligns as a patient. Through these alignments she brings about a doctor-patient relationship. Equally, "how are you?" can initiate phatic communication. If the patient responded to the inquiry with what Sacks (1975) labels a neutral response such as "fine" and a reciprocal "how are you?" inquiry, she structurally aligns as a recipient, interpersonally aligns affiliatively, but culturally she does not align as a patient and therefore does not "bring about" a doctor-patient relationship, but rather a casual acquaintance relation.[8]

Since the display of alignments in talk-in-interaction signals what kind of relationship the interlocutors have at the macro-level, they also compare to what Goffman labels "tie-signs", defined as "all such evidence about relationships, that is, about ties between persons, whether involving objects, acts, expressions" (1971: 232). However, while Goffman excludes the "literal aspects of explicit documentary statements," alignments as I define them include overt statements such as "you are my friends." They roughly correspond to Goffman's (1971: 237) "tie statements" – utterances which overtly inform one's interlocutor of a relationship.[9] I consider such overt relationship statements as a case of membership categorisation device (Sacks 1972a, 1972b) through which a specific relation is evoked, typically triggered by some business of the interaction and contributing to the ensuing talk (cf. Antaki, Condor, and Levine 1996: 487). Similarly, Conroy (1999: 349) distinguishes structural affiliation from personal or content affiliation, which is established if "one party expresses directly, or alludes to, a tie-in or partnership or state of empathy with/loyalty towards another party." The boundary between structural and content or in my terms implicit and explicit (dis)affiliation is fuzzy. Explicit categorisations can be contained within implicit alignment practices and there seems to be a continuum ranging from purely implicit to purely explicit practices.

The focus in the following sections will be on implicit alignment practices, since they constitute the majority of alignment processes in my data (cf. also Mandelbaum 2003; Watzlawick, Bavelas, and Jackson 1967). In section 4.2.6.2, I will then present a clear example of an explicit alignment practice.

4.2.4 Alignment practices

In this section, I will give a brief and certainly not exhaustive overview of implicit alignment devices or practices discussed in the literature – though not necessarily in these terms.[10] Processes which I consider aligning have been labelled differently, such as "positioning" (Davies and Harré 1990) or "relational framing" (Coupland and Coupland 2000). Furthermore, as I have already mentioned above, the term "alignment" has been used for different purposes in the literature, presumably due to the fact that the different planes of alignment which can be distinguished in theory interrelate in actual talk and likewise, the alignment practices at the micro-level interrelate with the macro-level of social organisation. For instance, some of the practices Nofsinger (1991; see above) considers as creating alignments on the structural plane, Ragan (1983) discusses with respect to social relationships: she finds that alignment practices such as formulations and repair are distributed unevenly in job interviews, and thus create an asymmetrical relationship between interviewer and job applicant. Contrarily, in casual conversation between fellow students, the distribution is balanced, hence creating a symmetrical relationship.

A review of the literature yields the following list of alignment practices, which can be distinguished according to the level of conversational organisation they are located at, ranging from prosodic phenomena and single words to large chunks of discourse. I will start out with the prosodic level and move towards the larger units of discourse. Another respect in which they differ is that some of them establish affiliation (or disaffiliation) retroactively, while others can be considered proactive, i.e. initiating affiliative sequences.

i) Backchannelling

Backchannels (Yngve 1970) are a retroactive alignment practice at the level of prosody. While Nofsinger (1991; see above) shows how they generally contribute to structural alignment, various other authors consider their interpersonal repercussions (Bublitz 1988; Gordon 2003; Müller 1996; Norrick 2000; Pritchard 1993). Müller (1996: 149) shows that they can contribute to affiliation, if they are displayed instantly at prosodically salient points, and that they signal disaffiliation if they occur "out of tune."

ii) Proximal and distal demonstratives and pronouns

Deictic expressions like demonstratives and pronouns are a word-level alignment practice, which can be used retroactively as well as proactively. They contribute to interpersonal alignments by indicating distance and proximity – literally as well as metaphorically. By using distal demonstratives, interlocutors can detach themselves from other participants (cf. Kangasharju 2002). The same holds for the use of distal pronouns: Straehle (1993: 219) discusses third person pronominal reference in the referred-to person's presence. This usage denies the person's participation in the interaction, and is thus an extreme form of disalignment and disaffiliation. Contrarily, proximal demonstratives and pronouns can achieve affiliation, for example the usage of inclusive "we" (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; Gordon 2003; Sacks 1992a; Straehle 1993). Nikolas and Justine Coupland (2000: 209) consider pronominal address and reference to be "the most obvious and the most powerful" practice to mark what they label "relational frames."

iii) Prefaces and discourse markers

Prefaces and discourse markers can be found at the word, phrase and clause-level and function mainly proactively. Prefaces such as Schegloff's (1980) preliminaries to preliminaries and discourse markers, especially "you know," orient the interlocutors to what is coming, hence contributing to structural alignment. In securing understanding or empathy, they also help establish affiliative interpersonal alignments (cf. Biber et al. 1999; Ragan 1983; Goldberg 1982; Ragan 1983; Schiffrin 1987; Watts 1989).

iv) Qualifiers

Qualifiers are "words and phrases that explicitly manifest tentativeness, uncertainty, and nonassertiveness" (Ragan 1983). They proactively and retroactively contribute to affiliative alignments insofar as they reduce the force of potentially disaffiliative utterance content.[11]

v) Repetition or reformulation of another's words

Repetition or reformulation of what the previous speaker has said retroactively establishes structural alignment by cohesively tying an utterance to the preceding one

(cf. Halliday and Hasan 1976). Repetition and reformulation can occur at the word, phrase, and clause level, but may also occur at the prosodic level, for example, if a specific tone of voice or intonation pattern is repeated. As for the interpersonal implications, repetition contributes to affiliation by demonstrating comprehension, ratification and appreciation of another's utterance or by linking one's ideas to those of the preceding speaker (Tannen 1987, 1989; cf. also Coates 1996a; Falk 1980; Gordon 2003; Kangasharju 1996, 2002; Pritchard 1993). Repetition, however, can also stress and thereby increase disaffiliation, especially in conflict talk (cf. M. Goodwin 1990; Spitz 2005; Tannen 1989).

vi) Collaborative utterance / turn production

Collaborative utterances are single units (phrases, clauses) which are constructed across the talk of several speakers (Lerner 1991). Jefferson (1973: 59) considers such collaborative utterances a "display of 'I know what you're talking about.'" They signal understanding and thus – retroactively – establish alignment. In order to accomplish such collaboration, the interlocutors have to pay close attention to all levels of organisation of the other's utterance, the content as well as the lexis, syntax, and prosody (Coates 1996a). The co-construction of utterances can also include simultaneous speech, i.e. saying the same words at the same time or slightly postponed (cf. Coates 1996a; Lerner 2002; Norrick 2004). On the interpersonal plane, collaborative utterances signal rapport and empathy (cf. Ferrara 1992) and therefore illustrate an "extraordinary tie between syntactic possibilities and phenomena like social organization" (Sacks 1992a: 145). In order to establish affiliative alignment, the interlocutors' contribution to the collaborative utterance needs to count "on both their behalfs" (Falk 1980: 508; cf. also Antaki, Díaz, and Collins 1996; Díaz et al. 1996). Otherwise, they establish disaffiliation, as we have already seen in the excerpt analysed above (SC_7.1 WOMEN WE HATE).

Gordon (2003) extends the idea of co-construction to what she labels turn sharing. This means that two participants collaboratively provide a conditionally relevant adjacency pair part such as a response to a question. In Gordon's (2003) data, for example, a shared response to an answer is accomplished through participants' conferring with each other (cf. also Lerner 1993).

vii) Accounts

Accounts are another retroactive alignment practice located at the utterance level. The investigation of accounts as alignment practices goes back to symbolic interactionist writings (e.g. Scott and Lyman 1968; Stokes and Hewitt 1976). Ragan (1983) considers them an interpersonal alignment practice insofar as they are used to justify behaviour deemed inappropriate by interlocutors allowing for realignment in the face of disaffiliation. Similarly, Heritage (1988: 135) shows how accounts contribute to what he labels "the management of self-other relationships," and how account giving relates to issues of face in the sense of Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987).

viii) Formulations

As discussed above, formulations are retroactive practices which summarise previous turns or offer a characterisation or explanation of the preceding talk (cf. Garfinkel and Sacks 1970; Heritage and Watson 1979, 1980). While Nofsinger (1991) shows how formulations accomplish structural alignment, Ragan (1983) demonstrates that they also function in the management of participants' roles and relations.

ix) Side-sequences

As Ragan (1983: 159) shows, side-sequences – first discussed by Jefferson (1972) – can also be employed to place "an interpretive bracket around some portion of talk." Side sequences in her data are frequently semi-formulaic sequences containing repeats or questions. They guarantee shared understanding of some issue and via this shared understanding contribute to interpersonal alignment. Side-sequences are retroactive, since they occur in response to something said in the preceding discourse.

x) Conversational repair

Conversational repair à la Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) has also been shown to contribute to conversational alignment – both structurally and interpersonally (Mandelbaum 2003; Nofsinger 1991; Ragan 1983; Zahn 1984). According to Mandelbaum (2003: 217), repair-initiations reveal interlocutors' "on-sight alertness" to the interpersonal implications of conversation. Like side-sequences, repair sequences are retroactive.

xi) Preference organisation

A much debated issue with respect to interpersonal alignments is the CA concept of preference structure (Pomerantz 1978, 1984; Sacks 1987). While CA scholars consider preference to function strictly on the plane of structural alignment, Conroy (1999) claims that following the preference for agreement is an important practice of doing affiliation.[12] This accords with Gordon's (2003: 397) concept of "supportive alignments, … in which one participant ratifies and supports another's turn at talk and what he or she has to say ... sending the metamessage (Bateson 1972) 'I support you, we agree.'"

While preferred responses are conducive to affiliation, dispreferred utterances potentially cause disaffiliation, as Steensig and Asmuß (forthcoming) show for utterances introduced by "yes but". They also find nuances in the structure of dispreferred utterances: the more socially problematic, the more complex is the structure of the "yes but" utterance. Dispreferred and preferred second-pair parts are another retroactive alignment strategy.

xii) Orientation to content and affective stance of topic

Topic organization contributes to interpersonal alignment insofar as it "allows parties to share interactionally both resources and orientations toward common focal points" (Conroy 1999: 342). Morrison (1997) shows that participants retroactively affiliate with the profferer of a topic not only by tuning in to the content but also to the affective stance with which the news is delivered, e.g. an enthusiastic news report is met with an enthusiastic response.

xiii) Response stories

A more extensive retroactive alignment practice is the response story. Norrick (2000) demonstrates how conversationalists establish structural and interpersonal alignment with the help of conversational narratives carefully constructed to match a preceding story by another participant. Typically a response or second story (Sacks 1992b) presents the teller in a similar situation displaying similar behaviour or attitudes. They demonstrate understanding and sympathy, signalling "my mind is with you" (Sacks 1992b: 257). As a conditionally relevant response these stories establish structural alignment, and through the equation of narrators' experiences they create affiliation.

Response stories are often found in the context of self-disclosure (cf. also Coates 1996a, 2001).

xiv) Tit-for-tat

Tit-for-tat is a retroactive affiliation practice described by Mandelbaum (2003). As a famous example, she cites the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. While uttering her vows Diana confused the order of Charles' names. This could be interpreted to have a variety of potentially negative relational implications, but through reciprocally getting her names wrong in his vows, Prince Charles indicated that this could happen to anyone. Mandelbaum's (2003) analyses of casual conversation show how such tit-for-tat also occurs in everyday situations.

xv) Intimacy pursuits through transgressive or improper talk and self-disclosure

Intimacy pursuits were originally investigated by Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff (1987: 159) as "expanded affiliative sequences," in which a speaker introduces an impropriety to make a bid for a more intimate interaction and thus relationship. The proactive affiliative potential of such sequences has been discussed by Conroy (1999) as well as by Coupland and Jaworski (2003). The latter show that transgressive talk allows interlocutors to test boundaries and reveal how the shared orientation to this endeavour establishes affiliative alignment on the interpersonal plane.

A related phenomenon is the practice of self-disclosure, which I have discussed above in the chapter on friendship (cf. section 2.3). Self-disclosure has the potential of initiating an extended affiliative sequence, since it constitutes a bid for intimacy "which invite[s] the listener to share and respond emphatically" (Pearce and Sharp 1973: 415).

xvi) Conversational humour, irony and teasing

Conversational humour, irony and teasing can occur proactively as well as retroactively. Norrick (1993) shows how participants accomplish affiliation and disaffiliation with non-present or present parties with the help of stock or spontaneous humour. Generally, tuning in to a humorous key establishes affiliation, while adhering to a serious key in the face of humorous utterances contributes to disaffiliation.

This leads into the topics of irony and teasing, which establish complex alignment patterns. Kotthoff (2003) investigates how participants negotiate a critical, i.e. disaffiliating, or friendly, i.e. affiliating understanding of irony through responding either to the *implicatum* or the *dictum* of the ironic utterance. Teasing is of special interest insofar as it establishes playful disaffiliation through various contextualisation cues in the sense of Gumperz (1982), such as high pitched, nasal tone of voice, laughter, and formulaic expressions (cf. Straehle 1993). If participants succeed in jointly establishing a play frame through such cues, antagonistic or face-threatening acts are perceived as affiliating. In Bateson's words, "the playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite" (1972: 180). Straehle (1993) illustrates how such playful alignments are created and how they shift throughout a conversation. She argues that their establishment is an outcome but simultaneously also a source of intimate relationships (cf. also Günthner 1996). Nevertheless, as Norrick (1993: 147) cautions, "even among friends with a history of joking, a playful jab may hit a raw nerve" and may cause negative affective reactions and serious disaffiliation.

xvii) Laughing and smiling

Following research by Jefferson (1979, 1984) and Jefferson, Sacks, and Schegloff (1987), Glenn (1995, 2003) shows that conversational laughter at large functions to retroactively establish interpersonal alignments. By "laughing along" and "laughing with" participants affiliate, whereas "laughing at" serves to disaffiliate with the interlocutor(s). Glenn (1995, 2003) also shows how participants negotiate shifts from an affiliative "laughing with" to a distancing "laughing at" and *vice versa* and thereby accomplish "a micro-transformation of social structure" (1995: 54). Pritchard (1993) and Kangasharju (1996) demonstrate that not only laughing but also its non-vocal counterpart, smiling, can achieve affiliation.

xviii) Silences

Silences or pauses can retroactively contribute to (dis)alignments and (dis)affiliation. Kangasharju (2002) shows how silences are used to disaffiliate in conflict talk through signalling disagreement, but silences can also have the opposite effect. Pritchard (1993) demonstrates how in troubles talk the tolerance of long pauses establishes affiliation,

because it indicates that the troubles teller is given plenty of space to self-disclose and that the interlocutors are aligned as sympathetic troubles recipients (cf. Jefferson 1988).

xix) Non-verbal devices such as facial expressions, gaze, body posture, gestures

Kangasharju (1996, 2002) following Charles Goodwin (1981) discusses various non-verbal devices which display alignments on the structural and interpersonal plane. Facial expressions such as frowning and nodding during another's turn are indicative, but more subtle features of non-verbal communication such as gaze and posture also play an important role. Charles Goodwin (1986) presents an example of someone establishing an intricate alignment pattern through diverging non-verbal activities: a woman joins a group of men telling dirty jokes – thus aligning as a recipient; but she turns her back to them, which indicates that her participant status is different from that of the men who are facing each other. Although my focus is on verbal devices, non-verbal elements will be taken into account in my analyses whenever they constitute discrete moves.

4.2.5 Alignment in multi-party conversation

The alignment practices described above occur in both two-party and multi-party conversations. Multi-party conversations, however, are "rather different things" from two-party conversations (Sacks 1992a: 309) and provide for much more intricate alignments on every plane. The turn-taking in four-party conversation is not analogous to two-party conversation; if it were, it would be ABCDABCDABCD (Sacks 1992a: 310). Hence, departures from this scheme provide a structural device for the display of participants' positioning towards each other. Glenn (2003), for example, finds differences in the alignments of multiparty conversation caused by who laughs first. While in two-party conversations, it is frequently the producer of the laughable who initiates shared laughter, in multi-party conversations any participant but the speaker triggers off the laughter. Glenn suggests that the organisation of who has the first laugh is determined by interpersonal issues, e.g. the producer of the laughable may try to avoid self-praise.

Typically, in multi-party conversations, interactional teams or ensembles (Gordon 2003; Lerner 1987, 1993) are formed or made relevant.[13] These may be relatively enduring social units (e.g. a married couple), associations occasioned by the overall organisation of the speech situation (e.g. hosts), or momentary collectivities, which have no vernacular labels, for example, participants who display the same opinion (cf. Lerner 1993). The teams discussed by Gordon (2003) and Lerner (1987, 1993) compare to Goffman's (1959) performance teams, which he defines as a set of individuals cooperating to stage a specific definition of the situation such as a party with guests and hosts.

Gordon (2003) investigates interactional teams in stepfamily interaction. In her data, teams are established:

> when two or more participants align supportively and exhibit conjoined participation, which means that they continue, complete, or repair each other's turns or speak on behalf of another team member, thereby making their association visible to co-interlocutors (Gordon 2003: 396).

She distinguishes three forms of conjoined participation (2003: 402): Firstly, there are shared turns, i.e. participants co-construct an adjacency pair part as described above. Secondly, participants may enter conjoined participation through alternating turns, which are parallel in function, e.g. several participants take turns which function to question the same addressee(s). Finally, interlocutors construct schema-echo turns based on a knowledge schema – in the sense of Tannen and Wallat (1993) – which is known to be maintained by other co-participants. In Gordon's data one such shared knowledge schema is teenage dating: through their utterances, which establish that one should only go on dates with people you know fairly well, three adults form a team in a conversation with a teenage girl, thereby defining the situation as adults giving advice to a young person.

The phenomenon of momentary interactional teams or ensembles is particularly widespread in contexts of multiparty social arguments and interpersonal conflicts. Maynard (1986) shows how children solicit and offer collaboration and thus form associations in multi-party disputes: a speaker joining a dispute can aggravate

opposition by aligning with the representative(s) of a position or the representative(s) of a counter position. Collaboration, however, is a negotiated phenomenon, i.e. it is only achieved if one of the original disputants aligns with the "outsider."

Kangasharju (1996) examines the teaming up of two participants in multi-party conversation in an institutional setting where conflict is rife. The teams she describes are jointly created in the course of the interaction by systematically affiliating with each other as well as simultaneously disaffiliating with the opposing team. She describes various practices which contribute to the affiliative alignment of the two speakers as well as to their disaffiliation with the other participants. Aside from the practices listed above, she also finds a special case of collaborative utterances, namely "teaming anticipatory completions" (cf. Lerner 1987). These entail that the recipient of the completion is not so much the speaker whose utterance has been completed, but the other participants – in which case the participant completing the utterance aligns with the previous speaker opposite the other participants.

Note that while interactional teams imply that their members share a viewpoint, i.e. are on one side, intimate relationships can also be established by jointly constructing events, in which participants do not take the same side, as Schiffrin (1984) shows for sociable arguments in an American Jewish community of practice, Watts (1989) for Swiss families, and Spitz (2005) for (fictional) mother-daughter relationships. The following analyses will show that macro-level friendship relations are not necessarily constituted through affiliative alignments on the interpersonal plane and a lack of disalignment on the structural plane. On the contrary, the friendship between the four women is constructed through constantly shifting alignment patterns, catering for the demands of the association/dissociation dialectic.

4.2.6 Alignment patterns in *Sex and the City*

In the following sections, I will look at how alignment is accomplished in two- and multi-party conversation between the four women friends. Rather than presenting specific devices which accomplish (dis)affiliation, I will analyse complete interactions which reveal how alignments shift throughout the conversations, constituting "micro-moments of transforming social structure" (Glenn 2003: 165). I will start out with a

section on what I label implicit alignments, and in a second section, I will focus on explicit alignments, more specifically, the membership categorisation device "friend."

4.2.6.1 Implicit alignments

The subsequent passages will move from relatively straightforward alignment patterns in a two-party conversation to the more complex alignments in four-party conversations. While in two-party conversations alignments between the two speakers can shift from affiliative to disaffiliative and back, in multi-party talk, these shifts are complicated insofar as there is a tendency towards the emergence of conversational ensembles, i.e. two or more participants align affiliatively while simultaneously distancing themselves from third parties.

The excerpt below shows how the two friends Carrie and Miranda shift their alignments while shopping for a pregnancy test for Carrie.

SC_10.9 OVARY OVERLOAD

```
1    C    I'm on total .. ovary overload.
          which kind do I get?
2    M    here.
          this one's on sale.
          half off.
3    C    sweetie,
          I just spent three hundred and ninety five dollars on a
          pair of open-toed Guccis last week.
          this is not the place to be frugal.
4    M    all right. ((mumbling))
5    C    wha- what about this one? {taking a packet from the
          shelf}
6    M    oh First Response.
          I remember First Response.
          I had a very reassuring moment once with First Response.
          .hhh hhh
          here's hoping.
7    C    hh
          (2.0) {walking towards the cash desk}
          what if I am?
8    M    (2.0) if you am you am.
9    C    .hh I don't think,
          I'd be very good at this.
          I mean,
          .. am I maternal?
10   M    (1.0) um ... ye-
11   C    you know,
          when I was a little girl,
```

```
        I left my favourite baby doll out in the rain for four
        days.
        her face peeled off.
        that can't be good.
12   M  yeah but I mean if you-
13   C  I shaved my Barbie's head when I was mad at her.
14   M  (1.0) when I was little,
        I took a rubber band,
        and put it around my dog Pepper's snout.
15   C  (2.0) ((frowns))
16   M  what?
17   C  god.
        h
        (4.0) {walking on then stopping again}
        can you picture it?
        us .. with,
        (1.0)
18   M  kids?
19   C  (2.0) babies.
20   M  hhh
        I'll probably end up with five.
        Hhh
```

Carrie's first turn "I'm on total ovary overload" creates humour through the unexpected combination of the terms "ovary," which is part of the gynaecological register, and the term "overload," which is predominantly used in technical contexts (cf. Raskin 1985). This contrast between a female body part and the technical associations evoked by the word "overload" is accentuated through the alliteration. The humorous key facilitates the actual function of Carrie's utterance, namely to signal that she is in trouble and needs Miranda's help, and it proactively establishes affiliation.[14] Miranda is eager to provide assistance. The enthusiasm she displays in response to Carrie's report and question signals affiliation. She points to a pregnancy test accounting for her choice by directing attention to its reduced price. Miranda's response also signals that she takes the position of a supportive trouble-recipient (cf. Jefferson 1988).

In the following turn, however, Carrie declines Miranda's advice. Her direct address of Miranda with a term of endearment ("sweetie") and the account she gives ("I just spent three hundred and ninety five dollars on a pair of open-toed Guccis last week.") indicate that declining the advice is a dispreferred second pair part and therefore disaffiliative on the interpersonal plane. The term of endearment and the account can be considered moves which re-establish affiliation. Miranda's mumbled "all right" in turn 4 indicates that she accepts this and ratifies the affiliation.

When Carrie suggests another product (turn 5), Miranda again displays enthusiasm (turn 6): she names the product that Carrie has pointed out, then repeats the name twice, conjuring up her own positive experiences with it: "I had a very reassuring moment once with First Response." This utterance achieves multiple goals: firstly, she agrees with Carrie on a product, and secondly, she signals that she has been in the same trouble that Carrie finds herself in. Hence, her turn achieves a reciprocal self-disclosure. The revelation of delicate personal information renders Miranda vulnerable, but the vulnerability is contained through the fact that Carrie is now in the same situation. Likewise, Carrie needs not worry about her own vulnerability in this situation. This provides for close alignment on the interpersonal plane and constructs intimacy and closeness at the macro-level. Reciprocal self-disclosures can thus be considered strongly affiliative extended sequences.

Miranda's formulaic clause "here's hoping," is ambiguous, yet does not preclude a happy end. Carrie's exhalation structurally aligns her utterance with Miranda's, by mirroring her friend's audible breathing. It also signals some relief, implying that she accepts Miranda's help. In terms of cultural alignment, they thus accomplish an advice-giver/advice-receiver relation, which will be discussed further below.

Walking towards the cashier Carrie is again overcome with doubts, which is revealed by her question: "What if I am?" The ensuing pause of two seconds is structurally disaligning. Miranda finally makes a tautological statement (turn 8): "If you am you am." This makes up for the two second silence, re-aligning Miranda with her friend Carrie on the structural as well as on the interpersonal plane. In this case, the need for affiliation even overrides grammar rules.

Furthermore, Miranda's utterance re-aligns her with Carrie through avoiding the word "pregnant." The two women co-operate in the construction of the concept of pregnancy as a taboo, which contributes to the feminine identities they negotiate in this sequence: contrary to the dominant discourse of pregnancy being part of womanhood and of celebrating pregnancy, they consider it an anathema. This interpretation is validated by Carrie's next turn (9): .hh I don't' think I'd be very good at this. I mean, .. am I maternal?" Due to the use of the mental verb "think" and the discourse marker "I mean," this can be considered "think talk," an externalised cognitive process (Craig and Sanusi 2003). Her inhalation and her negative statement signal that she is sceptical

about being a good mother. The discourse marker "I mean" indicates that she is not unsure about this statement, aligning Miranda to an "upcoming modification" (Schiffrin 1987: 296). This consists of a yes/no question eliciting Miranda's opinion on her motherly skills.

Miranda's response establishes disaffiliation through the dispreferred turn structure: "(1.0) um … ye- " (turn 10). The first syllable of an affirmative marker, presumably "yes," indicates that she rejects Carrie's prior assessment about her insufficient motherly skills.[15] Carrie then interrupts her in order to give some evidence of her prior assessment in the form of a self-disclosing minimal story (turn 11): "you know, when I was a little girl, I left my favourite baby doll out in the rain for four days. her face peeled off." The discourse marker "you know" functions "to enlist the hearer's participation as an audience to the storytelling" (Schiffrin 1987: 284). On the basis of Norrick's (2000) framework for narrative analysis, the story itself can be divided into three parts: first, a general frame ("when I was a little girl"); second, two narrative clauses ("I left my favourite baby doll out in the rain for four days" and "her face peeled off."); third, an evaluation ("that can't be good."). The evaluation "bids to win the audience over to a particular point of view" (Norrick 2000:116), in this case Carrie's being unfit to have children.

Still, Miranda is not convinced as can be gleaned from her response, which is introduced by "yeah but", a marker of partial agreement, indicating another dispreferred turn: "yeah but I mean if you-" (turn 12). This causes further disaffiliation, but Carrie does not allow for any disagreement and interrupts her again to continue her reasoning that she is not fit for motherhood (turn 13): "I shaved my Barbie's head when I was mad at her." Her utterance is almost a continuation of her minimal story about neglecting her doll. The general frame of the doll story still holds – this happened when she was a little girl – and she gives one more narrative clause ("I shaved my Barbie's head") followed by a narrow frame ("when I was mad at her."; cf. Norrick 2000).

After a one-second pause, which contributes to the existing disalignment and disaffiliation between the two interlocutors, Miranda accepts the story-telling frame and thus finally re-aligns herself with her friend through a response story which matches Carrie's minimal narrative (turn 14), hence establishing a conversational tit-for-tat à la Mandelbaum (2003). The general frame of Miranda's minimal narrative is almost the

same as the one in Carrie's ("when I was little"), and the story also consists of two narrative clauses ("I took a rubber band, and put it around my dog Pepper's snout."). It depicts Miranda as being irresponsible in a similar way as Carrie. The thematic and structural parallelism of the two stories contributes to structural alignment and creates affiliation on the interpersonal plane. Miranda's story signals that she understands Carrie. Her matching self-disclosing story also implies that if Carrie considers herself to have a character flaw, she shares this flaw. Such mirroring narrative self-disclosure creates strong affiliative alignment and is considered a typical strategy for constructing friendship between women (Coates 1996a). Yet, considering that Carrie behaved irresponsible towards her inanimate playmates whereas Miranda did so towards her dog, Miranda's story can also be regarded as an attempt to outperform Carrie. Such competitive quality of women's reciprocal self-disclosure has, to my knowledge, not been investigated so far, but can be interpreted as a striving for autonomy in the face of too much connection and is in keeping with the competitiveness of women's talk in gossipy speech events as discussed above in the chapter on friendship (2.3).

The ensuing two-second pause can be attributed to Carrie as she does not react verbally to Miranda's story. Her facial expression, however, signals a negative affective stance and thus disaffiliation: she frowns (turn 15). Miranda orients to this move with an open-class repair initiator "what?", demanding remedial work (Goffman 1971).[16] Carrie provides this by re-aligning in the following turn: "god. h (4.0) can you picture it? us … with" (turn 17). Her expletive together with the audible exhalation signal that her apprehensions about her being a bad mother are not allayed, but she extends them to Miranda. Her affiliative alignment is accomplished through two devices. Firstly, she shifts from the first person singular pronoun "I" (cf. turn 9, 11, 13) to the first person plural pronoun "us," including Miranda. Secondly, she uses a rhetorical question, which typically functions to check whether consensus exists (cf. Coates 1996a and section 4.4.4 below).

When Carrie breaks off and pauses, presumably looking for the right word, Miranda completes the utterance with the noun "kids" in question intonation. Miranda's completion shows that she has closely followed what Carrie is saying at all levels of organisation. When Carrie stops, she knows a noun phrase is missing, and from the context of the foregoing discourse, she anticipates the meaning of this noun phrase. In

the following turn, Carrie ratifies Miranda's completion by supplying a noun phrase with a very similar semantic content: "babies." Díaz, Antaki, and Collins (1996: 536) label this type of response to a completion offer "reshaping." Such ratifications not only confirm that the content of the completion is correct, but also indicate that the completion was made "on both their behalfs" (Falk 1980: 508), thereby establishing affiliative alignment.

Since the rhetorical question is co-constructed by the two participants, it needs no further confirmation. Instead, Miranda extends the contemplation with a self-mocking remark accompanied by a sigh: "hhh I'll probably end up with five." The mocking shows in her tone of voice as well as the contrast of the content of the utterance with the foregoing theme of the conversation, namely the two of them not being fit for motherhood. This is another affiliative move, reinforcing the idea that they share this dilemma of being ambiguous about motherhood.

In summary, the turn-by-turn analysis shows how participants shift alignments throughout a stretch of conversation. Overall, the women affiliatively align as troubles-teller and troubles-recipient (cf. Jefferson 1988), but there are several disaligning intermezzos: firstly, when Carrie rejects Miranda's first piece of advice (turn 3), secondly, when Miranda repeatedly rejects Carrie's assessment about her motherly skills (turns 10 & 12), and thirdly, when Carrie displays a negative affective stance towards Miranda's second story (turn 15 & 16). Still, each of these sequences is terminated by affiliative re-alignment: Carrie uses a term of endearment and an account to make up for her dispreferred response and Miranda accepts this (turn 3-4); the disalignment created through Miranda's rejection of her friend's assessment is remedied by Miranda's reciprocal narrative self-disclosure (turn 14); finally, Carrie's initial refusal to ratify this attempt at affiliation is remedied by her deictic shift and her rhetorical question. The establishment of a collective footing through the co-construction of this rhetorical question reaffirms the shift back to an affiliative alignment.

By shifting alignments, the women tackle activities which potentially threaten their friendship relation. The equilibrium is successively upset and re-established. Carrie's rejection of Miranda's advice, Miranda's disagreement with Carrie's assessment, and Carrie's frowning at Miranda's story can all be considered threats to the interlocutor's

face insofar as they signal that the speaker does not respect the addressee's needs (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987:62), hence upsetting the equilibrium. Redress, and with this an affiliative re-alignment, follows either in the same turn, in the speaker's next turn, or sometimes only after the recipient of the face-threatening act has displayed a negative affective stance towards this act, for instance, Miranda's "what?" in SC_10.9 OVARY OVERLOAD, turn 16.

These shifts back to affiliative alignment certainly constitute the most spectacular moves with respect to the negotiation of friendship relations. Another activity, which is just as interesting, however, is the pursuit of intimacy as described by Jefferson, Sacks, and Schegloff (1987). In conversations between the four women in *SATC* this usually takes the form of some intimate self-disclosure or some intimate question which initiates such disclosure. This can also be seen in the above excerpt: Carrie's initial request simultaneously reveals sensitive information and is thus a bid for intimacy. By complying with her friends' request Miranda then signals that she accepts this bid. Such intimacy pursuits also entail the potential to upset the equilibrium as I will discuss in detail below.

In the following passages, I will present more complex multi-party conversations and therewith more complex alignment patterns. I will start out with a three-party interaction and then proceed to a speech situation, in which all four friends are involved. Three-party interactions are rare in this TV series. As noted above, the audience is mostly presented with either all four friends involved in talk or just two of them, usually Carrie and either Charlotte, Samantha or Miranda.

In the excerpt below, Carrie, Miranda and Charlotte are going for a walk in the park, discussing Charlotte's affair with a widower she met in a cemetery.

SC_17.4 REBOUND

```
1    M    one word,
          .. rebound.
2    Ch   it's not a rebound,
          when the other person's dead.
3    C    she has a point.
4    Ch   he's moving on.
          I'm helping him to get over his wife.
5    M    this guy has PROject written ALL over him.
6    Ch   that's not fair.
7    C    so how is the sex?
8    Ch   hh aMAzing.
          it was like Liz was just looking over us giving us her
```

```
             blessing
9     C      a threesome in absentia.
10    Ch     I mean,
             my hat blew right into her headstone.
             she was CLEARly sending a message.
11    M      yeah,
             don't fuck my husband,
             you hat-loving bitch.
12    Ch     he invited me to a memorial service at her grave next
             week.
             that is hu:ge.
13    C      excuse me,
             but when did cemeteries get so HAPpening?
14    Ch     it's a sign that he's ready to move on.
             and he's ready to do it with me.
15    M      so you're saying you fucked him back to life?
16    Ch     in a way,
             ... yes.
17    C      man,
             you're good.
```

The scene starts *in medias res*. Presumably, Charlotte has been talking about her affair with a man she met at the cemetery. Due to the preface "one word", Miranda's reaction (turn 1) to the preceding talk at first sight appears to be a formulation, i.e. a summary of the previous stretch of talk (cf. Heritage and Watson 1979, 1980). This can be considered an aligning move on the structural plane, signalling the lining up of participants' moves crucial to intersubjective understanding. However, Charlotte disagrees with her friend's formulation: "it's not a rebound, when the other person's dead" (turn 2). Since this disagreement is not marked, it is feasible that Charlotte interprets Miranda's turn (1) as an oppositional, thereby cancelling out the preference for agreement and contextualising argumentation (cf. Kotthoff 1993). Consequently, Miranda's turn (1) – though it is structurally aligned with the preceding talk – is interpreted as disaffiliating, and Charlotte's disagreeing response establishes a disaffiliating sequence within an argumentation frame.

At turn 3, Carrie enters the discussion. Interestingly, she addresses Miranda and refers to Charlotte with the third person pronoun "she," thereby aligning with Miranda. Conversely, at the content level, Carrie agrees with Charlotte, which can be interpreted as establishing an alliance with Charlotte against Miranda. Whether this is a dual alignment or a mock-affiliation between Carrie and Charlotte remains unresolved, since Charlotte's response does not explicitly orient to either of these interpretations. Charlotte may feel the need to continue her argumentation against the alliance of her

friends or feel encouraged by Carrie's agreement: "he's moving on. I'm helping him to get over his wife." (turn 4). Miranda, however, still is not convinced and responds with another oppositional turn: "this guy has PROject written ALL over him." (turn 5). The prosodic marking indicates her negative affective stance. The partially formulaic expression "have project written all over him/her" also signals a negative stance towards the widower, because the lexeme "project" in this context implies a trap. Charlotte reacts to this by declaring her friend's utterance to constitute a breach of the rules of discussing such issues, a cultural misalignment: "that's not fair." (turn 6). In so doing, she counter-opposes Miranda's insinuation that her current boyfriend has dishonest motives.

In turn 7, Carrie then shifts perspective with the help of the discourse marker "so" (cf. Schiffrin 1987), inquiring about another, very intimate, aspect of Charlotte's relationship with the widower: "so how is the sex?" Furthermore, the delicacy of the question can be considered a bid for closeness in the face of dispute between two of the friends. The attempt to change the topic to intimate matters can be considered a reconciliation strategy, which aims at realigning all three interlocutors on the interpersonal plane.

Charlotte eagerly embraces the opportunity to list further merits of her relationship with the widower: "hh aMAzing. It was like Liz was just looking over us giving us her blessing." (turn 8). The inhalation and the prosodic marking indicate her eagerness and her positive affective stance towards her experiences with a widower. The curious juxtaposition of *eros* and *thanatos* in Charlotte's description of the dead wife watching her having sexual intercourse with the widower triggers an ironic formulation on the part of Carrie: "a threesome in absentia." (turn 9). This utterance is aligning on the structural plane, since it summarizes Charlotte's preceding turn, but at the same time, it is disaffiliative on the interpersonal plane, since Carrie brings in a humorous component, while Charlotte is very serious about her relationship. Charlotte does not respond to Carrie's remark, thus disregarding its humorous potential (cf. Kotthoff 2003). Instead, she continues straight-faced, arguing her point: "I mean, my hat blew right into her headstone. she was CLEARly sending a message." (turn 10). By this means, she disaffiliates with Carrie.

At that point, Miranda re-enters the conversation, picking up Carrie's humorous key by pseudo-quoting the deceased wife: "don't fuck my husband, you hat-loving bitch." Note that this quote is preceded by an affirmative marker, which responds to Charlotte's interpretation of the wife sending a message. The message Miranda puts in her mouth, however, is in stark contrast to what Charlotte thinks the message was, namely that the deceased wife approves of Charlotte having an affair with the widower. Miranda's utterance consequently simultaneously establishes structural alignment and disaffiliation on the interpersonal plane. Just as in turns 1 and 5, Miranda displays a critical stance towards Charlotte's doing, in this case her friend's interpretation of the hat flying into the gravestone. In spite of Miranda's acrimonious remark, Charlotte pursues her argumentation in turn 12, by revealing another circumstance, which allows for the interpretation that everything is going well in her relationship: "he invited me to a memorial service at her grave next week. that is hu:ge."

Carrie responds to this turn with an open-class repair initiator (Drew 1997; Sacks 1992b) followed by a but-prefaced question: "excuse me, but when did cemeteries get so happening?" These repair initiators generally indicate that the preceding utterance has not been heard or understood, but they do not necessarily indicate this cognitive state (Drew 1997). In this case, a very flat intonation pattern up to the first syllable on "HAPpening" together with the contrastive marker "but" indicate that she is not really expecting a repair, but is making a humorous comment centring around the incongruity of "cemetery," i.e. death and standstill and "happening," i.e. life and activity. This humorous comment links up with Miranda's humorous pseudo-quotation in turn 11 and thus establishes an affiliative alignment. Accordingly, Carrie slowly shifts alignments from Charlotte (possibly turn 3, turn 7) to Miranda (turns 9 & 13).

Charlotte seems oblivious to these shifts or else continues her argumentation in spite of it: "it's a sign that he's ready to move on. and he's ready to do it with me." (turn 14). This statement is followed up by what Freed (1994) labels a confirmation of information question on the part of Miranda: "so you're saying you fucked him back to life?" Still, at this point in the conversation this apparent confirmation question does not indicate the cognitive state of not having comprehended what Charlotte said. Although it warrants the interpretation that Charlotte helped the widower overcome his grief, the lexis of Miranda's utterance and the fact that she reduces Charlotte's influence to sexual

intercourse indicates that she is in fact humorously challenging Charlotte – again, there is a juxtaposition of *eros* and *thanatos*. In turn 16, Charlotte once more responds to the said rather than to the meant, though she qualifies the positive answer and briefly pauses before uttering the agreement token: "in a way … yes." The episode concludes with another ironic remark from Carrie "man, you're good." The flat intonation on the utterance does not display a positive affective stance but indicates that Carrie continues the ironic/humorous key established in turn 9 and reinforced by herself and Miranda in turns 11, 13, and 15. While at the level of the said, this final utterance establishes alignment with Charlotte; on the level of the meant, Carrie affiliates with Miranda.

To conclude, the preceding analysis shows how interpersonal alignments can shift during the course of a three-party conversation. In this case, Carrie first supports Charlotte, but then builds an alliance with Miranda through their joint establishment of a humorous/ironic key, which is in opposition to Charlotte's momentous treatment of her affair with a widower.

After having discussed alignment patterns in dyads and three-party conversations, I will now move on to conversations between all four women. Although there is one more participant, the alignment patterns compare to the ones in the preceding excerpt; only in this one, Charlotte is actively disaffiliating from the others. The conversation takes place while the four women are having lunch at a restaurant. Miranda is buying a flat for herself and is encountering difficulties as a single woman.

SC_17.3 BUYING A PLACE ALONE

```
1    M    I'm telling you,
          if I was a single man,
          none of this would be happening.
2    S    if you were a single man,
          I'd date you.
3    M    I've got the money.
          I've got a great job.
          and I still get,
          "it's just you?"
4    C    you know,
          they're threatened.
          buying a place alone means you don't need a man.
5    M    I DON'T.
6    Ch   everyone 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.
7   S   I'm sorry,
        did someone just order a Victorian straight up?
8   C   [((laughs))]
9   M   [((laughs))]
10  Ch  ((narrows lips to thin line and tilts her head))
```

The scene starts mid-conversation, and Miranda's first turn appears to be a summary of the preceding talk: "I'm telling you, if I was a single man, none of this would be happening." (turn 1). The anaphoric demonstrative "this" refers back to what Miranda has presumably already told her friends in the preceding interaction. Her preface "I'm telling you," orients the interlocutors to what follows: a gender-based critique of the events reported. Miranda establishes the category single woman via evoking the opposite, a "single man", in a hypothetical conditional structure.

In turn 2, Samantha displays her orientation towards Miranda's problem by repeating her condition verbatim except for a deictic shift from "I was" to "you were": "if you were a single man, I'd date you." This repetition provides for a structural alignment which is mirrored on the interpersonal plane in the conclusion: "I'd date you." The hypothetical statement displays that Samantha considers Miranda an attractive woman and attends to Miranda's positive face, giving a gift to the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1987; Ylänne-McEwen 2004: 529).

Miranda then proceeds to summarise her experiences with the help of three parallel clauses of the structure first person pronoun + form of the verb "to get" + object. This parallelism reveals the discrepancy she perceives between whom she is, i.e. her identity as a well-to-do professional ("the money," "great job") and the estate agents' behaviour. Rather than simply relating what the agents say with the help of indirect speech, Miranda performs their reaction "it's just you?" by changing her tone of voice and putting on a concerned, quizzical look. This can be considered a pseudo-quotation in Kotthoff's terms, i.e. the specific author of the reported utterance is of no interest, "it suffices that a recognizable type is identifiable from whom the staged utterance originates" (Kotthoff 1998a: 9), in this case, the typical New York estate agent. This performance renders her report livelier and the direct speech makes it more authentic (cf. Tannen 1989). Furthermore, the theatre frame helps her to distance herself from the said, i.e. from the estate agents' assumption that women do not buy flats alone.

In the following turn (4), Carrie affiliatively aligns with Miranda by orienting to her friend's criticism of the estate agents' behaviour. She provides an explanation for it: "you know, they're threatened." The discourse marker "you know" here functions to invite her friends "to recognize both the relevance and the implications of the utterances" (Jucker and Smith 1998: 194) and so establishes alignment. Carrie then elaborates what the estate agents are threatened by: "buying a place alone means you don't need a man." This is in line with Miranda's assumption that her problems are gender-related. Miranda emphatically agrees with a heavily stressed deictically shifted alter-repetition: "I DON'T." She does not directly respond to Carrie's explanation about the estate agents being threatened, but rather to her evocation of the categorisation "woman-who-does-not-need-a-man." The repetition again signals structural alignment, which is mirrored on the interpersonal plane through the emphatic agreement.

At this point in the conversation, Charlotte contributes her first turn, strongly disagreeing with Miranda and Carrie: "everyone needs a MAN." This is an oppositional move aggravated by lexical cohesion: the negative phrase "don't need a man" is turned into a positive statement. Furthermore, the use of the generalising pronoun "everyone" constitutes an extreme case formulation, legitimising her claim (cf. Pomerantz 1986). Charlotte then gives a detailed account of why she does not buy an apartment but rents, disaffiliating with her friend Miranda, whom she categorises as "woman who's too self-sufficient."

Charlotte's argumentative move is followed up by a counter-challenge from Samantha who displays disaffiliation with Charlotte and simultaneously affiliative alignment with Carrie and Miranda: "I'm sorry, did someone just order a Victorian straight up?" The utterance has multiple layers, because Samantha sets up a theatre frame with the help of a shift in voice quality: she assumes the role of a waitress who is unsure whether she has properly understood the order. What she thinks someone ordered was a Victorian. Though this might feasibly be a drink, the common association of the word Victorian with antiquated ethics and demeanour unlocks another plane of interpretation, namely that Samantha considers Charlotte's behaviour outdated. This is reinforced by the postmodifier "straight up," the word "straight" also implying conservative behaviour. Via implicature (Grice 1975) the participants work out a meaning at a deeper level than the surface sense of the utterance. At this deeper level,

Samantha's disagreement with Charlotte is aggravated by the use of "I'm sorry," which then indicates that she cannot believe someone said something so reactionary. Her utterance is thus strongly disaffiliative.

Carrie and Miranda then break out in laughter, obviously enjoying Samantha's performance as well as understanding her message and agreeing with her (cf. Hay 2001). The laughter patently also signals affiliation with the producer of the laughable (cf. Glenn 2003), thereby establishing an interactional team aligned against Charlotte. Charlotte's non-verbal reactions show that she gives in: she purses her lips, which is a sign of tension and tilts her head displaying submissiveness (cf. Givens 2005). These non-verbal cues re-establish alignment with her friends.

To summarize, the preceding analysis reveals that while Samantha and Carrie affiliate with Miranda through practices such as repetition, interactional gifts, and the elaboration of Miranda's position on what has occurred to her, Charlotte disaffiliates with the three of them by vehemently disagreeing in turn 6. This disaffiliation induces the establishment of an interactional team aligned against Charlotte. In the face of such superiority, Charlotte gives in and non-verbally realigns with her friends.

While the analyses of alignment patterns in the preceding two excerpts, have revealed Charlotte to be a somewhat marginal member of the friendship circle, the following extended four-party conversation displays a more complex set-up. The episode takes place at Carrie's place, where the four women meet up to gorge on Chinese take-away and chat. Miranda has dated a so-called modeliser, i.e. a man who mainly dates models, and the four women are discussing models and beauty ideals.

SC_2.2 MODELS

```
1    M    they're stupid and lazy,
          and they should be shot outside.
2    S    I've been out with a lot of guys,
          and they say that I'm just as beautiful as a model,
          but I WORK for a living,
          I mean I'm like
          ... well I'm like a model who's taken the high road.
3    M    the adVANtages given to models,
          and to beautiful women in general.
          are so unfair,
          it makes me want to puke.
4    S    sweetheart,
          you shouldn't say that.
          [you are so cute.]
```

5	C	{*waving to indicate that they should come to the table*}
		[come on.]
		[come o:n.]
6	M	[cute doesn't cut it] in this town.
		what's cute compared to supermodel?
7		{*voiceover Carrie: there's nothing like raising the subject of models among four single women to spice up an otherwise dull Tuesday night.*}
8	Ch	um they have this distant sexy look.
9	M	it's not sex,
		it's starva:tion.
10	S	that's starvation in the BEST restaurants.
11	M	yeah.
		what I want to know is,
		<when did all the men get together,>
		and decide that they would only get it up,
		for giraffes with big breasts.
12	S	[((laughs))]
13	Ch	[in some cultures,]
		heavy women with MOUStaches are considered beautiful.
14		(1.0)
15	S	and you're looking at ME while you're saying [this?]
16	M	[we] should just admit,
		that we live in a culture,
		that promotes impossible standards of beauty.
17	C	yeah.
		except men think they're possible.
18	M	yeah.
19	Ch	I just know,
		no matter how GOOD I feel about myself,
		.. if I see Christie Turlington?
		I- I just want to give up.
20	M	oh I just want to tie her down,
		and force-feed her lard.
		but that's the difference between you and me.
21	S	[((laughs))]
22	Ch	[((laughs))]
23	C	what are you talking about?
		look at you two.
		you're beautiful.
24	Ch	um
		I hate my thighs.
25	M	oh come o:n?
26	Ch	I can't even open a magazine without thinking,
		"thighs.
		thighs.
		thighs."
27	M	well I'll take your thighs and raise your chin.
28	C	I'll take your chin and raise your m-hm
		((with her mouth full)) {*pointing to her nose*}
29		(5.0) {*all look at Samantha*}
30	S	what?
31	C	oh come on.

```
32   Ch   hey.
33   S    I happen to love the way I look.
34   M    you should.
          you paid enough for it.
35   C    [((laughs))]
36   Ch   [((laughs))]
37   S    [hey.
          I resent that.]
          I do not believe in plastic surgery.
          ... well not yet.
38   C    I find it fascinating,
          .. that four.. beautiful flesh and blood women,
          could be intIMidated by some unreal fantasy.
          I mean look.
          {gets a magazine and holds up the cover}
          °look at this.°
          is this really intimidating to any of you?
39        (1.0)
40   Ch   I hate my thighs.
41   M    pass the chicken.
42   S    you know,
          I have that dress.
```

The scene starts with a harsh judgement by Miranda (turn 1), setting the agenda for the ensuing discussion. Samantha takes the floor to announce that she is not intimidated by models' beauty, but considers herself superior since she really works as opposed to the "lazy" models Miranda is complaining about. Through the co-operatively constructed opposition between "lazy" and "work for a living" this sequence establishes affiliation between Miranda and Samantha.

In the following turn , Miranda continues to voice her indignation in very graphic terms ("it makes me want to puke"). Samantha responds to this with a term of endearment, "sweetheart," and an attempt to soothe her with the help of a compliment (turn 4): "you shouldn't say that. you are so cute." The compliment and the term of endearment both attend to Miranda's face, signalling that there is no need to feel threatened by beautiful models, because her interlocutors accept her and consider her "cute" (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; J. Holmes 1986, 1998a; Wolfson 1983).

This also functions as a face-saving move by denial in the sense of Guendouzi (2004), who investigated how women talk about body-size and found such face-saving utterances to be typical moves in response to an interlocutor's critical or negative evaluation of her appearance. In this case Miranda's complaint about the advantages given to beautiful women implies that she is not part of that category. Such face-saving

moves at first sight promote affiliative alignment. At close inspection, however, the situation is more complex: Samantha's paying a compliment and giving comfort also establish her in a superior position vis-à-vis her afflicted friend.[17] I argue that the endearment, "sweetheart" here functions to redress this imbalance, securing affiliation and creating the equality central to friendship; a practice which will be discussed in detail below (4.3).

Miranda's response in turn 6, evades Samantha's compliment. This runs counter to the preference organisation of conversation and can thus be considered disaligning, yet, it also minimises self-praise – the opposing social pressure – and can therefore be viewed as a result of the interactional dilemma interactants are confronted with when faced with a compliment (cf. J. Holmes 1986; Pomerantz 1978). Miranda's move, however, also indicates that Samantha's attempt at soothing her failed; being cute is not enough.

In turn 8, Charlotte enters the discussion by attempting an explanation for the worshipping of models: "um they have this distant sexy look." Miranda opposes this statement in turn 9, disaffiliating on the interpersonal plane, though there is structural alignment through Miranda's basing her utterance on the lexis of Charlotte's: "it's not sex, it's starvation." Note that Samantha then picks up Miranda's term "starvation" to elaborate Miranda's argument: "that's starvation in the BEST restaurants." This leads to an extended affiliative sequence between Miranda and Samantha, which includes Miranda's affirmative marker "yeah" (turn 11) and Samantha's appreciative laughter in turn 12.

The affiliative sequence between Miranda and Samantha is terminated by Charlotte's anthropological contribution to the topic of beauty ideals brought up by Miranda, in turn 13. This can be considered as an attempt on Charlotte's part to affiliate with Miranda, but causes a one-second silence, indicating that this was not what her friends expected.

In turn 15, Samantha glosses over the silence with a humorous response implying that Charlotte considers her a heavy woman with a moustache: "and you're looking at ME while you're saying this." This is an attack on Charlotte for something she obviously did not do, thus signalling a play-frame and counting as bonding rather than biting. Miranda overlaps with Samantha's humorous quip to elaborate on the topic

introduced by Charlotte, i.e. beauty ideals. This can be considered an aligning move on both the structural and interpersonal plane. Carrie chimes in with an affirmative marker and another elaboration of the topic, likewise an affiliative move (turn 17). Miranda's positive response to Carrie's elaboration in turn 18 concludes this affiliative sequence.

In turn 19, Charlotte moves the topic from an abstract discussion of beauty ideals to her concrete feelings of inferiority when she compares herself to a model. Miranda responds to this with a change of perspective: instead of just feeling bad at the sight of models, she wants to do something about it. Unlike Charlotte, Miranda resists the ideal of the thin woman by turning the thin woman into a more substantial woman. The humorous description of her treating a model like a fattened goose elicits simultaneous laughter from Samantha and Charlotte. The laughter on Charlotte's part signals that in spite of the explicitly stated fact that she and Miranda are different they are still aligned affiliatively and ultimately that they are friends in spite of differences.

At this point, Carrie re-enters the conversation with a rhetorical question declaring that there is no need for Charlotte and Miranda to worry, supporting this with an explicit positively evaluative statement about their appearance: "you're beautiful." This can be considered another interactional gift or face-saving move by denial in the sense of Guendouzi (2004). Carrie here denies that her two friends are less attractive than Christie Turlington, thereby attending to their positive face needs. The complimenting move is accompanied by explicit reference to addressees of the compliment, which has an adjuratory effect: "look at you two."

In a move similar to Miranda's evading compliment response in turn 6, Charlotte rejects Carrie's face-saving attempt. She justifies her feelings of inferiority by pointing to a concrete blemish: "I hate my thighs." (turn 24). This is taken up in a denying move by Miranda: "oh come o:n?" (turn 25), eliciting further substantiation by Charlotte (turn 26). Miranda's reaction to this can be considered a supportive matching comment, another typical response strategy found by Guendouzi (2004). These moves are "attempts to create discursive solidarity" (Guendouzi 2004: 1643) and thus also establish affiliation. The formulaic phrasing "take and raise" is a mocking reference to bidding in a card game and is taken up by Carrie's turn (28), which further extends the affiliative sequence. The card game metaphor of taking and raising, nonetheless, also has a competitive element and can be considered another instantiation of

competitiveness, striving for autonomy in the face of close connection (cf. the competitive story-telling in SC_10.9 OVARY OVERLOAD).

Since three of the women have now disclosed their flaws, the need for reciprocity in such vulnerable situations requires of Samantha to do so likewise. Consequently, her silence is noticed: Miranda, Carrie and Charlotte react non-verbally to this absence by intensely looking at her. Her refusal to join in her friends' self-disclosure is then commented on by a humorous remark on the part of Miranda, similar in humour style to Samantha's turn 15: she implies that Samantha has had plastic surgery although Miranda is fully aware of the fact that her friend never did. Her quip elicits laughter from Carrie and Charlotte who clearly affiliate with Miranda. In cooperatively disaffiliating from Samantha, the three of them form an interactional team. Samantha responds to Miranda's imputation by declaring a negative stance towards this, but qualifies this declaration in tag position, thereby tuning into the jocular key: "[hey. I resent that.] I do not believe in plastic surgery.... well not yet."

Carrie then shifts back to a serious key by summarising the whole discussion. She underlines the absurdity of their situation by presenting the front page of a fashion magazine showing a skinny model. Her question "is this really intimidating to any of you?" is biased towards a negative answer, yet elicits a repetition of "I hate my thighs." from Charlotte (turn 40) and an abrupt topic change from Miranda (turn 41). Samantha, on the other hand, seems to focus on a totally different detail of the photograph, namely the dress worn by the skinny woman (turn 42). So she presents herself as the only woman not affected by the model on the magazine, disaffiliating with Charlotte and Miranda.

To conclude, the preceding analysis demonstrates that alignment patterns change from interaction to interaction. While the first two multi-party interactions presented allow for the claim that – based on micro-level alignment processes – Charlotte is a somewhat more marginal member of the friendship group, this excerpt presents Samantha as misaligned with her friends' expectations and more marginal at the macro-level. At the beginning of the interaction, Samantha can be seen to align with Miranda in her assessment of models and with Miranda against Charlotte, but towards the end she disaffiliates by not joining her friends' reciprocal self-disclosure. Although she partially attunes to the jocular key of Miranda's quip, she finally disaffiliates with

Charlotte and Miranda by presenting herself as the only woman not intimidated by the model on the magazine. The alignment patterns between the three other participants seem more evenly distributed with each of them, at one point disaligning and then realigning with her friends.

The analyses presented in this section thus demonstrate that implicit alignment processes at the micro-level allow for the balancing of association and dissociation and construct the relationship between the four women at the macro-level. Shifting alignment patterns indicate that Miranda and Carrie form the core of the friendship group while Charlotte and Samantha are somewhat more marginal. In the final section, I will turn to what I label explicit alignment devices and present an analysis of an excerpt, which confirms this intra-group differentiation.

4.2.6.2 Explicit alignments

In my data, explicit alignment, or in Conroy's (1999: 349) terms content affiliation, takes the form of overt expressions of friendship. I consider these overt expressions to be located on the cultural alignment plane, since they require a lining up of individual behaviour with conventional expectations of friendship relations. They typically occur in the case of cultural misalignments, i.e. when some of the women's behaviour is considered not to correspond to the friendship norms of the community of practice. Utterances such as "you are my (girl)friends" make this misalignment relevant, reinforce friendship norms and establish affiliation on the interpersonal plane.

As noted above, I consider these overt expressions of relational identities a case of membership categorisation device (Sacks 1972a, 1972b), more specifically they evoke a "standardised relational pair" (Sacks 1972a: 37). As explained above, membership categorisations are inference-rich labels for persons or collectivities: through calling someone a friend one evokes assumptions about what actions and events regularly go with this relational constellation. Hence, through category predicates, i.e. activities, entitlement, responsibilities, knowledge, attributes and competencies conventionally assigned on the basis of a given membership category, membership categorisation devices can accomplish blamings and accusations, for example in the case of some perceived misalignment.

Tracy and Anderson (1999) investigate the use of such categories in citizens' calls to the police and find that these can be upgraded or downgraded to call up assumptions which assist in maintaining a preferred version of an event. One of the terms typically downgraded is "friend," which is "applicable in the most intimate of relationships to mark enjoyment of and close emotional connection to the other," but can also be "a polite way to refer to an acquaintance" (Tracy and Anderson 1999: 211). In their data, the latter usage dominates: it is typically used as a contrast category with intimate, such as in the phrase "just a friend." In my data, the opposite usage is prevalent. The relational category "friend" is used in an upgraded fashion to stress the intimacy between the participants to the conversation. This can be observed in the following excerpt. The four women are at a café, and Samantha is eager to discuss a very intimate detail of her life.

SC_39.1 FUNKY SPUNK

```
   1   S   I'm dating a guy with the funkiest tasting spunk.
   2       (2.0) Charlotte looks at Carrie, Carrie looks at
           Miranda, Miranda looks at Carrie
   3       (4.0) Charlotte gets up and leaves
   4   M   and she's never coming back ((melodramatic intonation
           pattern))
   5   S   well I'm sorry,
           but who else can I talk to about this?
   6   C   may I suggest NO-one. ((smiling))
→  7   S   you're my girlfriends,
           help me.
   8   C   {raises her eyebrows and smiles}
   9   S   have you ever had this problem?
   10  M   not really.
           but I have to admit,
           it's never exactly been a trip to Baskin Robbins.
   11  C   ((laughs))
   12  S   well this guy is very sour,
           like .. asparagus gone bad or something. ((pulling a
           face))
   13  C   {addressed to waitress} can I cancel my rice pudding?
           thanks.
   14  S   beautiful guy,
           great in bed,
           it's so disappointing.
           it's like getting a bad bottle of Beaujolais Nouveau
           the first day of season=
   15  M   =it has a lot to do with nutrition.
           I once dated a smoker and it affected how his tasted.
   16  C   they should put that on the side of the packet,
           if they wanted to cut back sales.
```

```
17  S    maybe there is something he could eat that would make
         it sweeter.
18  C    maybe you should write to Martha Stewart.
19  M    "dear Martha,
         funky spunk,
         help."
20  C    "dear funky spunk,
         try:,
         .. a hint of mint"
21  M    ((laughs))
22  S    no,
         no no no,
         it's not just asparagus,
         it's asparagus and something else,
23  C    {pulling a face that expresses disgust}
24  S    {snaps her fingers}
         I know,
         Chlorox
25  M    well at least it gets your whites whiter.
26  S    this is serious {putting her hand on her chest}
         I almost gagged=
27  C    oh that is serious.
28  S    what am I going to do:?
29  M    just don't give him head again.
30  S    hm
         .. I never even thought of that.
31  C    what?
         casual head is back now?
32  S    oh it's fine.
         he's healthy and I don't swallow.
33  C    well as long as you are in the centre for disease
         control,
         I'm fine with it.
34  S    of course he just loves getting head,
         but then,
         what man doesn't.
35  M    you know,
         if the whole come situation were reversed,
         do you think men would get anywhere near the stuff?
36  S    hm maybe?
         .. if it tasted like beer.
         [((laughs))]
37  C,M  [((laugh))]
```

Samantha's disclosure is followed by a very long, six-second silence, in which the three other women exchange glances and Charlotte gets up and leaves the café. These strongly disaffiliative moves are aggravated by Miranda's staged voiceover comment: "and she's never coming back." (turn 4). In turn 5, Samantha apologises in an attempt to realign with her two remaining friends, giving an account in the shape of a rhetorical question: "well I'm sorry, but who else can I talk to about this?" Carrie responds to

Samantha's rhetorical question: "may I suggest NO-one." According to Goffman (1976: 271) such appropriate answers to rhetorical questions function as a quip, an interpretation supported by Carrie's smile, which contextualises humour and establishes a teasing frame.

Samantha, however, does not tune in to the jocular tone and instead reacts to the content of Carrie's suggestion. She implores her friends: "you're my girlfriends, help me." Her relational gloss is triggered by what she perceives as a misalignment with the community of practice's friendship norms and functions to evoke the equivalent of a standardised relational pair (Sacks 1972a): the intimate relationship which female friends conventionally have – a relationship in which such delicate, taboo issues can be discussed and in which help is provided. The categorisation device therefore emerges out of the business of talk, namely getting help from her friends and shapes the ensuing interaction.

The explicit alignment device also initiates affiliation on the interpersonal plane by signalling that Samantha considers her interlocutors to be in a close relationship with her, i.e. she makes an interactional gift to Carrie and Miranda. Her attempt at affiliation is met with raised eyebrows on Carrie's part. Still, she accompanies this facial expression with a smile, again contextualising play. Samantha reacts to this mixed message with a serious question: "have you ever had this problem?" (turn 9). Instead of eliciting a reciprocal self-disclosure, however, her question is met with a negative answer and an ironic remark from Miranda: "not really. but I have to admit, it's never exactly been a trip to Baskin Robbins." The juxtaposition of a sexual practice with eating ice cream again contextualises play and elicits an aligning laughter from Carrie.

In the ensuing exchange, Carrie continues to indicate disgust and to establish a play frame, which allows a humorous treatment of the topic (turns 13, 16, 18, 20, 23, 31). She only briefly aligns with Samantha in turn 27 to concede that she is in serious trouble. Nonetheless, this is then followed by a disaffiliating side-sequence, in which Carrie displays disapproval of Samantha's frivolous sexual activities (turns 31-33). Miranda's alignment is less disaffiliating: She gives advice and displays a reciprocal self-disclosure (turns 15, 29). Still, she keeps shifting back to aligning with Carrie and dealing with the topic humorously (turns 18-21, turn 25). In spite of this resistance, Samantha elaborates on her trouble (turns 12, 14, 17, 22, 24, 34) and insists on the

seriousness of the issue (turn 26). The fragment ends with an affiliative sequence initiated by Miranda: "you know, if the whole come situation were reversed, do you think men would get anywhere near the stuff?" (turn 35). The discourse marker "you know" here invites her friends to recognize the relevance and implications of what follows (Jucker and Smith 1998: 194) and thus proactively establishes alignment. Miranda then adroitly shifts perspective with a compound yes/no question, which establishes a joint opponent: men in general. This finally elicits a humorous response from Samantha, turning their joint opponent into the butt of a joke. The resulting shared laughter at their joint opponent re-establishes affiliation between the three women.

To conclude, explicit alignment devices typically indicate a misalignment on the cultural plane, i.e. a breach of friendship norms. They can be seen to emerge out of the current business of talk and to contribute to the ensuing exchange insofar as Samantha receives at least some advice from Miranda and the topic is discussed at length – though mostly in a humorous key. Carrie insists on a play frame, which allows for a treatment of taboo topics without threatening face by going off record (Brown and Levinson 1987). Since Samantha does not accept the play frame, the overall alignment pattern is disaffiliative until Miranda succeeds to initiate an affiliative sequence with her perspective shifting question.

As for the friendship relations constructed in the course of this exchange, the alignment patterns confirm the following constellations: Samantha and Charlotte are more marginal members of the friendship circle, whereas Carrie and Miranda form the core friendship pair. Samantha's topic initiation is extremely face-threatening and neither of them is comfortable with it. The non-verbal reactions following Samantha's topic initiation already establish the alignment pattern which pervades the complete exchange: Charlotte looks at Carrie, Carrie looks at Miranda, Miranda looks at Carrie, Charlotte leaves. Charlotte totally disaligns and disaffiliates from them, thereby establishing herself as diametrically opposed to Samantha. Carrie and Miranda, on the other hand, stay, but frequently align with each other in (mock)disaffiliation from Samantha. Carrie only deals with Samantha's trouble in a humorous way in spite of Samantha's resistance to the play frame. Through her reciprocal self-disclosure and advice, Miranda, on the other hand, more affiliatively aligns with Samantha, which hints

at the possibility that she is closer to her in some respects. Furthermore, it is Miranda who re-unites the friends at the end of the sequence.

4.2.7 Summary

In the preceding sections, I have investigated patterns of interactional alignment in conversations between the four protagonists of *SATC*. Since the term "alignment" has been used in various ways in the literature on talk-in-interaction, I have given an overview of prior research. In order to achieve a clearer definition of the concept, I have distinguished three planes of alignment: the cultural, the interpersonal and the structural. I have also discussed a list of conversational practices commonly considered to establish alignments on either one or several of the three planes:

- backchannelling
- proximal and distal demonstratives
- prefaces and discourse markers
- qualifiers
- repetition or reformulation of a previous utterance
- collaborative utterance or turn production
- formulations
- side-sequences
- conversational repair
- preference organisation
- orientation to content and affective stance of the topic
- response stories
- conversational tit-for-tat
- intimacy pursuits through transgressive or improper talk
- intimacy pursuits through self-disclosure
- conversational humour, irony, and teasing
- laughing and smiling
- silences
- non-verbal devices such as facial expressions, gaze, body posture and gestures

These practices are located at all levels of conversational organisation ranging from prosodic elements to sequences stretching across several turns. While some of them are retroactive, establishing alignment based on a preceding utterance, others can be considered proactive, since they initiate affiliative sequences.

My analyses of complete conversational exchanges from *SATC* show that all of these retroactive and proactive practices are also part of the repertoire of the community of practice under analysis. The four women use them for the establishment of alignment patterns on the structural as well as on the interpersonal plane. Interestingly, the patterns on the structural and the interpersonal plane may diverge insofar as structural alignment can be combined with disaffiliation on the interpersonal plane. This combination generally stresses and thus increases disaffiliation. There are also turns in which affiliative and disaffiliative practices are combined such as a term of endearment or humour to soften a criticism. I consider this a case of dual alignment, affiliative yet disaffiliative, which sets up dual contextualisations such as of solidarity, yet confrontation.

The analyses also demonstrate that the complexity of alignment patterns increases with the number of speakers. While in two-party interaction, the alignments alternate between aligning and disaligning, affiliative and disaffiliative, in multi-party conversations, one practice can simultaneously contribute to affiliation with one participant and disaffiliation with another. Furthermore, participants typically align in interactional teams, especially during sociable argument activities or serious conflict situations. In the course of a conversation, varying teams can emerge and dissociate.

Such shifts in alignment patterns accomplish micro-transformations of social structure (Glenn 1995), which in turn construct social relations at the macro-level. Of special interest is the interpersonal plane, on which participants' affiliations and disaffiliations are negotiated. While sociologists have traditionally considered these as non-directly measurable conditions, which are based on internal and emotive sources, turn-by-turn analyses clearly show how these alignments are accomplished in talk (cf. Conroy 1999). However, the conclusion that friendship is established and maintained through purely affiliative alignment patterns is premature. As I have argued above (cf. section 2.2), friendship relations are characterised by the dialectic of association and dissociation. The micro-level shifts from affiliation to disaffiliation and vice versa accomplish an appropriate balance between the antagonistic tensions which grow from this dialectic. Disaffiliation establishes closedness, autonomy and novelty, while affiliation creates openness, connectedness, and predictability. Some verbal practices can even accomplish both simultaneously. In the case of teasing, for example, criticism

is uttered humorously so that shared enjoyment and thus affiliation is provided along with the disaffiliating remark, establishing a dual alignment in one move (cf. Carrie's humorous remarks in SC_17.4 REBOUND).

The alignment patterns discovered through the above analyses suggests that the circle of friends consists of a core pair, Miranda and Carrie, and two more marginal members, Charlotte and Samantha. Still, even in conversations between Miranda and Carrie there are disaligning and disaffiliative moves. Since alignments can be shifted and since a single utterance can display more than one alignment, the women can embark upon precarious sequences entailing face-threats, which would otherwise have negative implications for their friendship relation. My analyses have shown how the women adroitly re-align after disaffiliating sequences and how they use affiliative practices in the context of disaffiliating moves to maintain friendship at the macro-level. These complexities allow for criticism and disagreement in friendship relations. This is vital, since criticism and disagreement themselves may be necessary in order to support a friend and help with self-clarification.

In the initial and final sections of this chapter, I also show how alignments on the cultural plane are relevant for the establishment and maintenance of friendship relations. With the help of implicit and explicit alignment practices the women attend to activities that they perceive to be misaligned with the friendship norms of their community of practice. This results in a reinforcement of these norms and the initiation of re-alignment work.

The turn-by-turn analyses have revealed two linguistic devices which seem to deserve extra attention with respect to alignment patterns: firstly, terms of address, which are generally considered affiliative practices, but typically occur in disaffiliative contexts and secondly, question-response sequences, which frequently realise alignments on all three planes: structural, interpersonal and cultural. The rest of this chapter will therefore be dedicated to a close investigation of these practices in the establishment of alignments and the construction of friendship relations.

Said Jerome K. Jerome to Ford Maddox Ford
There's something, old boy, that I've always abhorred:
When people address me and call me 'Jerome',
'Are they being standoffish, or too much at home?'
Said Ford, 'I agree;
It's the same thing with me.'
(William Cole, Mutual Problem)

4.3 "Charlotte sweetie" – Doing friendship with familiar terms of address

4.3.1 Introduction

Addressing someone with a term of endearment seems an obvious indicator of an intimate relationship, which may account for the fact that there is so little research on how these forms are used in conversation. As Sacks (1987: 56) notes: "One commonly tends to avoid making 'obvious' observations because it is not obvious what thereafter is to be done with them." Sacks' work shows that what can be done with them is to reveal the organisation of actions which underpin social life. In this section, my goal is to reveal how "mundane" terms of address function as an interactional resource for establishing alignments and thus for doing friendship. In this endeavour, I follow McConnell-Ginet (2003), who considers terms of address windows on the construction of social relations in communities of practice.

An initial survey of my data yielded that terms of endearment occur in the same conversational environments in which we find first name address and consequently seem to follow the same pattern. I therefore chose to investigate these two forms of *vocative* noun phrases, subsuming them under the term familiar terms of address. Since the label "vocative" is a Latin term used to describe a case in the Latin declension paradigm and hence unfit for the description of the English language, I will use the expression "direct address" instead. Before I venture into the analysis of actual occurrences of first names and endearments in my data, I will give a brief overview of the research done on terms of address.

4.3.2 Semantic categorisation and rules of address

One approach to the study of nominal terms of address is their semantic categorisation. Generally, scholars distinguish the following types (cf. Dunkling 1990; Leech 1999): endearments (e.g. "sweetie"), family or kinship terms (e.g. "dad"), familiarisers (e.g. "mate"), familiarized first names (e.g. "Jackie"), first names in full, title and surname, honorifics (e.g. " sir"), invectives (e.g. "turniphead"), and nonce or *ad hoc* names (e.g. "Ms Know-it-all"). Similarly, Braun (1988: 253) differentiates four groups of meanings: (1) master, senior, superior; (2) companion, comrade; (3) friend, acquaintance; (4) relative. As this classification suggests, the different categories can be related to addressers and addressees and their relationship with each other. Relevant to my research is category (3), terms that signal friendship relations.

Pioneering work on the rules of address in American English by Brown and Ford (1961) and Ervin-Tripp (1972) shows that intimates use endearments and first names.[18] Both studies are in keeping with Brown and Gilman's (1960) research on the pronouns of power and solidarity, which uses the properties of the dyad of speaker and addressee as a key to the usage of terms of address. Brown and Ford (1961) look at the options of addressing someone by first name or by title plus last name. Their data consist of modern American plays, i.e. fictional data, as well as actually recorded conversations and reported usage. Applying the findings on the patterns of T (tu) and V (vous) pronouns to the usage of first name (FN) and title plus last name (TLN), they distinguish an intimacy and a status dimension. They show that mutual TLN or mutual FN usage are on the intimacy dimension with mutual FN – as found amongst the four women in *SATC* – being the more intimate pattern.

Another phenomenon that correlates with increased intimacy is the use of multiple names for one and the same person, for example – as is the case in *SATC* – first names and endearments. Brown and Ford (1961) attribute this phenomenon to the semantic-psychological principle that lexical differentiation increases with the importance of a referent. By contrast, Leisi (1978) – investigating the private code of lovers – considers multiple names to signal appropriation, a process based on the magic and power of names and naming and typical of rites of passage. Finally, Wardaugh (1986) sees the use of multiple names as a means of role differentiation. In a couple in which several terms are used to address each other, "the two see each other as fitting many different

roles, with each term marking a different role" (Wardaugh 1986:261).[19] Conversely, there is also the tendency of using just one term of address to refer to all intimates within a family or love relationship.

Ervin-Tripp (1972) expands Brown and Ford's (1961) theory and develops a diagram to elucidate rules of address in American English. Her flow chart yields reciprocal first name address for adults who are friends or colleagues with no significant difference in age or rank. Since these early studies by Brown and Ford (1961) and Ervin-Tripp (1972), however, first name usage has become far more widespread in American English and no longer exclusively indicates intimacy, closeness or respect (Wardaugh 1986:260; Hook 1984). Biber at al. (1999: 1110) state: "first-name vocatives are normal nowadays between not only friends but colleagues and even casual acquaintances." This phenomenon accords with a general trend towards a "casualization of everyday speech" (Biber et al. 1999: 1099) and an increase in camaraderie in Western culture. Brown and Gilman (1960) already commented on this trend, claiming that the development of open and egalitarian societies boosted the solidarity semantic.[20] Wardaugh (1986) notices that this shift to solidarity is perpetuated, which, according to Wheeler, is due to the continual spread of casual variants through adolescent peer groups, resulting in "the constant attrition of formal variants which acquire old-fashioned associations" (1994: 170).

The early descriptions of terms of address usage are limited to a correlation of choice of terms with the participants' relationship and leave out contextual factors such as key, goals and setting. If, for instance, your sister is a judge, you will neither address her by her first name in court nor will you address her by "your honour" at the dinner table, unless for humorous purposes. Weatherall's (1996) study of terms of address in soap opera dialogue (*Coronation Street*) provides another example of how the situational context impacts on the choice of addressing behaviour: Mike and his fiancée Jackie interview Deirdre, who Mike once had an affair with, for a job. Despite Mike and Deirdre's familiarity, title plus last names are the only form of address used, firstly, because of the interview situation, and secondly, Weatherall speculates, because Mike wants to hide the fact that he had an affair with Deirdre from his fiancée Jackie.

Early studies on rules of address do not take into account the fact that different groups and subgroups may have diverging norms or rules of address and that there are

even idiosyncratic differences. As Weatherall (1996) shows for the British form of direct address "love" in *Coronation Street* dialogue, some characters use it only to refer to their spouses, others to refer to both partners and close friends, and one character uses "love" to address everyone she encounters, in which case the linguistic entity "love" functions as a dialect marker. While a semantic categorisation and a description of sociolinguistic rules of address are good starting points for research on nominal terms of address, the patterns of direct address can only fully be explained by relating their usage to the surrounding interaction and by looking at how they work in their conversational contexts.

4.3.3 Functions of nominal direct address

Zwicky (1974) states that direct address serves at least two functions: firstly, calls, designed to catch the addressee's attention and secondly, addresses, which function to maintain or emphasize the contact between speaker and addressee. This distinction corresponds to Schegloff's (1968), who uses the terms "summons" and "address" to describe these two patterns in conversational openings. Likewise, Eirlys Davies (1986) distinguishes an identifying and an expressive function. More recent work by Leech (1999) on the basis of the spoken section of the Longman Spoken and Written English Corpus (LSWE) yields three pragmatic functions: 1) summoning attention, 2) addressee identification, 3) maintaining and reinforcing social relationships; but 1) and 2) can be subsumed under attention/identifying function and 3) corresponds to the expressive/contact function. In terms of alignment, direct address can accomplish both structural alignment through the attention/identifying function and interpersonal alignment through the expressive/contact functions. This also accounts for the co-occurrence of both functions.

In his dictionary of epithets and terms of address, Dunkling (1990) lists as many as 30 reasons for the use of direct address, also taking into account ceremonial and ritual usage. These thirty reasons mirror the capacity of terms of address "to locate the speaker and the discourse in a particular social world" (Zwicky 1974: 795). According to Zwicky, they do so by expressing attitude, politeness, status, opinion about the degree of intimacy and the type of interaction, judgement about various properties of the

addressee (sex, age, occupation, physical and personal characteristics, family relationship, marital status), and membership. He concludes that there is virtually no affectively neutral direct address.

Listing the general functions still limits research to the description of terms of address as a static component of talk (cf. D. Holmes 1984, Hartung forthcoming). What is needed is a close inspection of the usage of terms of address in the interactional contexts in which they are embedded. A more dynamic perspective is to correlate the functions of nominal terms of address to their positions in discourse. Syntactically, nominal direct address is free as opposed to pronominal address, which is mainly bound. For example, in the sentence "Kristy, could you hand me the book?" the noun phrase "Kristy" is free and could be moved to the end of the communicative unit, whereas the pronoun "you" also functioning as address form cannot be moved around. As the following examples show, nominal direct address can occur initially (1), medially (2), finally (3), or stand alone (4):

(1) sweetie I got to go.
(2) you must realize honey that we can't keep meeting like this. (Zwicky 1974)
(3) you know what honey?
(4) Carrie.

McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) caution that the term "medial position" needs defining. They find that most medial direct address can in fact be considered turn-initial, since they are merely preceded by a discourse marker or other type of utterance preface, e.g. "Tell me, Margaret. Er you more or less did= got where you are today more or less off your own bat" (quoted in McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003: 166).

Few studies correlate position and function, and their findings are contradictory. For telephone openings Schegloff (1968) shows that addresses, i.e. addressee-identifying or relationship-maintaining terms of address, occur at the beginning of an utterance, at the end of an utterance or between clauses or phrases within utterances. Summonses, i.e. attention-getting terms of address, on the other hand, are positionally free and are typically accompanied by recycling to the start of the utterance. This pattern frequently occurs in classroom talk, when the teacher notices that some pupil is not paying

attention in the middle of a syntactic unit, for example, "read the- Alice. read the text quietly."

Leech (1999) finds that the position of direct address is directly related to its pragmatic function: initial direct address tends to combine the attention-getting function with the function of singling out the appropriate addressee and utterance-final address combines addressee-identifying and relationship-maintenance functions. Lerner's (2003) research on address in sequence-initiating actions within multiparty conversations yields similar patterns. In his data, pre-positioned terms of address are employed as a device to establish or verify the availability of a recipient in situations where this may be problematic. Post-positioned terms of address, on the other hand, are used to demonstrate a particular stance toward the relationship with a recipient in situations in which a confirmation of that stance is particularly relevant. The following two examples from my corpus fit this pattern.

In SC_11.4 CELIBACY, Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha are watching Carrie's neighbours having sex from Carrie's window. As the scene takes place, Samantha is being abstinent on purpose, whereas Miranda has not succeeded in dating a man for more than three months.

SC_11.4 CELIBACY

```
     16  M   {staring out of the window}
             oh my God?
             (1.5) look at them.
     17  C   {seeing neighbours having sex}
             oh wow.
             god I had no idea they did an afternoon show.
     18      {Samantha and Charlotte join them at the window;
             voiceover Carrie on them being the nineties version
             of matinee ladies}
→    19  M   Samantha,
             I cannot believe that you would give this up on
             purpose.
     20  S   actually,
             I hardly miss it.
     21  M   how long has it been?
     22  S   a hundred years.
```

In turn 19, Miranda uses the pre-positioned direct address "Samantha" to identify her as addressee of her utterance. This is necessary, because the four women are not facing each other, but looking in the same direction with Miranda sitting behind Samantha.

After having verified Samantha's attention, Miranda proceeds with stating her disbelief at Samantha's celibacy. Miranda's next turn does not contain a term of address; she has already established Samantha as her addressee, and the content of her utterance confirms this orientation by further pursuing the topic of Samantha's celibacy. Although Samantha's name predominantly functions to warrant her attention, it can be argued that it simultaneously has some expressive/contact function via the choice of the first name address as opposed to more formal forms of address such as Ms Jones.

In the second excerpt, Miranda and Charlotte are picking up Carrie for a "girls' day out." Carrie has not left the house since she split up with Mr Big for fear of running into him. Charlotte's utterance-final direct address in turn 11, serves to identify Carrie as the addressee and has a more specific relationship-maintaining function.

SC_13.1 BREAK-UP-RULE

8 M <just when exactly,>
do you think you're going to be getting out of this hostage [situation?]
9 Ch [Mira:nda?]
10 M what?
am I wrong?
→ 11 Ch {*turning to Carrie*} don't listen to her Carrie.
it's only been a month.
it takes half the total time you went out with someone,
to get over them.
12 M hu
13 C I always like a good math solution to any love problem.
14 Ch it's the break-up rule.
you and Big only went out for a year,
so that means that she's got five more months to get over him.

Since there are three participants involved in the interaction, who are moving around in Carrie's flat, it is necessary to identify the addressee. In turn 10, Miranda addresses Charlotte, asking her a question: "am I wrong?" This makes an answer by Charlotte conditionally relevant, but Charlotte seems to ignore Miranda's question, and addresses Carrie instead with the help of an explicit address and through her bodily orientation away from Miranda and towards Carrie. Through the content of her utterance, however, she implicitly addresses Miranda, by stating that what she is saying should be ignored and thus implying that she is wrong. Dick Holmes (1984) labels this format "explicit-

implicit address" and shows that it typically occurs in situations in which direct actions are avoided, in this case bluntly answering Miranda's question with a "yes," which would be disaffiliative on the interpersonal plane. By refusing an answer, Charlotte only disaligns on the structural plane. While indirectly dismissing Miranda's opinion, Charlotte fully aligns with Carrie: the first name address stresses that she is her friend and that she should listen to her rather than to Miranda. Characteristic of three-party conversations, Charlotte's utterance frames the participants into different communicative relations. In terms of Goffman's (1976, 1979) participation framework, Carrie is framed as Charlotte's addressee whereas Miranda turns into a ratified side participant. According to Coupland and Coupland (2000:209) "relational frames establish entitlements and responsibilities." In this case, Charlotte's right as a friend to give Carrie advice and to deny Miranda the right to do so. Consequently, through relational framing the post-positioned term of address here simultaneously serves to identify the addressee and to confirm the friendship relation. Note that later on Charlotte again changes the participation framework mid-turn, when she shifts from second person pronoun "you" to third person pronoun "she," thereby moving from talking to Carrie to talking about Carrie (turn 14).

In essence, these two examples confirm Leech's (1999) claim that direct address in initial position has predominantly an attention/identifying function whereas direct address in final position has predominantly an interpersonal function. As the LSWE corpus mostly yields direct address in utterance-final position, Leech (1999) concludes that the expressive/contact function of terms of address is prevalent. McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) take Leech's (1999) description of terms of address as a starting point and present a more sophisticated picture by distinguishing several interpersonal and organisational functions and by looking at two sets of data: conversations between intimates (friends, family) from the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE) and radio phone-in calls. While the first set of data compares to Leech's (1999) in yielding a high total for direct address in final position and a high percentage of expressive/contact functions, the radio call-in corpus has a significantly higher amount of utterance-initial and medial direct address and the organisational functions of direct address prevail. A closer analysis of final position address in the CANCODE data also confirms Leech's (1999) correlation of utterance-final position

and social function: 62% of terms of address in this position functions in badinage, the mitigation of face-threats and other relational work. By contrast, the distribution of direct address in the radio data is characterised by a higher frequency of organisational functions (call management, turn management, topic management, summonses), accounting for the higher number of turn-initial direct address. A more detailed investigation of the functions of medial direct address in the radio corpus also yielded a higher percentage of organisational functions in this position. In sum, broad-brush corpus studies show that the uses of direct address vary with the type of speech event, but there seems to be a general tendency that utterance-final address predominantly functions on the interpersonal plane while utterance-initial and medial address predominantly function on the organisational plane.

Wootton (1981), however, focusing on child-parent interaction, shows that in this setting utterance-initial direct address also has important interpersonal functions. In his data, utterance-initial address is used to anticipate trouble, including relationship trouble. The following example from my corpus fits this pattern. Miranda and Carrie are walking through Manhattan, discussing their affairs with younger men, when Carrie notices that she has to leave.

SC_4.3 FLING

```
    6    M    so what's the big deal?
              it's just a fling.
              it's not like we're throwing out our schedules or
              anything.
    7    C    oh
→             sweetie I got to go.
    8    M    yeah?
    9    C    I'm late for a meeting with my editor.
              [bye] ((shouting while running off))
    10   M    [oh]
```

The discourse marker "oh" in turn 7 indicates that Carrie has just "undergone some kind of change in (...) her locally current state of (...) awareness." (Heritage 1984a:299), namely that she is late for a meeting. This necessitates leaving Miranda in the midst of their discussion, thus rejecting her company. The initial term of endearment here serves to allay this rejection; hence, the pre-positioned direct address anticipates relationship trouble and can be considered to have a relational function. This shows that quantitative studies based on large corpora are not sufficient to account for the functions of direct

address. In my data, turn-initial direct address clearly does not predominantly function to identify someone or to catch their attention. Consequently, only detailed turn-by-turn analyses can reveal the workings of terms of address in talk-in-interaction and allow conclusions on their functions.

Jefferson's (1973) close analysis of closing sequences, for example, finds a special function of nominal direct address. She shows how tag-positioned address operates to add to the length of an ongoing utterance and provide that a speaker has not stopped talking, although a possible complete utterance has been produced. This usage prevents informative pauses, shifting the status of the term of address "from a key locus of relational work to a sound particle in the service of another type of interactional work" (Jefferson 1973: 74).

Evidently, any generalisation conceals the complexity of direct address phenomena. Every instance requires careful analysis in its linguistic and extra-linguistic context. As for extra-linguistic context, Leech (1999), for example, shows that direct address is not used among intimates where neither addressee-identifying nor relationship-maintenance is required. When participants are sure of their mutual relationship, for example in conversations between mothers and daughters, wives and husbands and good friends, terms of address are rare. Consequently, in these contexts, every familiar term of address which does not serve to identify an addressee can be considered marked and either indicates some kind of relationship renegotiation or has some other special function. In a study of children's friendship groups, Emihovich (1981), for instance, shows that little children regularly use their names in their interactions, even when summoning attention and addressee-identification were clearly not an issue and although the children were sure of their mutual relationship. She concludes that they use first names to maintain solidarity as a friendship cohort and to indicate their special relationship as "best buddies" vis-à-vis other children playing around them.

This in-group marking function is in keeping with Brown and Levinson's (1987) claims that familiar terms of address like first names and endearments are a positive politeness strategy. They also state that familiar terms of address typically occur in the context of face-threatening acts to accomplish redress. Their latter claim is corroborated by McCarthy and O'Keeffe's (2003) corpus data, which yield 15% of direct address in contexts of face-threats. While Brown and Levinson (1987) state that a higher degree of

imposition causes shifts towards more formal address than usual and never to more intimate forms, Terkourafi (2004) shows for her corpus of spontaneous conversational data from Cypriot Greek that such shifts towards more intimate forms do occur in the context of reprimands. She argues that the use of an endearment enhances the chance of the addressee's compliance with the remark; by affirming intimacy through the use of intimate address, the speaker frames the criticism as a piece of advice rather than a reprimand. According to Terkourafi (2004), it is the high degree of imposition which requires a reaffirmation of closeness through the use of more intimate terms of address. In Watt's (2003) framework, terms of address can thus serve as politic behaviour in the sense of appropriate to the situation as well as going beyond what is appropriate.

In the community of practice under analysis, first names and endearments regularly occur in what Brown and Levinson (1987) consider face-threatening situations or what endangers the state of equilibrium, i.e. the balance between the three tensions inherent in friendship: autonomy and connection, openness and closedness, predictability and novelty. In the following sections, I will present the distribution of familiar address according to the four characters and more importantly according to the local conversational contexts in which they occur. Given the functional complexity of direct address, a categorisation according to conversational contexts is more useful, allowing for an analysis that takes into account their potential multivalence. Furthermore, such analysis can go beyond indicating that direct address has interpersonal functions by revealing how it accomplishes these interpersonal functions.

4.3.4 Direct address in *Sex and the City*

4.3.4.1 Distribution of familiar terms of address

The familiar terms of address in my corpus are not equally distributed among the four women. Some prefer first names, others prefer endearments, and the number of direct address received also varies. Since I did not correlate the figures with the amount of talk, counting the occurrences and relating them to speakers and addressees certainly does not allow for any statistically correct conclusions, but it does give a rough picture of the overall distribution and allows some tentative hypotheses. The figures are based

on the core corpus of the first two seasons of *SATC*. Aside from counting the terms of address usage amongst the four women, I compared this intra-community usage to the women's addressing behaviour with other characters, and I will comment on it where appropriate. Since my focus is on the talk between the four women, these findings are not included in the tables below.

Considering endearments, I found three different terms: "honey," "sweetie," and "sweetheart." These terms are only used by Carrie (52%) and Samantha (48%), with Carrie preferring "sweetie" and Samantha preferring "honey." The categorisation of "honey" as endearment is debatable, as the term is used indiscriminately in current American English. However, the only SATC character using the term extensively is Samantha, who even uses "honey" to address waiters at restaurants.21 Miranda never uses it at all; Carrie addresses close friends and boyfriends with "honey;" and Charlotte only uses it when addressing boyfriends or her husband (thus not included in table 2).

	sweetie	sweetheart	honey	Total
Carrie	21	1	8	30
Samantha	3	3	22	28
Miranda	0	0	0	0
Charlotte	0	0	0	0
Total	24	4	30	58

Table 2: Users of terms of endearments

As for first names, Charlotte uses them most, followed by Carrie (cf. table 3)

Character	
Charlotte	14
Carrie	11
Miranda	6
Samantha	4
Total	35

Table 3: Users of first name address

Considering the recipients of these forms of direct address, there are also significant differences. Charlotte alone receives 48% of all endearments, while Samantha and Miranda receive only few (Samantha 12%; Miranda 15%); nor do they receive many first name addresses (8.5 % each; cf. tables 4 & 5).

	sweetie	sweetheart	honey	Total
Charlotte	11	3	14	28
Carrie	1	1	12	14
Miranda	8	0	1	9
Samantha	4	0	3	7
Total	24	4	30	58

Table 4: Recipients of terms of endearment

Character	
Carrie	16
Charlotte	13
Miranda	3
Samantha	3
Total	35

Table 5: Recipients of first name address

Both types combined yield the following picture:

Character	
Carrie	44%
Samantha	35%
Charlotte	14%
Miranda	6%

Table 6: Users of familiar terms of address

Character	
Charlotte	44%
Carrie	32%
Miranda	13%
Samantha	11%

Table 7: Recipients of familiar terms of address

Two tentative hypotheses can be drawn from this distribution. First, the use of specific terms of address does not only depend on the properties of the dyad, but may also be idiosyncratic, corroborating the above noted finding by Weatherall (1996). Second, the fact that Charlotte receives the highest amount of direct address indicates that she has a special status in the community of practice, which will be explored in the following analyses of familiar terms of address found in my corpus.

4.3.4.2 Local contexts of direct address

A first analysis of the 93 occurrences of nominal terms of address in my data suggests the following pattern. Aside from sequences in which the addressee is explicitly summoned or identified – as in example SC_11.4 CELIBACY above – familiar terms of address typically occur in the following five local contexts.

i) Access rituals
ii) Apologies
iii) Orders/requests
iv) Comfort/support
v) Knowledge displays

Although direct address can simultaneously fulfil an identifying and a relationship-maintenance function (cf. E. Davies 1986; Leech 1999), in all of these local contexts, they mainly serve to reaffirm the personal relationship between the interlocutors, or, in McConnell-Ginet's (1978: 23) terms, to indicate "the political and personal realities of social interaction." In the following sections, I will analyse instances of each local

context and thereby show in how far the familiar terms of address are conventional resources for doing friendship in the community of practice under analysis.

i) Access rituals

"Stay" is a charming word in a friend's vocabulary.(Louisa May Alcott)

Goffman (1971:107) defines access rituals as "ritual displays that mark a change in degree of access." This subsumes greeting and farewell sequences. Due to the fact that the interactions between the four women in my corpus usually begin *in medias res*, there is only one example of direct address in an opening sequence, when Charlotte calls Carrie to cancel dinner with her three friends.

SC_ 1.2 AMAZING DATE

```
     1   C    {answering the phone}
              hello?
→    2   Ch   hey Carrie.
              it's Charlotte.
→    3   C    hey sweetie.
     4   Ch   hey,
              look,
              I can't meet you guys for dinner tomorrow night?
              because I have an amazing date?
```

This telephone conversation opening displays a characteristic identification/recognition sequence (cf. Schegloff 1979). Carrie answers the phone with the standard US-American telephone greeting term, "hello?" (turn 1). Thereupon, Charlotte contributes the greeting term "hey" in conjunction with her friend's name (turn 2). The terminal intonation indicates that she has recognised Carrie's voice, and subsequently, Charlotte self-identifies (turn 2). In turn 3, Carrie reciprocates Charlotte's greeting – also in conjunction with a familiar term of address, in this case an endearment. After this second recognition solution, Charlotte repeats the informal greeting "hey" and proceeds to the first topic, the reason for her call (turn 4). Considering that the two friends know each other so well that they recognize each other's voices (cf. turn 2), the familiar terms of address do not merely serve the recognition solution. They also have an expressive

function, re-establishing the relationship between Carrie and Charlotte as a friendly one and creating a basis for the interaction to follow. In view of Charlotte's intention to cancel dinner with her friends, this establishment of good terms is highly relevant here.

Parting sequences are more complex than opening rituals, since the interlocutors are anticipating that they will soon be less available to one another. Ending an interaction with a friend temporarily threatens the state of equilibrium, because it suspends proximity and communication, which constitute necessary components of friendship. With respect to the three tensions inherent in friendship, lifting proximity and communication causes an imbalance towards autonomy, closedness and novelty. Investigating phatic communion in closing sequences, Laver (1981:302) concludes that these generally pose "a high degree of risk to face." Consequently, as Goffman phrases it, "withdrawal must be handled so that it will not convey an improper evaluation" (1967: 36-37). Interlocutors need to attend to the following two factors: first, assuaging any feelings of rejection perceived by the person who is being left; and second, re-confirming the existing relationship (Laver 1975: 231).

Research in conversation analysis has also focused on closing sequences, acknowledging that these sections of talk can be awkward. Jefferson (1973: 74) considers them to be "a systematic locus of a variety of relational work," and Schegloff and Sacks (1973:290) acknowledge that "for many people, closing a conversation may be a practical problem in the sense that they find it difficult to get out of a conversation they are in." Schegloff and Sacks describe how a proper initiation of a terminal exchange – with the help of a pre-closing – serves to lift the transition relevance of possible utterance completions while at the same time allowing for "the interests of the parties in getting their mentionables into the conversation" (1973: 313). Hence, closing sequences are characterised by complex interactional work.

I have already presented one example of a closing sequence above (SC_4.3 FLING), where Carrie uses the term of endearment "sweetie" to mitigate the rejection entailed in her abrupt leave-taking. The following terminal exchange between Carrie and Samantha is complicated by the fact that Carrie announces her parting just after Samantha has declared that she is going to leave Carrie by herself for a little while in order to talk to somebody else. Carrie and Samantha are at a lesbian art show opening at Charlotte's gallery and Samantha has just complained that there are no men around.

SC_18.1 MAKE NEW FRIENDS

```
    6   S   (1.0){Samantha is scanning the room}
            wait a second.
            do you see that guy?
    7   C   who?
    8   S   I know him.
    9   C   who is he?
    10  S   he's a trainer at my gym.
            and YOU should see his squat thrusts.
            (1.0) I'm just going to say hello.
→   11  C   you know what honey?
            I think I-
            I think I'm going to go home.
    12  S   what?
            rela:x.
            I'll be right back.
    13  C   yeah.
            you know what.
            I really don't I don't feel very well.
    14  S   what's wrong?
    15  C   just have a headache.
            it just hit me.
    16  S   you want a Percadan?
            I-
    17  C   no no:.
            I'm fine I'm fine.
            I just need some sleep.
            go ahead.
            make new friends.
    18  S   ((smiles))
            I'll call you
    19  C   okay. ((smiles))
```

After having identified an interesting man, Samantha announces in turn 10 that she is going to temporarily leave Carrie so as to have a chat with him. The one-second pause can be interpreted as a slight hesitation to do so. This is corroborated by the use of the downtoner "just," functioning as a hedge. Samantha indicates that she is going to leave Carrie to talk to somebody else, but she mitigates the rejection by describing her upcoming absence as a brief episode of small talk ("say hello"). Carrie then initiates a closing sequence by announcing her own departure from the party (turn 11). Sequentially, this is permitted, because Samantha's proclamation of temporary withdrawal has closed the topic. Since neither of the parties to the conversation displays an eagerness to continue it, the closing sequence is initiated (cf. Schegloff and Sacks 1973: 309). Still, Carrie's overture "you know what." (cf. Biber et al. 1999),[22] the familiar term of address "honey" and the dysfluency in the second part of her turn

indicate that her announcement is potentially disaffiliative. Samantha indeed takes offence, as can be seen in her exclamation in turn 12. “What?” typically serves as an open class repair initiator, “a generalized instruction: find whatever kinds of trouble the hearer could have with that thing, clear them up, and say it again” (Sacks 1992b: 413). Yet, in this sequence “what?” is not a complete turn by Samantha, which would yield the floor to Carrie to clear the trouble. Instead, Samantha continues her turn neither displaying mishearing nor miscomprehension, but displaying a negative affective stance.[23] The lengthening of the second syllable in the following imperative “rela:x.” confirms the negative stance towards Carrie’s reaction. The subsequent reaffirmation of the briefness of her withdrawal together with the semantic content of the imperative indicate that she considers Carrie’s reaction as inappropriate: “I’ll be right back.”

Carrie’s next contribution contains features typical of dispreferred turns: an initial agreement token “yeah” and an account for her leaving the party. Furthermore, she again uses the overture, “you know what,” to introduce her account. This displays an orientation to a preference organisation of talk which favours continuation of interaction over closing.[24] Samantha then reacts to Carrie’s account by asking for an elaboration of her general observation “not feeling very well.” She thereby aligns with Carrie, positioning herself “as a co-tracker of the trouble” (Jefferson 1980: 176). Carrie’s response in turn 15 reveals the exact trouble spot and at the same time – through the repeated use of the downtoner “just” – her response plays down the extent of the trouble. In Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness framework, this playing down can be considered a face-saving strategy in the context of imposing problems on someone, while in CA terms it can be seen as an orientation to “business-as-usual” in the context of a troubles telling (cf. Jefferson 1980). Considering the state of equilibrium, such trouble revelation tilts the balance between openness and closedness towards openness and thus requires politic behaviour.

Samantha’s subsequent contribution displays further orientation to Carrie’s trouble; she offers practical assistance in the form of a painkiller: “you want a Percadan? I-” Carrie interrupts her effort with an emphatic “no no:. I’m fine I’m fine.” The dual repetition at the beginning of turn 17 can be considered “multiple sayings” in the sense of Stivers (2004), since both repeats – one lexical, one sentential – occur under single intonation contours. According to Stivers, multiple sayings typically indicate that the

speaker’s talk targets a larger course of action than the preceding first part of the adjacency pair. It displays a stance against the interlocutor’s persisting course of action and aims to stop it, in this case presumably Samantha’s preventing Carrie to leave the party. This interpretation is corroborated by the fact that Carrie’s “I’m fine” contrasts with her preceding (“just have a headache. it just hit me.”) and following utterances (“I just need some sleep.”). Headaches and lack of sleep are clearly in contrast with the concept of being fine. Nevertheless, all of her moves contain the downtoner “just,” which renders them more coherent with “I’m fine,” signalling to Samantha that she really need not worry.

Carrie then shifts the topic from her state of health to Samantha’s social life with two imperatives: “go ahead. make new friends.” These imperatives backtrack to turn 10, when Samantha had announced briefly leaving Carrie to chat with the trainer from her gym. By explicitly prompting Samantha to socialise, Carrie indicates that she does not feel rejected and at the same time ensures that Samantha’s well-being is guaranteed after her leave-taking. Since both interlocutors are now assured that the other does not feel jilted, this utterance initiates the end of the parting negotiation. Samantha responds with a smile, displaying a positive affective stance. She also promises that she will call Carrie (turn 18), a consolidatory comment in the sense of Laver (1981), which provides for the continuation and re-affirmation of the existing relationship. Carrie reacts with an agreement token, “okay,” and a smile, also signalling a positive affective stance and finally closing the conversation.

In summary, ending an interaction between friends requires careful negotiation to avoid feelings of rejection. Furthermore, it is important to reaffirm the friendship before contact is temporarily terminated. This is done with the help of communicative patterns such as Samantha’s showing concern for Carrie in turns 14 and 16 and Carrie’s displaying support for Samantha’s actions in turn 17. It is also accomplished through smaller linguistic entities, in particular the use familiar terms of address (“honey” in turn 11). This latter observation is supported by Jefferson (1973), who notes that closing sequences are typical structural loci for terms of address, which are involved in work to signal that the interaction was satisfying and to show esteem and affection for the interlocutor in view of being parted from her. Familiar terms of address can therefore be

considered a characteristic linguistic pattern in access rituals and a resource for actively doing friendship in these local contexts.

ii) Apologies

> *A stiff apology is a second insult. … The injured party does not want to be compensated because he has been wronged; he wants to be healed because he has been hurt. (G. K. Chesterton)*

Apologies are another environment in which familiar terms of address can be found in my data. Since apologies are one of the main devices of “remedial work” in Goffman’s (1971) sense, their occurrence signals that some social infringement has occurred. Robin Lakoff (2001) compares apologies to plot points in a story and pleads for an analysis that takes the events that led to the making of an apology into account.

According to Fillmore’s (1971) semantic analysis, apologising means 1) that some action X of speaker A is bad for the addressee of the apology B; 2) that the speaker regrets having done X and pledges not to do X again; 3) that the speaker is directly or indirectly responsible for X; and 4) that the speaker had the option not to do X.[25] The two most basic conditions for an apology are the acknowledgement of responsibility and regret on part of the speaker (cf. Edmondson 1981; Fraser 1981; R. Lakoff 2001; M. Owen 1983). Fillmore (1971) includes another meaning component, namely that the speaker puts herself one-down vis-à-vis the addressee. This concurs with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) categorisation of apologies as threatening the speaker’s positive face. In terms the notion of equilibrium, apologies cause an imbalance through lifting the desired equality between the interlocutors.

In the case of a friend apologising to another, the implication for their friendship relation is that it may be threatened in two ways: first, one friend may have or has offended the other, and second, by apologising she makes this offence explicit and puts herself one-down, thereby undoing the equality assumed or desired in friendship. According to Robin Lakoff, “apology, more than most speech acts, places psychological burdens both on its maker and, less seriously, on its recipient” (2001: 201). Not only are

apologies problematic for the speaker, but they also set up expectations on the addressee's reaction, namely that she accepts or appreciates the apology (cf. Coulmas 1981). Consequently, apology exchanges require careful turn-by-turn negotiation as can be seen in the following example.

Following Robin Lakoff's (2001) call for inclusive research, I will present a turn-by-turn analysis of the conversational moves leading up to and ensuing the apology. The scene starts *in medias res* with Carrie and Miranda having their nails done at a beauty parlour. Carrie worries about not having had sex with Mr Big for three nights in a row and Miranda has not dated a man in three months.

SC_11.1 HORRIFIED

```
    1   M   three times?
            .. try three months.
    2   C   no:.
    3   M   yes.
            (1.0){Carrie pulls a face}
            now would be a good time to wipe that HORRIfied look
            off your face.
    4   C   ((laughs))
→           sorry sweetie.((laughing))
            I'm sorry.
            I just- wow
            I didn't know.
            where have I been?
    5   M   you've been having sex.
            ... I've been at BLOCKbuster renting videos,
            it's tragic.
            I'm like two rentals away from the three pounds of
            gummibears.
```

Presumably, Carrie has revealed in the preceding conversation (not shown in the TV show) that the last three nights she spent with Mr Big did not involve sexual intercourse. In turn 1, Miranda repeats the number of nights, but the question intonation does not indicate understanding problems or incredulity, rather it sets up a rhetorical strategy. In the following move, she contrasts Carrie's three nights with three months, implying that this is what she is going through, the small pause before her second move heightening the contrast. The indirect form of Miranda's disclosure indicates that this is sensitive information. At the same time the imperative "try three months" begs that Carrie shift attention from her problem to Miranda's. Carrie's prolonged "no:." in turn 2 displays incredulity so that Miranda reaffirms her original statement with an

oppositional “yes.” (turn 3). This sequence serves to cooperatively establish the extent of Miranda’s misery and culminates in Carrie’s non-verbal behaviour, which Miranda interprets as an expression of alarm, a “horrified look” (turn 3). Miranda’s complete utterance “now would be a good time to wipe that HORRIfied look off your face.” has the illocutionary force of a complaint, yet it also has a humorous component, insofar as Miranda re-organises the phrase “wipe that smile off your face” by replacing smile with an opposing feature, a “horrified look.” The humour created through this script opposition (cf. Raskin 1985) redresses the threat to Carrie’s face, establishing what I label “dual alignment of affiliation and disaffiliation.”[26]

In turn 4, Carrie reacts to both the humour and the complaint. She shows appreciation for Miranda’s humour by laughing and then gradually becomes more serious as she apologises for her offence. According to Edmondson (1981), complaints co-occur with apologies as sequentially relevant acts. Carrie’s first move “sorry sweetie” combines a frequent form of apology for minor personal offences, in particular between familiar interlocutors (cf. Fraser 1981; M. Owen 1983), with the direct address “sweetie,” which reaffirms their friendship in the face of a precarious situation: they are talking about sensitive issues; Carrie has displayed an inappropriate reaction; Miranda has made explicit that she disapproved of Carrie’s reaction; and by apologising Carrie admits to her mistake, thereby degrading herself vis-à-vis her friend lifting the desired equality between the two friends.

In her next move, Carrie repeats her apology in a less perfunctory form in which subject and verb are explicit. As she has also stopped laughing, this second apology is more serious. Edmonton (1981) argues that this “gushing” of apologetic utterances is socially appropriate in such exchanges, i.e. in Watt’s (1989, 2003) terms politic behaviour. In the remaining turn, Carrie gives an account for her behaviour – another device of remedial work, which often follows an apology in the case of more serious personal offence (cf. Fraser 1981). Carrie starts off with “I just-” using the downtoner “just” to make light of the her actions; then she breaks off to utter an exclamation which signals surprise (“wow”); next, she backtracks and offers “I didn’t know” as an explanation for her misdemeanour. Carrie’s “where have I been?” at the end of her turn can be considered a rhetorical question, since she knows the answer better than her addressee. Through this device she admits having withdrawn from her normal

surroundings and not having kept up with her friend's life, a cultural disalignment. This concession extends the focus of the remedial work from the immediately preceding action to Carrie's ignorance of her friends' problems, putting Carrie in a vulnerable position. The typical response to such self-humiliation is some utterance displaying forgiveness (cf. Edmonton 1981), which re-establishes alignment on the cultural plane. Fraser (1981) lists the following options: decline the need for apologising, deny offence, express appreciation, or deny the speaker's responsibility for the action. Miranda, however, chooses none of these options. Her response in turn 5, "you've been having sex" is a quick repartee, directly replying to a question not meant to be answered. Miranda thereby undermines Carrie's rhetorical strategy and simultaneously indicates that she does not acquit her from her offending infatuation with Mr Big, refusing realignment on the cultural plane. Instead, she continues comparing Carrie's situation to her own miserable life, which steers the conversation into a more confrontational direction.

The analysis shows that apologies are another local context in which familiar terms of address along with other linguistic patterns such as accounts and gushing can be considered politic behaviour, seeking to re-establish the equilibrium and to reaffirm the relationship between the interlocutors. First names and endearments typically accompany apologetic moves in such remedial exchanges between the four women – though not always successfully reaffiliating the interlocutors.

iii) Orders and requests

Who timidly requests invites refusal.
(Latin proverb)

The third local context in which familiar terms of address regularly occur in my corpus are orders and requests. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), these are threats to the negative face of the interlocutor as the speaker restricts the hearer's freedom of action by intending her to do some specific act. By giving orders the speaker puts herself one-up vis-à-vis her interlocutor; hence, the utterance can be heard as exerting control (cf. Spitz 2005). This clearly upsets the equilibrium, momentarily lifting the desired condition of equality between friends. Biber et al. (1999: 220) comment that

adding a term of address may either soften or sharpen a command, comparing this to the softening effect of the word "please" and the effect of the interrogative form "will you," which renders a command more insistent and precise. In my data, familiar terms of address in the context of commands have a softening effect, re-attaining the equilibrium between the interlocutors. Consider the following brief excerpt, from the women's joint trip to an old friend's baby shower. Carrie forgot to buy a gift and has asked Charlotte to share hers. They are on their way to the door, when Carrie remembers their shared gift.

SC_10.4 GIFT

```
    4   C   let's go.
            {walking towards the door} (7.0)
→           uh {touching Charlotte's arm} Charlotte sweetie,
            don't forget our gift.
            ((pointing to the car))
            {knocking at door}
            phhh
```

Carrie's ordering Charlotte to fetch the gift entails a high degree of imposition, and Carrie does not explicitly ask Charlotte to go to the car and get the gift, but formulates the order as a reminder not to forget the gift. This indirectness is inconsistent with a sharpening function of the term of address and corroborates the interpretation that the multiple terms of address here serve to maintain the fabric of the interpersonal relationship in the face of disaffiliation and disequilibrium.[27]

To recapitulate, leave-takings, remedial exchanges and orders/requests constitute local contexts in which disaffiliation is rife and the friendship relation is threatened through imbalance or rejection. These contexts require politic behaviour, which pro- or retroactively signals affiliation. The dialectic process of upsetting and re-attaining disequilibrium at the micro-level in turn reaffirms the friendship relation at the macro-level of social organisation.

iv) Comfort/support

Honest plain words best pierce the ear of grief.
(Biron in Love's labour lost, William Shakespeare)

Comfort and support sequences constitute the second most frequent locus of direct address with endearments and first names in the *SATC* corpus. At first sight, this context does not seem to fit in with the preceding categories, which entailed patent disaffiliation and disequilibrium, but close inspection reveals that comfort and support sequences are replete with subtle imbalances. The following excerpt illustrates this. Having heard a story of a single woman found dead in her apartment with her face half eaten by her cat, Miranda nearly choked on some food, which resulted in a panic attack and a trip to the hospital. In the following excerpt, Carrie is picking her up from the hospital.

SC_17.7 PANIC ATTACK

```
    1   M   well,
            THAT was freaky.
            ... I felt I was drowning and dying at the same
            time.
→   2   C   sweetie,
            they said you had a panic attack.
    3   M   yea:h.
            ((sarcastic tone of voice)) and I had to pay five
            hundred dollars of my single person's salary,
            to find that out.
            Hh
    4   C   (2.0){scrutinises Miranda's face}
            what's wrong?
    5   M   (1.0)
            .h
            take a good look at my face,
            because .. at my funeral,
             .. there will only be half of it.
            I'll be dead,
            >and my cat will be happy,
            and Charlotte will be picking up men at the next
            grave side over,<
→   6   C   breathe sweetie,
            >breathe,
            breathe.<
→   7   M   I'm all alone Carrie.
            the first people on my call in case of emergency
            list are my parents.
            and I don't like them.
            and they live in Pennsylvania. ((tearful))
→   8   C   °oh sweetie.°
```

```
           you can put me on there.
9    M     ((tearful))
           I CAN'T.
           you SCREEN.
10   C     well I'll pick up.
           ... I promise.
           (2.5){Miranda looks down and shrugs one shoulder.
           Carrie sits down next to her and puts her arm around
           her}
           listen.
           ... you did the RIGHT thing,
           buying that apartment.
           you love it right?
11   M     yeah. ((nodding))
12   C     and you won't be alone forever.
13   M     ((nods))
```

Carrie is standing next to Miranda, who is sitting on a hospital trolley, recovering from her panic attack. As noted above, revealing sensitive information about physical and mental health is a very delicate situation, which threatens the face of both the discloser and the addressee and shifts the balance between closedness and openness towards openness, thereby causing disequilibrium. This is noticeable in the discourse marker "well" at the beginning of Miranda's utterance (turn 1). According to Jucker (1993:444), "well" serves as a face-threat mitigator, redressing the imposition of troubles talk on Carrie. In Watt's (1989) framework such discourse markers constitute politic behaviour appropriate to the situation.

Miranda continues to describe her feelings, evoking strong imagery of herself drowning. Aside from the discourse marker her utterance contains other features that indicate trouble: The phrase "at the same time" constructs the two verbs "drowning and dying" as opposites although these two actions do not exclude each other. This signals that Miranda is confused and shaken; an interpretation supported by the pause preceding the utterance. Carrie responds to this with a report of the medical diagnosis, functioning as an account for Miranda's experiences and her current state of mind: "sweetie, they said you had a panic attack" (turn 2). Giving a medical diagnosis puts Carrie in a superior position vis-à-vis her afflicted friend. This is redressed by the term of endearment preceding the diagnosis, proactively affiliating the interlocutors by reaffirming the desired condition of equality. In turn 3, Miranda confirms Carrie's statement with an emphatic response form "yea:h," accepting her friend's contribution. She proceeds to complain about the amount of money she had to pay for the diagnosis,

her sarcastic tone of voice indicating that she would not have needed an expensive medical examination to arrive at that conclusion. She thereby trivialises the diagnosis and her ordeal.

However, explicitly stating that the money has to be paid from her “single person’s salary” opens up another potential trouble spot, an interpretation confirmed by her exhalation, indicating exhaustion. Carrie’s reaction displays an orientation to troubles talk: after a two-second pause, in which she scrutinises Miranda’s face, she asks, “what’s wrong?” (turn 4). This sets up a conditional relevance of more self-disclosure. Miranda’s next turn is consequently interspersed with hesitation phenomena: a pause and an inhalation at the start and two pauses within the first half of the utterance after which she picks up the pace and shifts to gallows humour. She starts describing what will happen after her death, based on the story her neighbour told her, contrasting her death with her cat’s happiness. She also juxtaposes her death with Charlotte’s love life, alluding to the fact that Charlotte is dating a man she met in a cemetery. In turn 6, Carrie attempts to soothe her, by advising Miranda to breathe. This advice again establishes Carrie in a superior position, which is exacerbated through the structural disalignment that her interruption of Miranda’s ranting constitutes. Again Carrie uses a term of endearment, “sweetie,” accomplishing affiliation in the face of structural disalignment and disequilibrium.

Miranda reacts to Carrie’s intervention with a sober summation of her situation: “I’m all alone Carrie.” The tag-positioned term of address, “Carrie,” redresses the imposition of this self-disclosure on Carrie. Miranda then follows up her summation with an illustration of her situation: “the first people on my call in case of emergency list are my parents, and I don't like them. and they live in Pennsylvania.” The whole utterance is tearful, indicating the distress Miranda is in. She reveals that her parents are the only persons she can entrust with the task of caring for her in a case of emergency, which reduces her to child-status. The reason she gives for her parents’ unsuitability augment the extent of her misery: she has no one to love, not even her parents.

The change-of-state token “oh” (Heritage 1984a) at the beginning of Carrie’s response in turn 8 shows that she has become aware of the difficulty of Miranda’s situation. The term of endearment which follows again signals solidarity and the softness of the “oh sweetie” indicates that she sees herself in the position of a caregiver.

This is followed by practical support: “you can put me on there.” Miranda, however, denies this by almost shouting through tears “I CAN'T. you SCREEN.” (turn 9), displaying utter despair. Carrie then promises to answer the phone (turn 10). Her discourse marker “well” can be considered as a delay device (cf. Jucker 1993), giving Carrie a short moment to consider how to react to Miranda’s reproach, or it can be considered politic behaviour, since promises count as negative face-threats (Brown and Levinson 1987: 66). The brief silence following the “I’ll pick up” indicates that Miranda does not accept her promise, and Carrie adds the performative verb (“I promise”) to make it explicit. Miranda is still reluctant to reply verbally and instead looks down and shrugs one shoulder. According to the nonverbal dictionary (Givens 2005), this displays submissiveness, expressing that she accepts Carrie’s offer. This interpretation is corroborated by Carrie’s reaction: she changes the topic, sits down next to Miranda, and puts her arm around her, thereby responding both non-verbally and verbally.

Carrie’s utterance launcher “listen” (cf. Biber et al. 1999) and the brief pause secure Miranda’s attention and signal sincerity. She argues that Miranda was right in buying the apartment and corroborates this by eliciting a positive answer from Miranda with the help of a generalized question tag: “you love it right?” (turn 10). Miranda emphatically agrees both verbally and non-verbally (turn 11) and also consents – though only non-verbally – to Carrie’s hopeful prediction that although she is alone now, this will change at some point: “and you won’t be alone forever.” (turn 12). The presupposition in Carrie’s prediction – that Miranda is alone now – also displays that Carrie concurs with Miranda’s analysis of why she had a panic attack.

To conclude, this analysis shows how in conversations between friends, sensitive information is revealed and received. By sharing her experience with Carrie, Miranda initiates a troubles-talk sequence (cf. Jefferson 1980). While in Jefferson’s corpus of telephone conversations the troubles talk is marked as a deviation from “business as usual” (p. 153), in this sequence, the hospital-ward setting renders troubles talk “normal.” Nevertheless, revealing problems and weaknesses is face-threatening to speaker and addressee at the same time (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 67-68, 286fn; Coupland et al. 1990). Even in close relationships, in which people orient towards private goods such as affection rather than the public social value of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) notion of face, this is a difficult and complex situation. As noted in

the chapter on friendship (cf. section 2.3), providing social and emotional support is part and parcel of a close friendship, but it also requires considerable resources and too much of it may lead to emotional strain. Along with the imbalance in the openness/closedness dialectic caused by the revelation, self-disclosure jeopardises the desired equality fundamental to friendship, because the discloser puts herself in a one-down position vis-à-vis the addressee. This inequality is augmented, if the recipient of the self-disclosure takes on the role of the caregiver – as Carrie does in this excerpt. Consequently, even amongst close friends self-disclosure and troubles talk require relational work. In the friendship group under analysis one important tool of such relational work is direct address with first names and endearments.

v) Knowledge displays

Nothing so fortifies a friendship as a belief on the part of one friend that he is superior to the other.
(Honoré de Balzac)

Knowledge display situations are the most frequent local context of familiar terms of address. They constitute sequences in which a speaker assumes expert-status – in my data typically on moral or sexual aspects of relations between men and women – and either gives advice or rebukes the addressee. Advice and rebuke are both considered face-threatening acts in Brown and Levinson's framework (1987), and they also have implications for the state of equilibrium, because, as in comfort/support and order/request situations, one interlocutor one-ups vis-à-vis the other(s). Consequently, these acts temporarily put the desired equality between the friends at risk and require some form of compensation to reaffirm the friendship relation. The following example shows how familiar terms of address can accomplish this. Charlotte has met a man whom she is attracted to. When Samantha hears about this, she ushers her friends to the ladies' room to discuss his qualities. Charlotte learns that due to his special lovemaking qualities the man is known as "Mister Pussy" and finds this revolting.

SC_15.1 MR PUSSY

```
     26  Ch  forget it.
             I'm not dating anyone who's known as .. °mister
             pussy°.
     27  S   why NOT?
     28  Ch  well,
             maybe I want more than that.
→    29  S   oh sweetie,
             if a man is good at that,
             there IS nothing more.
     30  C   [amen]
     31  M   [amen]
     32  Ch  {looks down and slightly shakes her head}
```

In turn 26, Charlotte establishes that on the basis of this information she no longer considers entering a relationship with him. She uses a conventional expression of refusal, "forget it," and follows it up with an account, "I'm not dating anyone who's known as .. °mister pussy°." The slight hesitation before the nonce term of reference "Mr Pussy" and the soft-spokenness of the term itself indicate that Charlotte is uneasy with it and possibly what it stands for. Charlotte's account is not satisfying for Samantha, who demands an explanation in the following turn: "why NOT?" (turn 27). The strong emphasis on the negative particle "not" indicates a lack of understanding for Charlotte's position. Through the use of the discourse marker "well" and a qualifier ("maybe") Charlotte's explanation displays insecurity: "well, maybe I want more than that." These markers anticipate that her explanation is insufficient to account for the rejection of Mr Pussy.

Indeed, Samantha is not satisfied with Charlotte's explanation that specific lovemaking skills are not a sufficient basis for a date with a man. In turn 29, she takes up Charlotte's phrase "more than that" and recycles it in a conditional clause with a contradictory proposition: "oh sweetie, if a man is good at that there IS nothing more." The change of state token "oh" indicates that Samantha has become aware of Charlotte's attitude. The direct address "sweetie" allays the imbalance created by Samantha's utterance. Firstly, this utterance contradicts Charlotte's statement, and thereby Samantha criticises her attitude. Secondly, the generic term "a man," the simple present form of the verb and the existential sentence structure of the main clause make it appear a general truth, so that Samantha assumes the role of an expert, whereas Charlotte's insecurity establishes her as ignorant. By simultaneously uttering the word

"amen" (turns 30 & 31), Carrie and Miranda frame the whole interaction as a religious act with Samantha as the head of the congregation, whose words are taken for granted. This shift to the religious register produces a humorous key through the opposition between pious language and the conversation topic. Still, their mock-consent implies that they accept Samantha as an expert on these issues. Charlotte, on the other hand, gazes down and lightly shakes her head, which indicates a combination of restrained disapproval and defeat (cf. Givens 2005).

The frequency of this situation type in the *SATC* corpus confirms that knowledge of moral or sexual aspects of relations between men and women is symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1978) in this community of practice, i.e. possessing it means an increase in prestige. This is further corroborated by the fact that such displays of knowledge are frequently contested, as the following sequence shows. After spending a night with a French architect in his hotel room, Carrie wakes to find him gone and is left with an envelope containing a thousand dollars and a note saying thank you for the beautiful day. Samantha and Miranda join her in the hotel room to discuss this incident over breakfast. Miranda is concerned that Carrie's acquaintance Amalita, who introduced her to the architect, has drafted her into a ring of prostitutes.

SC_5.3 BIOLOGICAL DESTINY

```
    16  M   she's a HOOker with a passport.
            you ever had any conversations about money?
    17  C   no.
            I mean,
            .. I did allude to the fact,
            that I was a bit cash poor these days.
    18  M   so maybe it's supposed to be a loan.
    19  C   <I:: don't remember filling out an application.>
→   20  S   sweetheart.
            men give,
            women receive.
            it's biological destiny.
    21  M   hello.
            do you really want to be saying that?
            I mean,
            that's exactly the kind of argument men have been
            using [since the dawn of time to exploit women.
            I mean I don't -]
    22  S   [ah
            (1.0)
            wait a minute.
            I-]
    23  C   [you guys,
```

```
you] guys,
you guys
I'm just going to you know write the whole thing
off as a bad date with a cash bonus.
```

Samantha's turn 20 is reminiscent of her turn 29 in the preceding excerpt, SC_15.1 MR PUSSY. She addresses Carrie with an endearment, "sweetheart" and then puts forward a statement claiming universality through the generic usage of "women" and "men." She thereby establishes her sophistication and creates a temporary imbalance, one-upping vis-à-vis her friend. The direct address functions to make amends. In this passage, however, her expert status is not confirmed. Whereas the addressee, Carrie, does not respond, Miranda, who at that moment is a ratified side participant (Goffman 1976, 1979), opposes Samantha's turn.[28] She shifts the participation framework and establishes herself as Samantha's prime interlocutor with the help of a greeting, "hello." (turn 21), which functions as an attention-getting device. Once she has the floor she poses a rhetorical question, "Do you really want to be saying that?" The distal demonstrative pronoun "that" detaches Miranda from what she refers to. The whole structure can be considered a biased interrogative with the adverb "really" suggesting a negative answer.[29] The interrogative does not directly challenge the content of Samantha's statement but expresses doubt about its appropriateness. Miranda does not expect an answer and immediately proceeds with an account of why her friend's behaviour is inappropriate: "that's exactly the kind of argument men have been using [since the dawn of time to exploit women." Like Samantha she uses generic noun phrases, "men" and "women," claiming general knowledge. Furthermore, "since the dawn of time" is an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986) – a pattern which typically occurs in conflict sequences to corroborate challenges (cf. Spitz 2005).[30] At that point, the interaction threatens to aggravate, but Carrie interferes with a successful attempt to re-establish consensus by re-directing the conversation to her situation.

The kind of knowledge display found in the interactions between the four women is at odds with various studies on women's language. One of the persistent findings in gender and language publications, in particular within the difference framework, is that women avoid expert-status and competition (e.g. R. Lakoff 1975, 1978; Tannen 1990; Troemel-Ploetz 1992; Scollon and Scollon 1995; Coates 1996a). Furthermore, literature on friendship relations contests that supremacy and contest are avoided amongst friends

(e.g. Reohr 1991). Consequently, conversations between female friends should display neither contention nor superiority. Nevertheless, the four women in *SATC* do not hesitate to frame themselves as experts vis-à-vis each other. Moreover, such knowledge is regularly disputed and the other's expert-status challenged. Even Charlotte, who is most frequently treated as a novice, at times establishes herself as expert, especially on the ethics of dating as can be seen in the following excerpt.[31] Charlotte, Carrie and Miranda are walking through Manhattan, discussing Miranda's current relationship problem: the man she is dating insists on making love in public places.

SC_24.2 OUTWARD BOUND

```
     9   M    we've actually never done it lying down.
              or inside for that matter.
→   10   Ch   Miranda.
              this is supposed to be a relationship,
              not Outward Bound.
              you've got to GET this guy in the bedroom,
              and find out what's really there.
    11   M    I'm a little afraid to try.
              he likes the threat of getting caught.
              what if .. being with just me isn't enough.
```

In turn 10, Charlotte assumes the role of an expert on relationships and gives Miranda advice. As in the examples above, criticism and advice are prefaced with a term of address, reaffirming the friendship relation in the face of temporary imbalance.

A similar local context is constituted when one woman reveals or relates something she has experienced, which the interlocutor is likely to doubt. In such cases, the speaker can be considered an expert, because she lived through the event or feelings reported. At first sight, therefore, direct address functions similarly, reconfirming the relationship between the interlocutors. Nevertheless, in these situations the reaffirmation of the relationship is a means to a different end. It is evocative of Brown and Levinson's (1987) findings on the usage of formal terms of address. Apart from greetings, farewells and face-threatening acts, these occur in the context of sincere assurance. Brown and Levinson (1987: 183) quote an excerpt from the Watergate tapes, in which Peterson wishes to convey honesty:

WT1_WALK OUT

```
Petersen   Mr President, if I thought you were trying to protect
           someone I would have walked out.
```

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the formal address reconfirms the addressee's status and signals that the addresser would not dare lie to someone in that position. Likewise, in the conversations between the four women, familiar terms of address may signal that the speaker would not deceive the addressee, because she is a friend and that she genuinely believes or feels what she is about to say or has said. Consider the following example, in which Carrie visits Charlotte, who is just taking leave of her old friend and fix-it-man Tom.

SC_16.6 FIX-IT-MAN

```
    1        {Charlotte taking leave of Tom}
    2   Ch   bye honey.
    3        {Tom leaves}
    4   Ch   ((sighs))
    5   C    .. bye HONey?
    6   Ch   yeah.
             when he told me he was leaving,
             I suddenly had all these feelings.
             like,
             what if HE was the one?
             .. he'd been right under my nose the entire time,
             and I'd never even seen him.
             I let the whole almost-forty-out-of-work-actor thing
             get in the way.
→            .. Carrie he is stro:ng.
             .. and masculine.
             .. and he can fix things around the house.
→   7   C    Charlotte.
             you can't create a relationship with a guy,
             just cause he can caulk your tub.
    8   Ch   (1.0) yes you can.
```

In turn 5, Carrie echoes Charlotte's farewell to Tom. The question intonation and the stress on "honey" indicate that she challenges Charlotte's usage of this form. A look at the distribution of the term "honey" reveals that Charlotte only ever employs it to address boyfriends (cf. section 4.3.4.1 above). Her usage of the term therefore indicates a more intimate relationship than friendship. In turn 5, Charlotte consequently responds to Carrie's challenge with the affirmative token "yeah," as if Carrie had asked her straightforwardly whether she is seeing Tom. She goes on to explain how she came to

fall in love with him and ends her turn with: ".. Carrie he is stro:ng. .. and masculine. .. and he can fix things around the house." The direct address, the pauses and the emphasis on the word "strong" through the prolonged vowel all work to convey that Charlotte's feelings for Tom are genuine. However, Carrie contradicts her by picking up her friend's last criterion and turning it into a more specific act: "he can caulk your tub." Evoking this concrete image of a man repairing a bathtub is a rhetorical strategy to support her argument that the comfort derived from having someone around the house who can mend things is not a sound basis for a love relationship. As this frames Carrie as an expert vis-à-vis Charlotte, it causes an imbalance, which is assuaged by the familiar term of address. Still, Charlotte does not accept Carrie's advice and after taking a second to think it over counter-opposes: "yes you can." She thereby challenges Carrie's expert status.[32]

As the analysis shows, these two uses of first name address are related, yet different. They occur in roughly the same context, namely one friend assumes expert-status and thus one-ups vis-à-vis her interlocutor. However, while the usage of "Carrie" in turn 6 serves to convey sincere assurance, expressing, "you are my friend, so what I am saying to you is genuine," the usage of "Charlotte" in turn 7 implies "you are my friend, so you can take my advice." This confirms that the functions of direct address can only be revealed through careful analysis of the surrounding interaction.

4.3.5 Dual alignments

A survey of the usage of familiar terms of address in my corpus yielded a categorisation according to local contexts in which they typically occur: access rituals, apologies, orders/requests, comfort/support, and knowledge displays. Close turn-by-turn analyses of individual examples have shown that the familiar terms of address in these situation types share the function of reaffirming the friendship relation in the face of some kind of interpersonal trouble, which at least temporarily causes disaffiliation and disequilibrium, endangering the relationship by suspending desired conditions for friendship such as proximity and equality.

While in access rituals, familiar terms of address reaffirm friendship in the context of a suspension of proximity, the remaining situation types entail a suspension of the

equality between the interlocutors, which requires a signal indicating that equality is at least desired. More specifically, in the context of apologies the speaker puts herself one down, while orders/requests, comfort/support and knowledge display result in the speaker one-upping vis-à-vis her interlocutor(s). In all those sequences in which the condition of equality is at least momentarily not satisfied, direct address conventionally functions to counterbalance this deficit. As I have already noted above (cf. section 4.2.7), I consider these cases of dual alignment, i.e. affiliation and disaffiliation in one turn. This also entails a dual contextualisation of for example not equal, yet equal. These dual alignments – upsetting and re-attaining equilibrium in one go – are indicative of the dialectic process of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation and hence of friendship relations. However, familiar terms of address do not always constitute resources for re-attaining equilibrium; they can also aggravate a situation.

4.3.6 The multivalence of direct address

Opposition is true friendship.
(William Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell)

Tannen (1993) cautions against a simple form-function equation in discourse analysis, showing that all linguistic strategies are relative. As Antaki, Condor, and Levine state "there is no point in searching for the meaning of a word (...) without taking into account its indexicality – the fact that it will always be used in some certain set of circumstances" (1996: 489). The same linguistic resources can be used to index solidarity and to index power. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet relate this ambiguity of linguistic entities to their usage in communities of practice: "The power lies not in the forms themselves but in the complex web that connects those forms to those who utter and interpret them and their kinds of membership in the community of practice in which the utterance occurs" (1992: 477-478). A few studies have shown that this also holds for forms of direct address. Any linguistic item used as address can function as endearing as well as neutral or even deprecating; in terms of interpersonal alignment, they can be affiliating as well as disaffiliating.

According to Dickey (1997), one reason for this is markedness. Every dyad and by way of extension every community of practice uses specific terms of address in specific situations, which are consequently unmarked. Accordingly, the value of terms of address serving as insults or endearments would lie in the fact that they are marked forms for a given community of practice and therefore convey a particular emotion. Moreover, McConnell-Ginet (2003) notes that, although there seems to be a general conventional ranking of choices in terms of address, members of a particular community of practice may develop their own usage conventions. For example, close friends may address each other by title plus last name, although this conventionally signals formality and distance. McConnell-Ginet summarises:

> The significance of particular forms of address lies in the history of patterns of usage within and across particular communities of practice and in the connection between addressing and other aspects of social practice that build social relations and mark them with respect and affection or with contempt and dislike. (2003:79)

Brown and Levinson (1987) also mention the capacity of familiar terms of address for degrading the addressee when they are used in a marked way, for instance, when the form chosen is too intimate in a certain context. This is reminiscent of studies on the use of baby talk in nursing homes for the aged. One typical feature of this secondary baby talk is the use of endearments. Sachweh (1998) finds that it is mainly used with very dependent women who are either liked very well or very little. Marked usage of terms of address can also be found in service encounters. Wolfson and Manes (1980) show how a non-reciprocal shift to endearments on part of the sales clerk is typically prompted by something in the interaction which shows the customer to be less competent. They argue that this usage mirrors the non-reciprocal usage of endearments in the parent-child dyad, implying that the speakers are not equal.[33]

However, Marjorie Goodwin (1990) shows how a semantically neutral term of address can display disrespect in a specific interactional context. The direct address "man" in the talk of young black boys obtains affective valence from the way in which it is embedded within this context. If speaker and recipient are oriented toward each

other in an asymmetrical fashion, with the speaker suggesting that he can tell the recipient what to do, "man" serves as an addressee intensifier and "can become coloured by the disrespect visible in the participant structure of the talk that encompasses it" (M. Goodwin 1990:88). Goodwin's data also contains terms of endearment used to display disrespect towards the interlocutor in confrontational situations:

Goodwin_1990:150

```
    Bea   I'm just askin' you how you know.
→   Ruby  and I'm just tellin' you honey.
```

These examples show that the concept of markedness is not sufficient to account for affiliating and disaffiliating usage of direct address. Certainly, prosody plays an important role in signalling whether the term "honey" or a first name has an endearing, neutral, or deprecating function. Re-consider SC_13.1 BREAK-UP-RULE presented above:

SC_13.1 BREAK-UP-RULE

```
    8    M    <just when exactly,>
              do you think you're going to be getting out of this
              hostage [situation?]
→   9    Ch   [Mira:nda?]
    10   M    what?
              am I wrong?
```

The free-floating "Mira:nda?" in turn 9 compares to Spitz' (2005) "blame-implicative address" found in mother-daughter interaction. The drawn out pronunciation of the vowel combined with the raised intonation pattern here clearly indicate that Charlotte is reproving Miranda for what she has just said. This interpretation is confirmed by the following utterance, in which Miranda orients to this by questioning Charlotte's rebuke: "what? am I wrong?"

In my data, there are hardly any instances of clearly prosodically marked terms of address. However, I found one sequence in which the addressee objects to repeated direct address by first name. There is no clear prosodic marking of a negative stance, but the frame is clearly argumentative. In an early morning phone call, Charlotte tries to discuss her decision to quit her job with her friend Miranda.

SC_55.1 CHOICE

```
     38        {Charlotte dialling a number; looking determined}
     39   M    {just had a shower; answering the phone}
               hello.
     40   Ch   you were so: judgemental at the coffee shop
               yesterday.
     41   M    (1.5) excuse me?
     42   Ch   you think I'm one of these WOmen.
     43   M    what?
               one of-
               what women?
     44   Ch   one of those women we hate.
               who just works until she gets married.
→    45   M    ((trembling voice)) Charlotte,
               .. it's eight fifteen.
     46   Ch   that's not a response.
     47   M    it's an eight fifteen in the morning response.
     48   Ch   {walking through the flat where interior
               decorators are at work; goes into an empty room
               and closes the door}
               the women's movement is supposed to be about
               choice.
               and if I choose to quit my jo:b,
               that is my choice.
     49   M    the women's movement? {camera on Charlotte}
               jesus christ.
               I haven't even had coffee yet.
     50   Ch   ((raised voice)) it's my life,
               and my choice.
→    51   M    okay Cha:rlotte.
               this isn't about me?
               this is your stuff?
     52   Ch   ((raised voice)) admit it.
               you're being very judgemental.
     53   M    ((raised voice)) I'm dripping all over my
               bathroom,
               and you're calling me judgemental, {camera still
               on Charlotte gaping}
               and if you have a problem quitting your job,
               maybe you should take it up with your hu:sba:nd.
     54   Ch   ((raised voice)) see.
               there it is.
               you:r husband.
               ((shouting)) there's nothing WRONG with having a
               husband.
→    55   M    ((raised voice)) Charlotte.
               I'm hanging up.
     56   Ch   .hhhhh
               ((raised voice)) don't you dare hang up and and
               and and,
→              stop saying Charlotte like that. {camera on
               Miranda about to hang up}
               I .. am quitting my job,
```

```
to make my life better,
and do something worthwhile like .. have a baby,
and cure aids.
```

This exchange is very unusual insofar as there is no conventional telephone opening (cf. Schegloff 1968, 1979). In response to Miranda's greeting Charlotte immediately introduces her reason to call. Miranda perceives this as odd, which is borne out by turn 4, when after a fairly long pause she uses the open class repair initiator "excuse me?" to request that Charlotte retrace the preceding turn. This disturbance of the interaction order paves the way for aggravation. In the ensuing exchange, Miranda addresses Charlotte by her first name three times: first, in turn 8, when she refuses to react to Charlotte's accusation by giving an account: ".. it's eight fifteen."; the trembling voice clearly displaying her agitation; and second, in turn 14, again in the context of refusing to accept Charlotte's topic. The "okay" signals a change in tactics rather than agreement. The third occurrence of the first name address, in turn 18, then precedes a threat, "I'm hanging up.", which structurally could function as a pre-closing. All three occurrences concur with disaffiliating acts and may be interpreted as politic behaviour, in which case they would serve to activate a dual alignment, simultaneously contextualising solidarity and conflict.

Charlotte's reaction in turn 19 undermines this interpretation. Her prohibition "stop saying Charlotte like that" clearly reveals that she perceives Miranda's use of her first name as disturbing, although the ambiguous modification "like that" indicates that she is unsure of the exact nature of offence: saying "Charlotte" in that particular way or saying it in the particular state Miranda is in. This may be due to the fact that familiar terms of address in this community of practice are ritualised resources for reaffirming the friendship relation in the face of momentary inequality. As Charlotte is frequently addressed by her first name in sequences in which she is put down vis-à-vis the other women, especially in knowledge display situations, the familiar term of address can flip flop and be interpreted to signal humiliation. In this situation, in which Charlotte is accusing Miranda, she cannot afford being put down and opposes the signal.

This example reveals the multivalence of direct address. One and the same term can be perceived as affiliating and as disaffiliating, depending on the local context and the goals of the interactants. However, since this is the only clear example of direct address

aggravating disagreement, I argue that in the community of practice under analysis these linguistic entities by and large function to (re)affiliate.

4.3.7 Summary

In the preceding sections, I have investigated the use of familiar terms of address amongst the four friends in *SATC.* As prior research on terms of address has not provided a unified functional analysis, I have drawn from various approaches and studies. There is general agreement that terms of address have a relationship-maintenance function, and my analyses show how they play a part in the discursive negotiation of the friendship between the four women friends.

A survey of local contexts in which first names and endearments are used in the *SATC* corpus yielded five categories: 1) access rituals, 2) apologies, 3) orders/requests, 4) comfort/support, and 5) knowledge displays. All of these local contexts are characterised by a temporary suspension of some fundamental component of friendship relations, in particular proximity, similarity and equality, along with an imbalance of the tensions autonomy versus connection, openness versus closedness, and novelty versus predictability. Using first name address and endearments in these contexts functions to assuage disequilibrium, thereby reaffirming the friendship relation at the macro-level of social organisation.

The interpersonal uses of direct address found in my data partially compare to the functional categories established in McCarthy and O'Keeffe's (2003) broad-brush corpus study. Their relational category includes – amongst various not clearly specified sub-types – direct address with greetings and leave-takings, a pattern confirmed in my fictional community of practice. Their second interpersonal category, mitigators, subsumes all forms of direct address redressing face-threats:

> The class of mitigators includes vocatives occurring in any context where there is a potential threat to positive or negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987); i.e. any challenge or adversative utterance, or any potentially sensitive or offending context, or any attempt to direct or coerce the recipient via imperatives or requests that might restrict the

> recipient in terms of action or behaviour. (McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003: 164)

According to McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003), direct address in the local context of apologies, orders/requests, comfort/support and knowledge displays can thus be categorised as mitigators. However, as I have argued above (cf. section 3.6.2.2.4) close friends do not orient so much towards the public social value entailed in Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of face, but towards more private goods such as affection. More useful is Watt's (1989, 2003) concept of politic behaviour. This behaviour is geared towards attaining a state of equilibrium, an appropriate balance between the antagonistic tensions inherent in friendship relations. My analyses demonstrate that familiar terms of address can be considered politic behaviour. They accomplish a dual alignment in the face of an imbalance caused by one interlocutor's leave taking, authority, well being or remedial work. This dual alignment also entails a dual contextualisation of for example solidarity and conflict or expertise and equality.

McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2003) distinguish a third function of direct address on the interpersonal plane, which they label badinage. This covers all forms of direct address in non-serious contexts, which function to support "the camaraderie and intimacy desired of such occasions" (McCarthy and O'Keeffe 2003: 163). This is supported by Wolfson and Manes (1980), who find that terms of address frequently occur in speech acts typical of intimates such as teasing, as well as by Straehle (1993) who demonstrates that first names and endearments receive extra stress in teasing sequences. Surprisingly, my data provides hardly any clear examples of first names or endearments in teasing sequences or other non-serious contexts. Consider the following excerpt:

SC_17.1 GRIEF TALKING

```
     7    C   see that's the thing about New York.
              you're always more popular when you're not around.
     8    S   Carrie,
              I have to look fabulous.
              EVeryone is going to be there.
→    9    C   reminder honey,
              this is a funeral,
              .. not forty-nine Bond Street.
→    10   S   that's your grief talking honey.
              get your purse.
              lets go.
```

The reciprocal use of "honey" in turns 9 and 10 here can be seen to contextualise the exchange as humorous banter rather than redressing a knowledge display on the part of Carrie and an oppositional turn on the part of Samantha. However, there is no other indication such as a smile or laughter that indicates non-seriousness. Other examples of badinage in the corpus also seem to predominantly serve the enjoyment of the audience in front of the screen rather than function at the level of character interaction. In my discussion of the use of questions in the following sections, I will present some examples of humorous exchanges that work at both levels of screen-to-face discourse. Direct address in non-serious contexts certainly deserves attention in future research, using naturally occurring rather than scripted sitcom dialogue (cf. Norrick and Bubel 2005).

Section 4.3.4.1 shows that the usage of familiar terms of address varies from member to member in the community of practice under analysis. Consequently, the usage of direct address is always also a matter of individual discourse styles. Furthermore, the fact that Charlotte is the one who receives most addresses, especially in knowledge display sequences, confirms that she is a more marginal member and has less symbolic capital. In the sense of Lave and Wenger (1991), Charlotte is a novice in this community. This is borne out by the fact that during the course of the series she is adopting some of the other women's dating behaviour, i.e. she is learning.

I have also shown that direct address like any other linguistic pattern is multivalent. First names and terms of endearments can be perceived as affiliating or disaffiliating, depending on the local context and the interactants' objectives. Hence, direct address can be considered a means of doing friendship amongst the four women in *SATC* by serving both sides of the dialectic process of appropriately balancing association and dissociation.

Questions are never indiscreet.
Answers sometimes are.
(Mrs. Cheveley in An ideal husband,
Oscar Wilde)

4.4 "What's wrong?" – Doing friendship with questions (and responses)

4.4.1 Why questions?

The preceding section focused on familiar terms of address as a resource for doing friendship in sequences, in which the friendship relation between the women is threatened or in need of re-negotiation. From a syntactic point of view, terms of address like "sweetie" or "Samantha" are resources at the phrase level. In this section, I will examine a key resource for doing friendship at the clause level: the use of questions. Questions are of particular interest for alignment processes, firstly because they can initiate affiliative sequences such as intimacy pursuits and secondly, because responses (to questions) are a clear indicator of how participants align with each other (cf. Nofsinger 1991). Since it is only their placement in the sequence, in particular the responses they enable, that renders them tools for alignments and hence for the negotiation of friendship relations at the macro-level, I will again discuss extended stretches of talk, which harbour the linguistic patterns under analysis. Since "question answer sequences are viewed as an essential point of linguistic interaction" (Baumert 1977: 85), they constitute a junction at which several linguistic subdisciplines meet. One of the most controversial discussions of question usage ensued from Robin Lakoff's

(1975) seminal paper *Language and Woman's Place,* rendering it a core topic of language and gender research.

Robin Lakoff's (1975) claim that women use more tag questions and more question intonation in declarative contexts spawned a series of studies, which established that women generally use more questions than men, and that this reflected women's conversational insecurity and powerlessness (e.g. Brouwer et al. 1979; Fishman 1978, 1980, 1983; DeFrancisco 1991). Fishman (1978, 1983) and De Francisco (1991) moreover demonstrate that, in heterosexual couples, women worked harder to maintain interaction. In Fishman's terms (1983: 99) women are the "shitworkers of routine interaction," and questions are one resource for doing this work.

Within the subculture or difference approach (Maltz and Borker 1982; Tannen 1990), the imbalance in the number of questions was considered to reflect different communicative strategies acquired by girls and boys as part of their sex-specific socialization. Tannen (1984) lists questions as one feature of high-involvement style, but cautions against simplification. She illustrates the phenomenon of "pragmatic homonymy" with the help of an excerpt in which one speaker uses a barrage of personal questions. These questions can be interpreted as an expression of interest, but they can also be perceived as impatient and intrusive. Similarly, "the machine-gun question" may signal familiarity and casualness, but may also be interpreted as pushy (Tannen 1984:64).

Consequently, more recent scholars of language and gender like Greenwood and Freed (1992: 198) warn: "Considering questions as a single syntactic and pragmatic form masks important information about the complexity of question use in conversation." As with all linguistic entities, the context in which they occur is crucial. Studies which take context into account have shown that questions can in fact be powerful forms in institutional settings (amongst others Cameron et al. 1989; Harris 1984; Mishler 1975; Todd 1983; West 1984) and that the gender imbalance in questioning behaviour is inverted in public and formal contexts. Janet Holmes (1995: 40) concludes that men ask more questions "in status-enhancing contexts where talk is valued."

Aside from distinguishing different contexts, researchers have also differentiated between various types of questions, for example supportive, critical and antagonistic

questions (J. Holmes 1995). In Janet Holmes' (1995) study, gender differences mainly appeared with respect to antagonistic questions, which men use twice as much. She concludes that women are more attentive to the positive face needs of their interlocutors (J. Holmes 1995: 47). Likewise, researchers distinguish different types of tag questions: confirmation-seeking, facilitative, softening, and challenging (cf. Cameron et al. 1989; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; J. Holmes 1984, 1995). As for the gender-related usage of these forms, the general tendency is that women use more facilitative tags, while men use more confirmation-seeking tags. However, tag questions – like any other linguistic form – can simultaneously have diverse functions in a single utterance (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003), i.e. in Tannen's (1993) terms they can be "pragmatically polysemous."[34]

Their multivalence renders questions an important tool in the construction and negotiation of interpersonal relations. Goody (1978: 39) sees questions as "speech acts which place two people in direct, immediate interaction" and as carrying "messages about relationships – about relative status, assertions of status and challenges to status." Likewise, Athanasiadou (1991: 107) states: "The use of the different modes of questioning indicates the relationship that exists between the questioner and the respondent." In social constructionist terms, questions not only carry or indicate relationships but manage an active doing of relationship. In this framework, Mishler (1975) considers questioning as one language resource through which social reality is constructed, more specifically, in his data, authority relationships:

> Through the act of questioning one speaker defines the way in which the other is to continue with the conversation and thus defines their relationship to each other along a dimension of power and authority. (Mishler 1975: 105)

Likewise, Coates (1996a: 201) claims that questions are one of the principal means by which connection and separateness are negotiated, i.e. one of the tensions inherent in close friendships. Her investigation of all-female talk, indeed, reveals how speakers engineer friendship with the help of questions. Hornstein (1985) finds that in telephone conversations, friends use more questions than strangers; however, she does not give

any detailed analyses of the type of questions asked and their sequential context. In the following sections, I will supply such detailed analyses of question-response sequences from my corpus, which support but also go beyond Coates' (1996a) findings, in that they reveal how questions engineer closeness through asking for and eliciting intimate information. Prior to that, I will more clearly define the object of research and briefly discuss the legitimacy of questions as a research object, especially in the analysis of conversation.

4.4.2 How to define and study questions?

always the beautiful answer
who asks a more beautiful question
(e.e. cummings)

Bolinger (1957: 1) finds that "the Q(uestion) is an entity that is often assumed but seldom defined." He concludes that questions have a non-linguistic rather than a linguistic basis, an attitude or behaviour pattern, which is as difficult to grasp as anxiety or embarrassment. Nevertheless, questions have been widely described and discussed in various interrelated areas of linguistics. In syntax, questions constitute an utterance category associated with interrogative form, i.e. typically marked by subject-verb inversion, initial wh-words, or rising intonation.[35] Biber et al. (2002: 249) list the following basic uses of questions: eliciting lacking information, finding out whether a proposition is true or false, and asking which of several alternatives applies.

This is in fact a semantic classification of questions based on the set of (logically possible) answers (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002). The first use described by Biber et al. (2002) is typically realised by wh-questions such as "Who stole the shoes?" These are also labelled variable questions (Huddleston and Pullum 2002). Their set of answers is indefinite, i.e. there is no limit to the number of different possible values that can substitute for the interrogative word "who"(Huddleston and Pullum 2002). The second use corresponds to the semantic category of yes/no-questions, which take as an answer either of a pair of polar opposites, positive and negative, for example "Did Nicole steal the shoes?" These are also labelled "polar questions" (Hudson 1975). Finally, asking which of several alternatives applies can be accomplished by alternative questions,

which have as answers sets of alternatives given in the questions themselves, for instance “Did Bettina steal the shoes or Susan?”

At the pragmatic level, this one-to-one relationship between form and function does not hold. Questions can receive other than logical answers, for example an addressee may respond to the polar question “Did Nicole steal the shoes?” with “I’m not sure,” which is neither positive nor negative and avoids giving an answer (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 866). In fact, Kearsley’s (1976: 372) research on question-asking in psychotherapy sessions and in fictional dialogue led him to conclude that questions rarely receive logical answers: “in general, answers to questions are not usually ‘straightforward’ in the sense that they directly answer the question [...] and usually the question asker must infer the answer indirectly form the response.” This also seems to hold for everyday, naturally occurring conversation.

As for characteristic uses of questions from a pragmatic point of view, they typically have the illocutionary force of inquiries, but they are also frequently used as directives or commissives and as such convey requests, advice, invitations, and offers (Searle 1976). Due to “the fact that recipients can be counted on to infer the purpose-for-asking,” information questions can be used as indirect speech acts (Pomerantz 1988: 365). McHoul (1987: 455) distinguishes straightforward elicitations of information (Q-types) from what he labels “implied ‘negatives’” (N-types) such as complaints, objections, or warnings. In their pragmatic description of questions, Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 862) therefore differentiate primary and secondary illocutionary force of questions. Thus, indirect speech acts such as “Do you know what time it is?”, which perform two illocutionary acts simultaneously, can be considered to have the primary force of a directive and the secondary force of an inquiry. Likewise the utterance “Did you water the plants this morning?” has the primary force of an inquiry and possibly the secondary force of a complaint.

I define any utterance as a question which has inquiry either as a primary or secondary force. This is crucial to my investigation, because inquiry force at either level can have implications for the engineering of the interlocutors’ relationship. If, for example, the response to the question “Do you know what time it is?” is “Around midnight,” the indirect form of the request functions to save face (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987). However, the interrogative form may also prompt answers appropriate

to polar questions such as a plain "yes." This can be considered an act of teasing, negotiating a more intimate and casual relationship than giving the time does. Hence, utterances such as these can only be disambiguated by their sequential context. In order to decide on the actual function of a question in my corpus, I will therefore pay close attention to the responses elicited by the relevant questions.[36] This procedure is keeping with Heritage and Roth (1995), who code questions for an analysis of news interviews by starting out with a grammatical nucleus and taking into account pragmatic extensions as well as turn-constructional variations.

Such pragmatic-sequential definitions allow for a wider scope, including utterances which do not take interrogative form. Sacks (1992a: 288) calls attention to the fact that "an enormous number of observable questions have neither 'question intonation' nor the grammatical form of questions, and yet seem to be recognized as questions." In his data, typically, the "first question" is marked as such, but all items which follow its response are not marked and inspected for whether they are "second questions." The sequential placement can thus mark an utterance as question. Likewise, the prosody of an utterance can indicate that an otherwise declarative structure has question force, for instance, "This is Sonja's new car?" Sadock (1971) refers to this phenomenon as "queclaratives," and Kearsley (1976) labels these utterances "intonated declaratives."[37] A third marker of question force is the content of the statement. Heritage and Roth (1995) describe these as B-event statements, "declarative utterances in which the speaker formulates some matter as one to which the recipient has primary access," i.e. which constitute a B-event in Labov and Fanshel's (1977) terms. Aside from declarative questions, the pragmatic-sequential definition also allows for an inclusion of imperative utterances, which function to elicit responses from the addressee such as "Tell me" (cf. Heritage and Roth 1995).

Within the pragmatic framework, questions are also categorised according to completeness or incompleteness of proposition: yes/no questions and alternative questions are complete propositions, whereas wh-questions are incomplete and only the answer can provide the missing element (Searle 1969). This distinction corresponds to Robinson and Rackstraw's (1972) categorisation of open and closed questions.[38] From a sequential point of view, however, both categories can be considered open or incomplete, as both require responses – "verbal or non-verbal reactions" (Baumert

1977: 86). Stenström (1988), following Sacks, describes question and response sequences as an interactive Q-R system, which inherently involves at least two speakers. In this system, the question is an "incomplete statement" (Sacks 1992a: 687) which demands a response or makes a response conditionally relevant (Schegloff 1968). Labov and Fanshel (1977: 63ff), who use the more general label "requests" for utterances I define as questions, also find that these have a "compelling character."[39] They describe sequencing rules, which result in responses being tightly constrained. In their data, the entities that I label "questions" are used to request action, information, confirmation, agreement, evaluation, interpretation, and sympathy. According to them, an unaccounted refusal to supply either of these may lead to a break in social relations, i.e. a structural disalignment through refusing a response impacts on the relationship at the macro-level of social organisation. Consequently, the conditional relevance of a response following a question is mirrored by a social obligation. In Goody's (1978:23) terms: "questioning binds two people in immediate reciprocity."

Hence, the use of questions in conversation provides another window on the construction of social relations in communities of practice. This accounts for the fact that scholars working in the fields of sociolinguistics and CA have explored patterns of usage despite methodological qualms as expressed by Schegloff (1984).[40] He argues that questions are "commonsense, not technical categories" (p. 30) and that "whatever defines the class 'questions' as a linguistic form will not do for questions as conversational objects, or interactional objects, or social actions" (p. 49). For other scholars, however, the fact that questions are commonsense categories, i.e. have "psychological reality for speakers and hearers" (Freed 1994: 623), combined with their various structural properties renders them a concrete starting point.[41]

I follow Freed (1994) and Selting (1992) in considering questions a rewarding, linguistic place to start. By including utterances which, from a pragmatic point of view, have "question" either as their primary or secondary force, I pay heed to Schegloff's (1984: 34) warning that "a question form can be used for actions other than questioning, and questioning can be accomplished by linguistic forms other than questions." All utterances classified as questions will then be investigated in their sequential organisation, focusing on what participants make of them. My analyses will show that Schegloff's (1984: 34) statement, "not only is the path from linguistic questions to

interactional ones not a straight line, but not much may lie at its end," does not hold true, and that such (empirically) ambiguous entities – if treated with prudence and considered in their sequential environment – provide valuable insights into the conversationalists' negotiation of their relationship.[42]

As for the sequential environment of questions, opinions differ as to whether questioning exchanges consist of two or three parts. Robinson and Rackstraw (1972: 6), in a study of children answering questions, restrict their focus to two-part sequences, although they are aware of the fact that "questions and answers frequently occur in continuing dialogues." Halliday and Hasan (1976:206) consider the question-response-sequence a "standard pattern in language," which consists of two cohesively related consecutive utterances, a question and a direct or indirect response. Similarly, Goffman (1976: 257) states:

> In questions and answers we have one example, perhaps the canonical one, of what Harvey Sacks has called a 'first pair part' and a 'second pair part,' that is, a couplet, a minimal dialogic unit, a round two utterances long, each utterance of the same 'type,' each spoken by a different person, one utterance temporally following directly on the other; in sum an example of an 'adjacency pair.'

Although question-response-exchanges are generally treated as two-part units within the CA framework (e.g. Heritage 2003; Merritt 1976; Sacks 1972b, 1992a, 1992b), there are exceptions. Heritage (1984a: 336) for example shows that information questioning has a "prototypical Q-A-*oh* structure" with the third part, "oh," indicating "information received." Aside from the change of state marker, the third position receipt can also take the form of a newsmark in the sense of Jefferson (1981), for instance "did she?", or of an assessment such as "good." All of these third-turn response actions align the questioner with the answerer as recipient of the reported information (cf. Heritage 1985). Goffman (1976: 272) also notes:

> a response will on occasion leave matters in a ritually unsatisfactory state, and a turn by the initial speaker will be required, encouraged, or at least allowed, resulting in a three-part interchange.

Based on studies of classroom interaction, which typically consists of initiation-response-feedback sequences, the Birmingham school of discourse analysis developed their theory of conversation as made up of three-part exchanges (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975).[43] Labov and Fanshel's (1977: 61) research into therapeutic discourse also led to a conception of the "request exchange format" as three-part structure. Stenström (1984, 1988) finds three-part structures not only in institutional settings but also in genuine everyday conversation.[44] She therefore minimally describes question-response sequences as "Q R (F), with the F move as an optional constituent" (1984: 2).

In my analyses, I will neither restrict myself to two nor three utterances, but investigate the sequential environment that leads up to a question as well as the following utterances controlled by the trajectory of the question turn, allowing conclusions on how participants formulate and interpret question utterances, and how the four women in *SATC* use them to construct and maintain their friendship relation (cf. also Allwin 1991).

4.4.3 Who uses questions when and to what ends?

> *Questioning is not the mode of conversation among gentlemen. (Samuel Johnson)*

Section 4.4.1 gave an overview of the literature on questions with respect to gender, focusing on how questions are used to do control and conversational maintenance. In this section, I will concentrate on more general categorisations of question functions and their overall achievement in the discourse of specific social entities. Hymes (1974: 110) cautions that each speech community develops its own norms for interrogative behaviour, and the same holds for communities of practice. Each community of practice uses certain question types to achieve specific ends, which makes questions one of the practices that constitute these communities. A cursory inspection of my corpus revealed

that question occurrences accumulate in specific local contexts, which can be considered realisations of friendship processes in and through talk.

Another factor impacting on questioning behaviour is the type of speech event. This has been demonstrated in a study by Greenwood and Freed, who elicited conversations between same-sex friend dyads in three different experimental settings (Greenwood and Freed 1992; Freed 1994; Freed and Greenwood 1996). On the basis of these conversations they developed a useful tool for the description of questions: a continuum of sixteen question functions, ranging from purely information-seeking questions over meta-communicative questions and relational questions to questions expressing style, which convey rather than elicit information (cf. Figure 6).

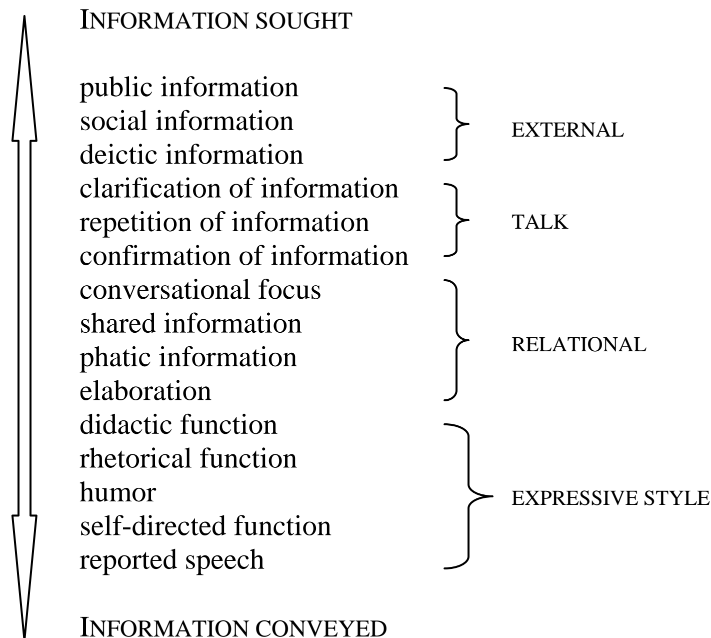

Figure 6: Question functions (adapted from Freed 1994: 626)

Their analyses show that the number and function of questions varied according to the type of speech event. The smallest proportion of questions occurred in a setting in which the participants were asked to discuss a specific topic, while experimental settings in which the dyads were free to talk about whatever they wished yielded the highest question scores. The prevalent question functions also varied. For example, in the first spontaneous section, when participants talked while waiting for the researchers to start properly, there was a large number of so-called "talk" and "external questions."

Talk questions serve to confirm or clarify utterances of the other speaker, for instance, “What did you say?”, whereas external questions ask for new information, for example, “Which movie did you see last night?” This question behaviour meets the requirements of the setting; the speakers have just started talking and are acclimatising to the situation (Freed and Greenwood 1996: 18). Freed and Greenwood do not comment on the relatively high proportion of external questions, but this finding accords with Athanasiadou’s (1991) research on question behaviour in friendship dyads. She accounts for the high proportion of information questions at the beginning of friends’ conversations with the friends’ the need to catch up on each other’s lives.

Greenwood and Freed (1992) also investigate whether the type of relation between the interlocutors affects questioning, by correlating the length of time speakers have been friends with the number of questions asked. The fact that there is no simple correspondence highlights the limitations of a quantitative approach; presumably neither the number of years nor the number of questions allow any conclusions about the interlocutors’ friendship and questioning patterns. Though Heritage and Roth (1995: 52) claim that “any effort to associate an interactional practice with some social category or outcome will require quantitative evidence,” this did not prove useful for the analysis of friendship in my data. While a cursory quantitative analysis yielded some interesting hypotheses in the investigation of address terms above, this approach did not suggest any consistent patterns with respect to questions. I will thus only present qualitative analyses of the four women’s questioning behaviour.

In the process of analysing how the fictional community of practice accomplishes friendship with the help of questions, I used Freed and Greenwood’s taxonomy of question functions as a starting point. However, the question functions of the two corpora of friends’ talk – Freed and Greenwood’s elicited and my constructed conversations – do not fully match. Some of Freed and Greenwood’s functions do not occur in my data, and some of the uses questions are put to in my data are not included in their taxonomy. Freed (1994: 633) herself notes: “certain types of questions which are common in other settings did not occur in these data.” Presumably, my fictional interlocutors engage in different speech events.[45]

Another disadvantage of Freed and Greenwood’s taxonomy is its focus on the information-eliciting/information-giving continuum, which does not allow for claims

about the interpersonal function of questions. It is certainly too simplistic to deduce that questions which Freed and Greenwood categorise as relational questions are relevant for the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relations. In fact, it seems that other question categories are much more significant: social information questions, for example, play a crucial part, since one of the key processes in friendship relations is the exchange of intimate details of each other's lives as well as the exchange of troublesome experiences. Expressive style questions, which pertain to unavailable or already known information, are also relevant as they can be used to avoid confrontation and to create shared amusement (cf. Coates 1996a).

Another problem with Freed and Greenwood's taxonomy is that some questions defy categorisation altogether, achieving several goals at once. The question "storing up for winter?" in the following sequence, for example, requests the information "why are you eating so much?", thereby emphasising the fact that Carrie eats a lot – clearly a face-threatening act in an overly weight-conscious society (cf. Guendouzi 2004). Moreover, by juxtaposing a human being and animal-specific behaviour, it creates humorous incongruity. Hence, in Freed and Greenwood's framework, this could be classified as social information and as a humour question.

```
SC_28.4 STORING UP FOR WINTER
    1   C   {to the waitress}
            I'm going to have,
            uh Spanish omelette,
            hash browns,
            some more coffee,
            and orange juice.
            .. oh and,
            uh could I have some rice pudding for later?
            thanks.
 →  2   S   ... storing up for winter?
    3   C   no.
            I'm starving.
            Patrick and I-
            all last night.
            and I'm just-
```

Considering the sequential environment, the elliptic clause "storing up for winter?" can be categorised as a social information question, eliciting the facts Carrie gives in the subsequent turn. Yet, the jocular tone of the question also has an impact on the relationship. The humorous comparison of Carrie with a hibernating animal sets up a

teasing frame, and although it lasts for only one individual utterance, this small frame is incorporated in and constructs a larger one (cf. Straehle 1993; Tannen 1986), in this case one of friendly talk. By straightforwardly supplying the answer together with an explanation, Carrie signals that she does not object to Samantha's question, thereby, in Tannen's (1986) terms, sending a "metamessage of rapport."

The problem of multiple functions occurs with any categorisation of question usage. Goody (1978), for example, distinguishes four main performative modes of questioning: 1) information-seeking questions, 2) rhetorical questions, 3) control questions, and 4) deference questions. These are arranged in a circle with some more question types located in between, for example the joking-challenge situated between the rhetorical and the deference mode. Ilie (1994, 1999) identifies questioning strategies based on what kind of response the questions elicit, also yielding four major groups: 1) answer eliciting questions, which require a verbalized answer, 2) information eliciting questions, which require new information though not necessarily verbalized, 3) action eliciting questions, which require the addressee to do something, and 4) mental response eliciting questions, which require the addressee to quietly acknowledge and preferably agree with the questioner's message. Likewise, Kearsley (1976) distinguishes four categories, which correspond to Freed and Greenwood's superfunctions: 1) epistemic questions, which elicit information and evaluations, 2) echoic questions, which request the repetition of an utterance or the confirmation that an utterance has been correctly interpreted,[46] 3) social control questions, which are used to control the discourse and maintain conversation, and 4) expressive questions, which convey the attitude of the questioner. Ilie (1999) and Kearsley (1976) explicitly state that categories can overlap and that one utterance can have several effects at the same time. In Kearsley's words, "functional categories are not exclusive of each other. Thus while some questions are intended to serve only one purpose, many have multiple intents." (1976: 363)

As the analysis of SC_28.4 STORING UP FOR WINTER has shown, the multivalence of questions even holds, if one takes into consideration the recipient's reactions rather than only the speaker's intentions. This renders such categories futile in my endeavour to elucidate how questions function in the negotiation of friendship. Although the question "storing up for winter?" cannot be pigeonholed with respect to established functional categories, it can quite clearly be shown to do work in the

construction of interpersonal relations, by testing and providing rapport and finding out intimate details about the interlocutor. In the following section, I will therefore not simply apply existing functional categories to my data, but rather present analyses of the typical local contexts, in which question occurrences accumulate.

4.4.4 How is friendship done with questions in *Sex and the City*?

My analyses yielded four major question-centred activities, which can be considered to contribute to the negotiation of friendship ties in the fictional community of practice:

i) Catching up on friends' lives
ii) Interchanging opinions
iii) Evoking a shared background
iv) Accomplishing humour and teasing

Obviously, there are other activities in which questions play a central role and which are crucial for the negotiation of interpersonal relationships, for example, so-called social invitation questions (Freed 1994). These questions are indirect speech acts with the force of a commissive (Searle 1976), interpreted as invitations or offers. However, as the following example demonstrates, they do not take centre-stage in my data and are regularly pushed into the background by other issues.

```
SC_26.1 DEVILLED EGGS
    12  M   he's going through a very stressful time,
            waiting to make partner in his firm.
            when that finally works out,
            I think maybe,
            he'll lighten up a bit.
    13  C   or maybe,
            you should just face the fact that you're attracted
            to angry guys.
 →  14  Ch  devilled eggs?
    15  M   wait a second.
            hold the eggs.
            what about Skipper?
            he never got angry.
```

In this excerpt, the women are discussing Miranda's new lover and her pattern in choosing men. Charlotte's elliptical question "devilled eggs?" in turn 14 is interpreted

as an offer, but since this offer interrupts the discussion of Miranda's relationship patterns she declines: "wait a second. hold the eggs." (turn 15). While the first move in this turn, "wait a second." may also refer back to Carrie's claim about Miranda's preference in men, the second move "hold the eggs." is clearly directed at Charlotte, partially repeating the noun phrase that Charlotte used with a rising intonation contour. Due to their subordinate role in the conversations under analysis, I will not further discuss these kinds of questions, nor will I discuss other interrogative structures which can be considered conventional politeness formulae (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987). Instead, I will focus on the four question-centred activities listed above and show how they function in the negotiation of friendship ties.

i) Catching up on friends' lives

In meeting again after separation, acquaintances ask after our outward life, friends ask after our inner life. (Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach)

As I have described in the chapter on friendship (cf. section 2.2), one of the important components of friendship is knowledge of what is happening in the other's life based on a reciprocal willingness "to make one's self available to the other" (Reohr 1991: 36). One way of achieving this state of knowledge is to ask questions which elicit self-presentational information (cf. Berger and Bradac 1982; Svennevig 1999). Catching up on each other's lives is typically done through what Freed and Greenwood label "social information questions." These questions ask for "new private domain information of a factual and specific nature" (Freed 1994: 626). Public information questions, on the other hand, "where information is the only goal of the question" (Coates 1996a: 177) are rare in the conversations of female friends – in Coates' naturally occurring conversations as well as in my constructed ones.

Coates (1996a) finds a difference between the talk of younger and older women with respect to information-seeking questions. Her data shows that these questions are much more important in the talk of younger women, who exchange information about boys and adolescent problems in general. Interestingly, public information questions in my

data are mostly asked by Charlotte, which once more is an indication of her status as a novice in the community of practice. The following excerpt is a case in point.

SC_26.2 FUCK BUDDY

```
    4    Ch   .. excuse me.
              .. fuck buddy?
→             .. what .. is a fuck buddy?
    5    M    hhhh
    6    S    oh come ON.
    7         (1.0){getting up for next step in their workout}
    8    C    a fuck buddy is a guy you probably dated once or
              twice,
              and it didn't really go anywhere?
              but the sex is so great,
              you sort of .. keep him on call.
    9    S    uh
              he's like dial-a-dick.
    10   Ch   you- you mean,
              you just .. CALL this guy up,
              when you are,
              you know,
              °horny°?
```

While public information questions mainly function referentially, social information questions always have implications for the relationship, because they invite addressees to talk about themselves. Still, it is not only the telling that matters, but also the questioning itself and the being told. In casual conversation, asking intimate questions already counts as a bid for a close relationship, and the revelation of private information shows that the answerer aligns with the questioner and thus accepts the bid.[47] At the same time, what is being told forms the basis for future interactions, a shared background. Social information questions consequently initiate affiliative sequences and proactively accomplish affiliation, as described above in the section on alignment practices (4.2.4). Hence, Argyle (1994: 70) lists personal questions as one of the verbal moves, which are important in developing friendship relations. According to him, their significance lies in their potential to elicit self-disclosure. We have already seen an example of this in excerpt SC_17.7 PANIC ATTACK (cf. section 4.3.4.2), where Carrie's question "what's wrong?" leads to Miranda disclosing her fear of dying alone. While in this troublesome situation, self-disclosure can be anticipated, it may also occur unexpectedly prompted by social information questions which aim at less intimate information. Consider the following excerpt, where Miranda meets a man while she is

jogging with Charlotte and Carrie. When he has left, Charlotte gives a positive evaluation and inquires about him.

```
SC_16.2 FAKE IT
   10  Ch  cute.
→          who was that?
→  11  M   an ophthalmologist I once faked orgasms with.
   12  C   okay,
           we're officially stopping.
   13      (4.5) {Miranda measures her pulse, Carrie takes out
           her cigarettes, Charlotte does some stretching
           across the path from her friends; voiceover Carrie:
           the idea that Miranda would fake anything stopped me
           cold.}
   14  M   I only slept with him twice.
           the first time I faked it,
           because it was never going to happen,
           and the second time,
           I HAD to fake it,
           because I'd faked it the first time.
```

Charlotte's question (turn 10) elicits a description in the format of a postmodified occupational title: "an ophthalmologist I once faked orgasms with." The postmodification not only specifies what kind of ophthalmologist, but contains a self-disclosure, which concerns a very intimate detail of Miranda's life, namely that she fakes orgasms. The parenthetical presentation of this detail accords it a minor significance, but Carrie reacts to this self-disclosure by announcing a breather, and after measuring her pulse Miranda reveals how the pretension came about. In sum, Charlotte's question initiates a co-constructed intimacy pursuit (Jefferson et al. 1987), consisting of a parenthetical impropriety, an orientation towards it and an extended intimate self-disclosure. Hence, this sequence establishes affiliation and thereby simultaneously signals and constitutes friendship at the macro-level of social organisation.

Social information questions and self-disclosure typically lead into troubles talk (cf. Jefferson 1980, 1988; Jefferson and Lee 1981), another significant activity in talk between friends (cf. section 2.3). The trouble is not necessarily of such intimate nature as in the preceding excerpt or as emotionally disturbing as the fear of dying alone disclosed in SC_17.7 PANIC ATTACK. Consider the following excerpt, in which the

question "what's wrong?" elicits the revelation of job-related trouble. The women are on holiday in the Hamptons and Samantha has received an upsetting letter.

SC_29.4 HAMPTONS HOEDOWN

```
    13  M   Samantha,
            that came for you.
    14  S   o:h
            (2.0) {opens letter}
            OH MY GOD.
            hh
→   15  M   what's wrong?
    16  S   it's for the Hamptons hoedown tomorrow night,
            and the event is being run by Nina G public relations.
            {Miranda takes the invitation and her eyes widen while
            looking at it}
            .. Nina G.
            I was up for that job.
            and now she's using my rolodex to put together the
            guest list.
```

Samantha's expletive, "OH MY GOD." in turn 14 is trouble-premonitory and prompts Miranda's inquiry "what's wrong?". In the subsequent turn, Samantha reveals the contents of the letter and gives some background information that accounts for her outcry. Her former assistant, who has stolen her rolodex, is organising an event that Samantha's PR agency had applied for. Samantha presumes that Nina is making use of the rolodex. This revelation counts as "a problematic departure from the course of ordinary events that warrants special treatment" (Jefferson 1980: 153). Still, the four friends manage this type of situation "in such a way that it need not interfere drastically with their familiar, everyday activities" (Jefferson 1980: 153), i.e. have resources at hand that allow for the appropriate treatment of such troubles. Appropriate reactions in the community of practice under discussion are the display of empathy or of trouble recipients' viewpoints.[48] In this case, Miranda takes the invitation and non-verbally affiliates with Samantha through her facial expression. Since the scene ends after turn 16, we do not learn what kind of verbal reaction follows; presumably, the women discuss the issue and agree to accompany Samantha to the event, since later on in the episode Samantha is seen at the Hoedown in the supportive company of her three friends. Self-disclosure or trouble announcement and exposition (cf. Jefferson 1988) typically lead to what I label "opinion interchanges," an activity discussed in detail below.

So far I have shown that social information questions function to elicit self-disclosure and initiate troubles talk sequences. This renders them a tool to test the interlocutor's willingness to make herself available. Furthermore, the responses these questions elicit provide the questioner with a deeper and more up-to-date knowledge of her interlocutor.

As I have noted above, social information questions frequently occur in the opening sections of friends' conversations. This can also be seen in constructed dialogue under analysis. In the subsequent excerpt, Samantha even pre-empts a greeting exchange to issue a social information question. The question-response sequence which ensues allows for a very efficient exchange of intimate details.

SC_23.4 NEW PLAN

```
    1   C   hello.
    2   S   I've been trying to call you.
→           were you at Big's?
    3   C   oh no,
            I was out shopping.
            my relationship is at a standstill,
            so instead I'm evolving my look.
            .. hey.
→           how did it go with Dominic?
    4   S   °I slept with him.°
    5   C   well,
            that wasn't part of the plan.
    6   S   it's part of the new plan.
            I wanted to remind him what he was missing.
            hu
            I can't beLIEVE I thought he was such a great lover.
            .. I'm better than him now.
    7   C   ((giggles))
    8   S   by:e
```

In turn 2, Samantha is trying to find out why she could not reach Carrie by phone. The polar question "were you at Big's?" includes a candidate answer, i.e. it provides the type of answer that would satisfy Samantha's purpose-for-asking (Pomerantz 1988: 360). Thereby Samantha displays her knowledge of Carrie's habits, evoking familiarity and engineering a close relationship. However, the question receives a negative answer and an account. The *oh*-preface (Heritage 1984a, 2002a) at the beginning of Carrie's turn marks that there is trouble with the presupposition of Samantha's question. Heritage (2002a: 209) shows that *oh*-prefacing is common in contexts where the answerer has "epistemic priority in the matter being assessed." In this case, Carrie

knows best where she has been.[49] Carrie then continues with an account for the fact that she was not at Big's, thus treating her negative response as a dispreferred (Pomerantz 1984), in spite of the intensifying *oh*-preface: "I was out shopping. my relationship is at a standstill, so instead I'm evolving my look." In Coates' (1996a) line of argument this can be considered as seizing the chance to talk about herself, but Carrie breaks off, pauses briefly and uses the attention signal "hey" to mark an upcoming topic change.

With the help of a social information question she then shifts to Samantha's life: "how did it go with Dominic?" Carrie is referring to an event that they had discussed when they last met, namely that Samantha was planning to meet an ex-boyfriend who seriously hurt her feelings. The question indicates that Carrie knows about Samantha's private life and elicits information that allows her to complete this knowledge. In turn 4, Samantha indeed reveals a very intimate detail: "°I slept with him.°" The quiet voice lends it an almost conspiratorial tone. The discourse marker "well" at the beginning of Carrie's next turn (5) shows that there is a discrepancy between her and Samantha's background assumptions (cf. Jucker 1993: 442). The utterance "that wasn't part of the plan." reveals Carrie's background assumption, which is indeed not compatible with what Samantha has just related. In turn 6, Samantha then accounts for this discrepancy by explaining that there is a new plan. She also reveals another very intimate detail, namely that she is a better lover than her ex-boyfriend. Carrie's giggling in turn 7 displays either relief at Samantha's outdoing Dominic or *schadenfreude* aimed at him. The fact that Samantha abruptly ends the conversation after this response invites the interpretation that her reason to call was to communicate how things went with her ex-boyfriend.

This sequence illustrates how two friends can quickly catch up with what is going on in each other's (intimate) lives with the help of social information questions: within the span of seven turns their knowledge of each other's love lives is brought up to date. Morrison (1997), who investigates telephone conversations between intimates, refers to the type of question Carrie asks in turn 3 ("how did it go with Dominic") as "tracking question." It reveals the speaker's knowledge of what the other party has been doing since their last contact and thus signal common ground. At the same time it can display concern, anxiety, curiosity and other personal interests. Tracking sequences are completed by a response and an acknowledgement of this response. The response

ideally provides the relevant information, catering for the questioner's interests. In the above example, Samantha reports having had sexual intercourse with Dominic. Acknowledgements typically provide an early assessment and request elaboration. In the example under discussion, Carrie's "well, that wasn't part of the plan" (turn 5) signals that she is puzzled and elicits an elaboration.

Morrison's (1997) research and the example above clearly demonstrate how catching up sequences create mutual involvement and balance the three antagonistic tendencies more towards openness and predictability, hence negotiating ties at the macro-level of social organisation. Furthermore, these sequences make up for the periods in which the interlocutors have not been in each other's presence. Catching up on each other's lives "enables persons to acknowledge and learn about information regarding the period of non-co-presence that may become part of the background or taken-for-granted knowledge that will tacitly inform subsequent interaction" and therefore "functions as a powerful continuity constructor" (Sigman 1991: 121).

Apart from a systematic catching up on each other's lives, social information questions also serve to fill knowledge gaps which emerge in the course of a conversation or joint activity. Charlotte's inquiring about the identity of the jogger in SC_16.2 FAKE IT can be considered an example of this. Likewise, in SC_29.4 HAMPTONS HOEDOWN, Miranda's "what's wrong?" in response to Samantha's trouble-premonitory utterance can be considered a question aimed at filling a gap between Samantha's receiving the letter and her expletive. In the following excerpt, Charlotte perceives an information gap within Samantha's utterance.

```
SC_23.1 LEAVING UNDERWEAR
     22  S    I never leave underwear at a guy's place,
              because I never see it again.
 →   23  Ch   what happens to it?
     24  S    nothing.
              I just never go back.
```

The women are talking about leaving their possessions at their lover's place, amongst other things underwear. In turn 22, Samantha states that she never leaves underwear at a man's place, because she never sees it again. This prompts Charlotte's inquiry in turn 23: "what happens to it?" Samantha then provides some additional social information relating to her preceding utterance: "I just never go back." While in Greenwood and

Freed's taxonomy this would count as a clarification question, this type of question here evidently also elicits an intimate detail, namely that Samantha only ever stays at a man's place once.

Clarification questions frequently take the form of a repetition or paraphrase of some part of the preceding turn, but they seek "new information associated with the previous utterance" (Freed 1994:627). They lend themselves to finding out more about a specific event in the life of a friend that has been hinted at in the preceding conversation as illustrated in the following excerpt.

SC_5.2 ADVANTAGE

```
   11   Ch   what if you SENSE,
             that someone is giving you a professional advantage,
             because they FIND you charming.
   12        (1.0){putting cards down}
→  13   M    charming?
   14   S    this I got to hear.
   15   Ch   well,
             a few days ago.. Neville Morgan,
             .. THE notoriously reclusive painter,
             paid a visit to the GALlery,
             {flashback: Charlotte's story about Neville Morgan's
             visit and the invitation to the artist's farm upstate to
             view his latest work}
             so,
             if I could get him to show at the gallery,
             it would be an incredible coup,
             but what if he wants me to .hhh
             .. you know.
```

In the preceding talk, the four women have discussed whether it is permissible to exploit their femininity for career advancement. In turn 11, Charlotte seeks her friends' opinion on a particular state of affairs. Miranda repeats Charlotte's final word, "charming" with a rising intonation contour, thereby requesting further information. This is followed by an explicit inquiry on the part of Samantha. In turn 15, Charlotte then complies with her friends' requests and gives a full report of how she made an impression on a famous painter, who then invited her to his house.

This instance shows how the disclosure of specific moments in the life of a friend is necessary to allow for further talk. Miranda and Samantha request background information on the basis of which they can comply with Charlotte's original request in turn 11, namely an evaluation of something that happened to her. In the following

section, I will focus on such requests for evaluation, which occur in what I label opinion interchanges.

ii) Interchanging personal opinions

Friendship will not stand the strain of very much good advice for very long.
(Robert Lynd)

Interchanging personal opinions is a crucial element of various friendship processes which can be subsumed under the heading of social support and self-clarification. Talking about problems and exchanging viewpoints helps friends to think about situations in new ways and helps them find ways to handle their concerns. This also covers asking for and giving advice.[50] Sequentially, opinion interchanges consist of a minimum of three turns: 1) eliciting a viewpoint, 2) expressing an opinion, and 3) acceptance or rejection. This compares to Maynard's (1989, 1991) "perspective-display series", consisting of 1) a perspective-display invitation, 2) the recipient's assessment, and 3) the elicitor's own perspective. The trajectory of perspective-display series and opinion exchanges in general typically extends further than three turns. In the community of practice under analysis, for example, the perspectives given frequently affect the behaviour of the counselled friend in the course of an episode or even in the course of a season.

Questions are one means of eliciting a friend's point of view and advice, but they may also serve to venture an opinion. Interestingly, these two question functions do not occur in Freed and Greenwood's corpus of conversations amongst friends. Their data merely contain questions which serve as an overture to the speaker's position on some matter under discussion. I will first give examples of how opinions are elicited more or less explicitly through questions, secondly, present questions which function as hedged opinion statements and thirdly, discuss a case of questions as opinion overtures. The analyses also show that these three functions cannot always be clearly distinguished.

Explicit opinion questions in my data frequently contain the mental verb "think" and thereby specifically invite the interlocutor's evaluation. Consider the following example.

SC_11.2 WATERSHED RELATIONSHIP MOMENT

	1	S	normal is the half-way point between what you want, and what you can get.
	2		{*voiceover Carrie: even in the plough position I could count on Samantha for amazing sexual clarity*}
	3	I	{*giving instructions*} very good. let's move on to downwards facing dog.
	4	S	woof. with him I could do it every hour on the hour.
→	5	C	do you think it means something, if Big and I are sleeping together, but we're not sleeping together?
	6	S	the truth?
	7	C	and when have I ever wanted that? yeah okay tell me.
	8	S	I think there's trouble. I mean, sex is a barometer for what's going on in a relationship.
	9	C	well, I wasn't going to tell you this. but um .hh (1.0) .hh I farted.
	10	S	then move your mat away.
	11	C	not no:w. I did it in front of Big.
	12	S	hu:ge mistake.
→	13	C	you THINK?
	14	S	ah
	15	C	it wasn't a CHOICE. I'm human. it happened.
	16	S	no honey, you're a woman. and men don't like women to be human. we aren't supposed to fart, douche, use tampons, or have hair in places we shouldn't. I mean hell, a guy once broke up with ME, because I missed a bikini wax.
	17	C	I knew it. this is a watershed relationship moment, I'm never going to be able to erase.
	18	S	oh sure you will. just go over there and fuck his brains out, and they forget all about it. men aren't that complicated. they're kind of like plants.

In this episode, Carrie worries about not having sex with Mr Big. She discusses this with Samantha while doing yoga. The scene starts mid-conversation with Samantha's elucidations on how much sex is normal, presumably adjacent to a preceding question about what is normal. This question-answer pair then initiates an opinion interchange.[51] After some intervening talk by the yoga instructor and a comment by Samantha on his sexual attraction, Carrie proceeds to the trouble she is experiencing and requests her friend's viewpoint: "do you think it means something, if Big and I are sleeping together, but we're not sleeping together?" The question format "do you think X" with X containing the verb "to mean" occurs massively, indicating that seeking their friends' opinions on the significance of some event in their lives is very important to the four women.[52] In turn 6, Samantha initiates a side sequence (Jefferson 1972) or insertion sequence (Schegloff 1968) by asking another question, which defers the conditional relevance of an answer to Carrie's question until Samantha's question has been answered. Merritt (1976: 333) labels these sequences "embedded Q_2-A_2 sequences" and accounts for them with the fact that "the answerer seems to be asking the questioner a question because he [sic] needs the answer to his [sic] question (Q_2) before he [sic] can supply an answer to the original question (Q_1)." What Samantha seeks to find out is how Carrie would like her question in turn 1 to be answered. Samantha's elliptical polar interrogative consisting of a noun phrase with a rising intonation contour literally requests either of the answers truthful or not truthful. This unlocks another interpretation, namely that Carrie may have asked the question to be put at ease.

Carrie's reaction in turn 7 playfully alludes to this interpretation: "and when have I ever wanted that?" The negatively-oriented polarity item "ever" biases the question towards a negative answer (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002), implying that Carrie never wants to know the truth – presumably because she prefers not to be confronted with any disturbing facts. The connective "and," which precedes the question, however, marks a continuation of Carrie's search for enlightenment (cf. Schiffrin 1987). This indicates that the question is in fact ironic and signals ambivalence towards Samantha's upcoming response to her original question. Carrie's question (Q_3) consequently requires no answer (A_3) before A_2 can be supplied, and she immediately proceeds to her next move: "yeah okay tell me." This can be considered an emphatic request to tell the truth, since it contains two positive response forms "yeah" and "okay" (Biber et al.

1999) plus an explicit mentioning of the predicate and object left out in Samantha's elliptical question.

Samantha considers this a satisfactory answer (A_2) and, in turn 8, finally provides the conditionally relevant second pair-part to turn 5, displaying her perspective: "I think there's trouble. I mean, sex is a barometer for what's going on in a relationship." Samantha's use of the mental reporting verb "think" creates cohesion and hence structural alignment insofar as it takes up the make-up of Carrie's question (Q_1), "do you think." At the same time the mental verb creates the impression of an on-line clarification process. The complete stretch of talk can therefore be considered what Craig and Sanusi (2003) label "think talk." This interpretation is corroborated by the occurrence of the discourse marker "I mean," which "marks a speaker's upcoming modification of the meaning of his/her own prior talk" (Schiffrin 1987: 296). Samantha expands on the evocation of the term "trouble" by explaining why this is problematic. The discourse marker "I mean," thus also indicates that what follows is relevant to interpret the overall point made (cf. Schiffrin 1987:309). The marker occurs regularly in the women's opinion interchanges and can be considered a characteristic feature in their think talk, so much so that it can be considered contextualising opinion interchanges.[53]

In the following turns, Carrie elaborates on the trouble (turns 9 & 11). This is characteristic of the course of a perspective-display series in ordinary conversation. Maynard (1989, 1991) finds that the initial query and response function as a pre-sequence. This pre-sequence is followed either by the elicitor's own report or by further questions or topicalisers, which elicit additional viewpoints. In this case, Carrie uses another topicaliser (the farting, turn 9) and elicits Samantha's assessment, "hu:ge mistake." This move prompts a prosodically marked confirmation question on the part of Carrie: "you THINK?" (turn 13). The mental verb "think" again contextualises think talk, and the prosodic marking displays astonishment.[54] In the subsequent turn, Samantha supplies a minimal confirmation ("ah"), which triggers an account on the part of Carrie: "it wasn't a CHOICE. I'm human. it happened." (turn 15). Samantha disagrees and supports her prior assessment with an extensive perspective-display. This display concludes with a report of a personal experience, on which Samantha bases her opinion (turn 16). Carrie responds with her own assessment of what happened, which corresponds to the third part of a canonical perspective display series. After Carrie has

accepted Samantha's viewpoint and with that her own apprehension, Samantha seems to change her course of action and again disagrees with Carrie, now advising her on how to remedy her relationship trouble.

In sum, the analysis shows how the two friends negotiate an opinion interchange, thereby assessing Carrie's relationship problems. The interchange is initiated and maintained with opinion questions (turns 5 & 13). Although Samantha's assessment at first meets with opposition, it eventually prompts Carrie to utter her own fears about her relationship. Carrie's confession then allows Samantha to support her by giving advice on how to deal with the situation. This sequence illustrates how opinion interchanges function as social support processes, how in these processes the appropriate balance between association and dissociation can be upset through critical statements or the revelation of troubles and how it is re-attained, hence consolidating the friendship at the macro-level of social organisation.

Aside from explicit opinion questions, which contain a mental verb such as "think" or "believe," there are more implicit opinion questions. These can take various forms and are only recognisable as such through the fact that an opinion is put forward in the subsequent turn. Frequently, the speaker starts off with one question and then adds another, which is a reformulation or specification of the first question. Puchta and Potter (1999) refer to these question clusters as "elaborate questions." In their data of market research focus groups, elaborate question format signals that an opinion rather than factual information is requested. In the following excerpt, Carrie adroitly uses an elaborate question and other question formats to elicit her friend Miranda's viewpoint.

SC_4.3 FLING

```
→ 1   C   shouldn't we be dating men our own age?
  2   M   good luck finding one.
          <there are no available men in their thirties in New
          York>
          Giuliani had them removed along with the homeless.
  3   C   ((laughs))
          oh so,
→             then what's really going on here?
          I mean is it younger-,
          younger men feel safer?
  4   M   what's really going on here is sex.
          good old-fashioned,
          eager to please,
          do what I tell you to eagle scout,
          sex.
```

```
5    C    yah,
          but I'm not having sex.
          it's a kissing thing.
6    M    so what's the big deal?
          it's just a fling.
          it's not like we're throwing out our schedules or
          anything.
```

Carrie and Miranda are discussing their current affairs with younger men while walking through Manhattan. The episode opens *in medias res* with Carrie's negative interrogative "shouldn't we be dating men our own age?" According to the traditional literature on questions, the negative polarity and therefore greater complexity of this yes/no question renders it a marked structure (cf. Hudson 1975: 17). The markedness triggers inferences in the hearer about the expectations of the speaker and biases the question towards a specific answer (Bublitz 1981). This bias is also reflected in the sequential context of these questions; they set up a specific preference for the adjacent turn and dispreferred responses are marked by delays and discourse markers (cf. Koshnik 2002). Sacks (1987: 57) proposes a preference order for such answer turns: "if a question is built in such a way as to exhibit a preference as between 'yes' or 'no', or 'yes—' or 'no—' like responses, then the answerers will tend to pick that choice." In syntactic theory, polar questions which are built to exhibit such a preference are labelled "conducive questions" (cf. Bolinger 1957). In this particular case, there is a deontic bias towards a positive answer, i.e. Miranda's answer ought to be "yes" (cf. Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 880). This interpretation suggests that Carrie expresses doubts about having an affair with a younger man and invites Miranda to agree. Matters are complicated in pragmatic accounts of conducive questions (e.g. Bublitz 1981; Ilie 1994); they impose the condition that the speaker really expects an answer. If the speaker does not want the hearer to answer for fear of not receiving the desired reply, the utterance is categorised as rhetorical question. In contrast, Frank (1990) argues that a definition of a rhetorical question on a pragmatic basis is not sufficient and that the hearer's actual response and the context are relevant. Heritage (2002b), for example, investigates negative interrogatives which accomplish assertions of opinion rather than questioning, basing his analysis on the fact that they massively receive agreement or disagreement.

Carrie's negative interrogative receives a complex response from Miranda, which at first sight seems neither an answer nor an agreement/disagreement: "good luck finding one. <there are no available men in their thirties in New York> Giuliani had them removed along with the homeless" (turn 2). The initial formulaic utterance wishing good luck indicates that Miranda indeed interprets Carrie's question to be biased towards a positive answer: Carrie thinks they should be dating men of their own age group. However, instead of agreeing or disagreeing, she wishes Carrie good luck in her search. The following move, which is stressed through a slower speed of delivery, accounts for this well-wishing: there are no men of their own age-group to be found in New York. This hyperbolical assessment signals sarcasm and can be considered an aggressive disagreement with Carrie's viewpoint. Structurally, Miranda distances herself from Carrie's utterance by not picking up the first person plural, shifting from the "we" to "you." The final move of Miranda's turn then introduces a jocular and fantastic key through the unexpected juxtaposition of men in their thirties and the homeless as well as the evocation of a scenario in which the mayor of New York arranges the disposal of the men so desired by the two friends. This jocular key mitigates the sarcasm and disagreement displayed by Miranda and at the same time makes light of the troublesome situation.[55]

The laughter at the beginning of her next turn (3) signals that Carrie responds to the humour. Still, her subsequent move displays that she is not prepared to play along and makes explicit that Miranda's response has broken the frame (cf. Goffman 1976: 287). The discourse markers "oh so" indicate that Carrie expected a serious reaction and serve to recontextualise the interaction: "then what's really going on here? I mean is it younger, younger men feel safer?" (turn 3). The use of "really" confirms this interpretation, retrospectively recasting Carrie's first question as an opinion request rather than merely a display of her own perspective.

Carrie's second attempt to elicit Miranda's opinion takes the format of an elaborate question with a second more specific yes/no interrogative latched on to a variable question. The two questions are linked by the discourse marker "I mean." As noted above, this marker frequently occurs in the women's think talk and generally indicates that what follows is relevant to interpret the point made (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 309); more specifically in this instance, in between questions, it serves to signal that what follows is

relevant to allow for a satisfying response. Carrie tentatively puts forward an explanation for their current dating practices, presumably not so much to receive a confirmation, but rather to elicit an opinion from Miranda by way of offering up one of her own. The cut off and restart after "younger" display Carrie's insecurity about the proposition put forward in her latched on polar question.

Carrie's second interrogative includes a candidate answer in Pomerantz' (1988) sense and can be considered a correction-invitation device as described by Sacks (1992a: 21ff). Via the candidate answer, Carrie gives one possibility and elicits, as its correction, another: "what's really going on here is sex. good old-fashioned, eager to please, do what I tell you to eagle scout, sex." (turn 4). Miranda's response does not confirm Carrie's assumption about safeness being the crucial factor, but puts forward an alternative explanation. In her opinion, the attraction is mainly sexual. Contentwise as well as structurally, Miranda's utterance responds to the first part of the elaborate question, which supports the interpretation that Carrie's latched on polar question functions as an illustration of the type of answer she expects, namely an opinion. Miranda even repeats Carrie's initial question "what's really going on here?" in subject position, complementing it with her reason for having affairs and relationships with younger men: "sex." She goes on to specify this with the help of a rhythmically delivered extended noun phrase with several *ad hoc* created premodifiers.

Carrie's response to this in turn 5, takes the shape of a disagreement to an assessment, thereby adhering to the preference structure of conversation (cf. Pomerantz 1984): she starts with an agreement token "yah" and follows this up with a disagreement marker "but" to contrast Miranda's explanation with her own situation ("I'm not having sex. It's a kissing thing."). With this move Carrie indicates that Miranda's point of view does not apply to her situation, disaffiliating with her friend. Miranda reacts with a challenging question "so what's the big deal?", which paradoxically serves to put Carrie at ease (turn 6). *So*-prefaced questions can indicate a challenge, carrying the metamessage: "Come on convince me" (Johnson 2002: 96). Contentwise, however, what Miranda challenges is Carrie's distress, implying that she need not worry. Her questions can therefore be considered affiliative rather than disaffiliative. This is confirmed by Miranda's next move. She once more attempts to make light of the situation and shrugs off Carrie's behaviour as a "fling." The downtoner "just" indicates

that “fling” occupies a subordinate position in a relationships hierarchy. In her final move, Miranda then explicitly re-affiliates with Carrie through the use of the first person plural pronoun: “it’s not like we’re throwing out our schedules or anything.” She signals that whatever the reasons for their relationships with younger men, and whatever shape these relationships take, neither of them changes her life for it. This affiliative alignment constructs the two women as similar in the face of differences, mastering the association/dissociation dialectic and thus reaffirming their friendship at the macro-level of social organisation.

To conclude, the analysis reveals how the two friends interchange opinions, thereby evaluating what is happening in their lives. While Carrie is worried about them having affairs with younger men, Miranda takes a different point of view, downgrading these relationships to having no substantial impact on their lives. This brief but complex episode is another illustration of how interchanges of opinions can function to negotiate meanings of unsettling events in the friends’ (love) lives and are consequently an important instantiation of friendship processes. Questions play a crucial role, since Carrie uses them to initiate and maintain think talk. Both question formats, the negative interrogative and the elaborate question, allow her to simultaneously venture her own opinion and elicit Miranda’s point of view.

In the course of an episode, opinion interchanges can usually be seen to not only help the women interpret events in their lives but they also prompt actions based on these interpretations. This justifies their categorisation as social support process. A more direct way of soliciting social support is asking for advice. These questions often take the form of variable interrogatives, mostly containing the interrogative word “what.” They frequently occur in troubles talk and request the interlocutor to counsel the speaker on the current problem. Although they often contain a first person singular pronoun and seem self-directed (e.g. “What am I going to do?”), these questions succeed in eliciting a piece of advice or some supportive reaction from the interlocutor. Consider the following example:

SC_9.4 RABBIT

```
   9   Ch  sh
           °yeah.
           well it's weird,
           cause with the rabbit,
           it's like every time,
```

```
                boom.
                and one time I came for like .. five minutes.°
     10   C     uh Charlotte honey,
                it's not illegal.
     11   Ch    yeah,
                °but no men ever did that,
                I mean I'm scared,
→               what am I going to do?°
     12   C     well you know,
                you could still enjoy sex with a man and the rabbit.
     13   Ch    no:
                no no.
                I'm done with it.
                that's it,
                °I'm never going to touch that thing again.°
                ...
```

Charlotte has bought a vibrator and is worried about her obsession with the product. She is whispering and avoids explicit vocabulary ("the rabbit" and "boom" in turn 9, "that thing" in turn 13, "did that" in turn 11), which indicates that she is uncomfortable talking about this topic in public. Still, she succeeds in discussing the issue with her friend Carrie at the gym. In turn 11, which can be considered a trouble-exposition (cf. Jefferson 1988), she compares her experiences with the vibrator to her experiences with men, implying that she might prefer the former. This culminates in Charlotte making explicit that she is uneasy about the situation, "I'm scared." and a self-directed question "what am I going to do?" The fact that Carrie takes the floor after this self-directed question shows that she interprets it as a cry for help: Carrie suggests a solution for Charlotte's dilemma – "well you know, you could still enjoy sex with a man and the rabbit." (turn 12). In the following turn, Charlotte flatly rejects this suggestion: "no no. I'm done with it. That's it, °I'm never going to touch that thing again.°" (turn 13). Carrie's advice seems to trigger a resolution-making process, which is externalised through Charlotte's turn-at-talk. This turn consists of incremental moves ranging from a one-word rejection of Carrie's suggestion to the actual resolution clause, which formally also is a belated answer to her self-directed question: "what am I going to do?" In summary, Carrie interprets Charlotte's self-directed question as a request for advice, but although Charlotte does not accept her friend's suggestion, it helps her to arrive at a decision. The whole sequence can thus be considered another instantiation of social support and self-clarification triggered by questions.

The following two sequences suggest that these social support processes of interchanging opinions and giving advice are rule-governed in the community of practice under analysis. Carrie has advised a friend to leave her husband and is later on criticised for it. I will first present the sequence in which she gives the advice, a telephone call taking place late at night after the friend's irascible husband has thrown Carrie out, because his wife and she had been too noisy.

SC_14.3 LEAVING HUSBAND I

```
     1    C    hello?
     2    Su   I am SO sorry.
               I'm SO embarrassed.
     3    C    no,
               don't be.
               he's just,
               he's just tired and cranky.
     4    Su   that was classic Richard.
               tyrannical,
               emotionally abusive,
               H
               I don't know what to do anymore.
     5    C    well,
               maybe there were special circumstances tonight,
               that,
     6    Su   he works hard,
               he's sleep-deprived,
               bla bla bla,
               I don't give a SHIT.
               (3.0){in the background Richard is coughing}
→              hh what would you do,
               if you were with a guy like that?
               would you leave?
     7    C    well like,
               you know,
               if things didn't change,
     8    Su   well,
               they haven't.
               °and they won't.°
     9    C    phh
→    10   Su   so,
               you think I should leave him?
     11   C    .hh if you're not happy,
               you know li- life's too short.
     12        {Richard coughing in the background}
     13   Su   hh
               °I got to go.°
```

Carrie's friend, Susan Sharon, apologises for her husband's behaviour and although Carrie signals sympathy with him, Susan continues complaining about him. In turn 6,

she signals that she is fed up with the situation and after a long pause, in which she anxiously listens for her husband, she sighs and asks “what would you do, if you were with a guy like that? would you leave?” This is another instance of an elaborate question consisting of two interrogatives. While the first question is open and allows for various answers, the second interrogative is closed and indicates that Susan specifically requests Carrie’s advice on whether to leave her husband or not. The cluster of discourse markers at the beginning of Carrie’s turn indicate that she is hesitant to do so: “well like, you know, if things didn’t change,”. The conditional clause further postpones the answer.

The if-clause also ties in with Susan’s conditional, creating cohesion. However, while Susan’s conditional in turn 6 is hypothetical, Carrie’s is real and implies that there are “things” in the relationship that should change. Carrie does not proceed with the main clause although the level intonation contour indicates that she is not finished. She allows Susan to take the floor, presumably relieved that she does not have to explicitly state the consequences. In turn 8, Susan hastens to stress that things have not changed and predicts that they will not do so in the future. The hushed prediction reflects Susan’s fear that her husband might wake up.

Carrie’s response is a deep sigh signalling empathy with her friend and thus affiliation. In turn 10, Susan uses the discourse marker “so” to preface a request that has been accounted for in the preceding discourse (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 208): “so, you think I should leave him?” The utterance takes the form of a declarative question with an epistemic bias, “seeking confirmation of a proposition the speaker is inclined to believe” (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 881). In this case, Susan seeks confirmation of the conclusion she has drawn from what Carrie hinted at in her conditional clause and her own assessment that things did not change. Carrie responds to this request for confirmation with a deep breath and another unembedded conditional clause, which pertains to Susan’s feelings: “if you’re not happy,” This is followed by a formulaic utterance: “you know li- life’s too short.” (turn 11) The discourse marker “you know” here indicates that what follows is a general truth (cf. Schiffrin 1987: 275) rather than the main clause on which the conditional depends. By way of implicature, however, the inference that Susan should leave her husband can be drawn. The restart in the formulaic expression, “li- life’s” indicates that Carrie is highly agitated and does not

feel at ease giving this kind of advice. The conversation is then broken off, because Richard is waking up. In the course of the episode, we learn that Susan has indeed left her husband.

The following is an excerpt from a conversation Carrie later has with Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte. Miranda and Samantha co-operatively reprimand her for having given Susan the advice to leave her husband (turn 1 & 2).

SC_14.4 LEAVING HUSBAND II

```
→ 1   M   telling a friend to leave her husband,
          is something you just don't do.
  2   S   if she DOES break up with him,
          it's your fault.
          if she DOESN'T break up with him,
          she knows that you think that she should,
          .h and therefore can never speak to you again.
          either way,
          you're screwed.
  3   M   which is a shame,
          because there goes your cashmere connection.
  4   C   she had me in a weak moment.
          I was tired,
          I'd just been chased out of her apartment,
          ...I have a birthday looming,
  5   M   hhh
  6   C   I said too much.
```

While Miranda evokes the unwritten rule that you do not tell a friend to break off a relationship, Samantha accounts for the rule by predicting that Carrie will lose her friend. This is followed by an expression of regret on the part of Miranda.[56] In the following turn (4), Carrie attempts to account for her behaviour. When Miranda snorts at these excuses (turn 5), Carrie finally concedes that she has made a mistake by not adhering to the rules (turn 6).

These excerpts show that although giving advice is an important friendship process and a regular practice in the community of practice under analysis, there are unwritten rules about what kind of advice is given to friends – rules which are explicitly re-established in conversation in the case of a member breaking them. This may be one of the reasons for the frequent occurrence of opinions and advice given in a hedged form, typically in the shape of an interrogative, which does not commit the speaker and leaves a way out for both speaker and hearer. This in turn is borne out by the fact that strong

statements of opinions are commented on by the women, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

```
SC_30.1 FRIENDS WITH AN EX
    5   M    I have never been able to be friends with an ex-
             boyfriend.
             I meet those couples,
             who stay friends,
             and I think how?
             how do they do that?
    6   S    I've never been able to be friends with any man.
             why would I?
             women are for friendships,
             men are for fucking.
    7   C    honey,
→            you've GOT to learn to form an opinion. ((voice
             shift))
```

The women are discussing the difficulties of turning a love relation into a friendship relation. While Miranda questions her incapacity of being friends with an ex-boyfriend, Samantha bluntly states that she generally is not able to be friends with men. Although both Miranda and Samantha's turns contain questions, they are received differently. Miranda's embedded question "I think how? how do they do that?" implies that she would like to be able to do it. Samantha's "why would I?" occurs mid-utterance and is not meant to be responded. It can be considered a rhetorical question which serves to make her argument more persuasive. This interpretation is confirmed by Carrie's ironic remark in turn 7, which implies that Samantha has strong opinions. The reaction signals that uttering these opinions in such an explicit way is marked behaviour, in particular in the context of trouble talk. With the exception of Samantha, the women generally proceed more carefully in venturing opinions in such situations.

I label questions that speakers use to cautiously express their point of view or to give advice "suggestion questions." Interestingly, Freed (1994: 623) has not found any of these in her data of friends' talk. My personal experience as a member of a circle of close female friends, however, suggests that suggestion questions occur frequently in naturally occurring conversation in such communities of practice. My corpus of constructed all-female conversation also yields several sequences in which questions function to suggest a course of action in a certain situation or to give a tentative

explanation for a troublesome event.[57] They mainly serve to give advice or help. The following example is an illustration of this question function:

SC_12.2 SHOWER AFTER SEX

```
    1   M    he goes to church with his mother?
             ... that can't be good.
    2   Ch   oh
             don't listen to her.
             a man who cares about his mother makes a wonderful
             husband.
    3   C    I think it's sweet.
    4   M    sure.
             all religions are sweet,
             till you get to this shower after sex phase.
    5   Ch   oh my god.
             is he still doing that?
    6   M    please,
             it's amazing he has any skin left.
 →  7   C    well have you tried taking a shower with him?
    8   M    no.
             I'm afraid he'll pull out garlic and a cross.
    9   Ch   so.
             which church does his mother go to?
```

In this excerpt, the women are talking about the religious habits of the men they are currently dating. Carrie has reported that Mr Big goes to church with his mother. While Charlotte thinks considers this likable, Miranda considers it a bad omen. Miranda's ironic remark in line 4 proposes a different though related topic through her reference to her current relationship with a man who compulsively showers after sexual intercourse. Carrie reacts with an exclamation and a social information question: "oh my god. is he still doing that?" (turn 5) She thereby displays surprise and aligns with Miranda, accepting a topic shift to Miranda's relationship troubles.

Miranda's "please" in response to Carrie's question can be considered a mock politeness formula on the basis of what follows it: "it's amazing he has any skin left." This implies that he is still doing it, moreover, that he is doing it excessively.[58] The exaggeration inherent in the image of showering until all of the skin has come off achieves a continuation of Miranda's ironic-sarcastic key. Nevertheless, Carrie volunteers a serious piece of advice in the next turn: "well have you tried taking a shower with him?" The discourse marker "well" indicates "some sort of insufficiency" (R. Lakoff 1973a: 463), in this case at the level of key, shifting from mock-sarcastic to

serious. The question format together with the use of the present perfect renders this utterance an indirect speech act protecting the face of both Miranda and Carrie. Carrie does not directly prescribe a specific procedure, but asks Miranda whether she has already attempted this course of action. This allows for the fact that Miranda may already have taken this course of action and in so doing avoids any implications that Miranda is not sufficiently knowledgeable or resourceful.

Advice and opinions are typically provided in an indirect form, whereby the speaker avoids playing the expert. According to Coates (1996a: 190) this is characteristic of conversations between women friends, who strive to "minimize distance between conversational participants." As I have argued above (section 4.3.4.2), knowledge is a significant and often hard-fought resource in this community of practice. Nevertheless, the format of knowledge displays in troubles talk often leaves a way out for both interlocutors. In turn 8, Miranda answers Carrie's literal question with a "no," and supplies an account for why she won't do so in the future, thereby indirectly declining Carrie's advice: "I'm afraid he'll pull out garlic and a cross." The garlic and the cross again evoke a grossly exaggerated image of her current lover and achieve the re-establishment of the sarcastic key.

Having discussed the opinion eliciting and venturing function of question, I will now proceed to the third function that questions may have in the interchange of personal opinions, namely as an overture to an opinion given on some matter under discussion. The following excerpt illustrates this function; Carrie and Miranda are discussing motherly behaviour while they are attending a baby shower.

SC_10.6 BREAST-FEEDING

```
   1   C   there's a woman in there breast-feeding a child who
           can chew steak.
→  2   M   you know how I feel about that?
           if you can ask for it,
           you're probably too old to have it.
           {we hear a mother reprimanding her kid inside the
           house}
```

Carrie tells Miranda that she has seen a woman breast-feeding a toddler. The postmodifying relative clause which states that the child could already eat properly indicates that she is critical of this behaviour. In the consecutive turn, Miranda utters a conversational focus question in the sense of Freed (1994). These questions "refer the

hearer to the informational content contained in what the current speaker is about to utter or about the direction the conversation is about to take" (Freed 1994: 629). With the help of the focus question, Miranda indicates that she is about to display her attitude towards such behaviour, consequently taking up the topic introduced by Carrie. The far-from-speaker demonstrative "that" serves to distance herself from this behaviour and signals that whatever follows will also be critical. In the following move, Miranda displays the announced criticism of breast-feeding older children. Her means of expressing this criticism are similar to Carrie's in the preceding turn: while Carrie used the child's capability to chew food as a measuring rod, Miranda uses the infants' capability to speak.

In my corpus, conversational focus questions generally do not receive an answer. Typically, the current speaker self-selects and continues talking. Structurally, they can therefore be considered overtures (Biber et al. 1999) or prefaces (Maynard 2003). Hence, their function is to heighten the interlocutor's attention to what is coming.[59] In the example above, Miranda's overture emphasises the upcoming criticism and thus also stresses agreement and affiliation with Carrie. The capacity for alignment justifies Freed's (1994) categorisation of conversational focus questions as relational questions. Through their exchange of opinions Carrie and Miranda affiliate with each other and confirm a shared world view as well as establish similarity. While the question in the excerpt above functions as an overture to the reciprocation of an attitude, questions can also initiate the evocation of a shared background amongst friends. This process will be investigated in the following section.

iii) Evoking a shared background

Nothing better forges a bond of love, friendship or respect than common hatred toward something.
(Anton Chekhov)

As noted above in the chapter on friendship (cf. section 2.2), similarity in attitudes, values, interests and tastes is considered a key contributor to friendships. Similarity is closely interrelated with the antagonistic tension of predictability versus novelty and hence contributes to the dialectic process of balancing association and dissociation.

While Argyle (1994) lists searching for similarity as one of the important verbal moves in developing friendships, the affirmation of the commonality of certain beliefs and feelings, which constructs similarity in talk, is certainly crucial to maintaining a friendship. In verbal interaction, this can be achieved through the evocation of a shared background. One of the most prominent strategies used to check assumptions about this shared world are questions, in particular so-called rhetorical questions (cf. Coates 1996a).

A rhetorical question, according to Freed (1994: 631), "refers to information the speaker already knows" and "orients the hearer to the speaker's point of view." In the latter case it may also convey sarcasm or irony. As briefly discussed above, rhetorical questions are traditionally considered to be unanswerable so that no overt response is expected (cf. Biber et al. 1999). Hudson (1975: 16) states:

> there is never anything in their form that tells the hearer whether or not he is supposed to offer an answer. More often than not, he recognizes a question as rhetorical because of some very obvious feature of the situation of utterance – if the speaker leaves no time for answers, but just goes straight on speaking.

Ilie (1994), however, shows that this is a misconception. According to her, rhetorical questions "are in fact mental answer-eliciting, since the addressee is expected to infer the implicit answer as a prerequisite of his/her cognitive response to the question" (p. 216). Furthermore, explicit answers are regularly supplied by the questioner herself "to reinforce the implications of the rhetorical question" (p. 103), and also by the addressee to "cancel the implication of the rhetorical question" (p.104). Likewise, Goffman (1976: 271) states that "the apt answering" of a rhetorical question is "automatically a joke or a quip."

Frank (1990) finds that rhetorical questions generally receive some kind of response. Furthermore, she shows that it is largely the hearer's response that allows an identification of a question as rhetorical and conclusions on the function of the question as either minimizing face-threatening acts (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 223ff.) or strengthening the persuasive effect (cf. Anzilotti 1982). In the latter case, when the

rhetorical question functions as an assertion, it typically receives some kind of agreeing or disagreeing response. Due to this capacity to elicit agreement, it is not surprising that Athanasiadou (1991) and Ilie (1999) found that rhetorical questions achieve shared agreement and anticipate consensus between interlocutors in contexts as diverse as talk at work and TV talk shows. This capacity also renders them a useful tool in the assertion of a shared world view amongst female friends.

In her corpus of naturally occurring talk between female friends, Coates (1996a: 188) finds that rhetorical questions serve as "a cue for agreement." My analyses confirm this function for the fictional circle of female friends as can be seen in the following example. Miranda and Carrie are attending a baby shower and meet a woman who tells them how much she adores her own son.

SC_10.4 HE'S A GOD

```
    34   R    I love my son.
              Andy's eleven months old,
              he's a go:d,
              and I tell him so every day.
    35   M    {when woman is out of ear-shot to Carrie}
 →            thirty years from now,
              what do you think the chances are that some woman is
              going to be able to make Andy happy?
              .. I'm going to go with zero.
    36   C    ((presses her lips together and nods))
```

In turn 35, Miranda challenges this behaviour by addressing a question to Carrie: "thirty years from now, what do you think the chances are that some woman is going to be able to make Andy happy?" After a brief pause, she answers the question herself, reinforcing the implications of her question, namely that no woman will ever be able to make Andy happy: "I'm going to go with zero." Only then does Carrie respond by pressing her lips together and nodding in agreement. Hence, Carrie recognises Miranda's rhetorical strategy, and Miranda's question followed by an allo-answer succeeds in orienting Carrie to her sarcastic attitude and in eliciting a non-verbal agreement, reaffirming the shared values of the friendship group. In Freed and Greenwood's question taxonomy, such questions, which seek "to establish the existence of mutual or shared information, knowledge or reactions" (Freed 1994: 629) are labelled "shared information questions."

Coates (1996a: 187) also finds examples of several rhetorical questions in a row, which function to build up a sense of indignation or shock. Consider the following excerpt which contains two structurally parallel rhetorical questions.

SC_16.3 SINGLE & FABULOUS

```
     7   Ch  {reading from the magazine}
             single was fun at twenty.
             but you want to ask these women,
             how fun will all night club hopping be at forty,
→            who's out all night?
→    8   S   who's forty?
     9   M   do you know what I'm saying?
             fuck them.
             exclamation point.
```

Carrie has been interviewed and photographed for a magazine article on single women in New York. When it turns out that the article is called *Single and Fabulous?* rather than *Single and Fabulous!* and deals with the misery of single females in their thirties, the friends join Carrie in her outrage. In turn 7, Charlotte is reading out a few lines from the article, when she suddenly stops to utter a question: “who’s out all night?” This question has the format of a clarification question repeating parts of the preceding utterance, in this case the line from the article read out by Charlotte herself. The same applies to Samantha’s question in the following turn: “who’s forty?” However, neither of the two questions can receive a clarifying answer, because they are directed at a virtual addressee, the author of the magazine article. This implies that the true addressees are the women present, which is confirmed by Miranda’s response in turn 9.

Miranda provides a curse, which is bracketed by markers of emphasis, an overture and an explicit punctuation mark: “do you know what I’m saying? fuck them. exclamation point.” This reaction indicates that Charlotte and Samantha’s utterances in fact function to challenge the preceding discourse, i.e. the magazine article. Their questions assert: we’re not out all night, and we’re not forty. The parallelism of the two interrogatives, “who” + “to be” + subject complement, signals alignment on the structural plane. Both subject complements refer back to elements in the magazine article, “all night club hopping” and “at forty.” The cohesion created through this is typical of opposition sequences (Gruber 1998). Through the consecutive parallel questions the women thus constitute themselves as being in joint opposition to the article and signal their outrage. Miranda can then be seen to join the others in their

opposition by cursing whoever wrote the article. Her use of strong language aggravates the virtual conflict and simultaneously intensifies the affiliation with her friends. The use of the third person plural pronoun "them," rather than a more impersonal "it" referring to the article, constructs the four friends as the opposed "us."

To conclude, aside from eliciting or giving information, opinions and advice, the four women's questions are also used to establish or confirm shared background, beliefs and attitudes. While the question in SC_10.4 HE'S A GOD receives an allo-answer, the two consecutive questions in SC_16.3 SINGLE & FABULOUS remain, strictly speaking, unanswered. This justifies their classification as rhetorical. More significant for the analysis of the question as means of doing friendship are the responses they elicit, i.e. Carrie's nodding and Miranda's cursing. These reactions display agreement with or confirmation of the assertions the recipients infer from the questions, accomplishing affiliation and evoking similarity. This impacts on the predictability/novelty dialectic and hence negotiates friendship at the macro-level of social organisation.

Another question format which has been shown to signal shared background and attitudes are tag questions (cf. Bishop et al. 1998; Coates 1996a; Huddleston and Pullum 2002). Epistemic modal tags, usually with rising intonation, do not only elicit information but also request confirmation (cf. J. Holmes 1984, 1995; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003), and can be used as tools in the establishment of a shared world view. In Coates' (1996a: 194) study they indeed function "to check the taken-for-granted-ness of what is being said, to confirm the shared world view of the participants." However, in my corpus of fictional conversations between female friends tag questions hardly ever occur. The few occurrences vary in form, intonation and function, and no clear pattern correlated with friendship relations emerges. There are only 12 instances of tag questions in around two hours of conversation, mostly invariant tags such as "right" and "okay." This seems to be an indication that women's overuse of tag questions, which has been propagated in the language and gender literature, is not something that is part of our intuitive knowledge of how women talk.

The importance of a shared world view in this community of practice is also at issue in the following section, in which I focus on humour and teasing as a question-centred activity functioning in the negotiation of friendship relations. Teasing can provide

shared amusement based on shared background knowledge and attitudes, but it can also serve as a mild reprimand of a participant deviating from a shared point of view.

iv) Accomplishing humour and teasing

Humor is a rubber sword. It allows you to make a point without drawing blood. (Mary Hirsch)

Investigations of conversational humour and teasing have shown that they both function in relationship engineering (cf. Günthner 1996; Kotthoff 1996b, 1998a, 2003, forthcoming; Norrick 1993; Straehle 1993). Hence, humour and teasing also have a special status in female friendship relations. First, conversational humour generally "allows participants to perform for their mutual entertainment with a consequent enhancement of rapport" (Norrick 1993: 43), rendering humour one of the crucial verbal skills involved in friendship processes (cf. Argyle 1994). Second, studies of female conversational humour have demonstrated that women display closeness by joking about shared troubles and constraints in their lives. Humour consequently functions as a co-operative coping strategy (cf. Jenkins 1985). Third, humorous linguistic practices allow for a combination of "bonding" and "biting" (cf. Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; cf. also the section 4.2.4). In friendship relations, high-cost humorous remarks are possible without threatening interpersonal ties. Sarcastic remarks and other teasing challenges are typically used to avoid open confrontation and to playfully stage arguments (cf. Eder 1993; Schütte 1991). Furthermore, they can serve as a social control mechanism in the case of deviant behaviour by a participant. Simultaneously, they contribute to shared enjoyment and thus further strengthen social bonds (cf. Eder 1993; Eisenberg 1986). Friendship groups are therefore characterised by customary joking relationships (cf. Radcliffe-Brown 1940). Such customary joking relationships also become apparent in the conversations of the community of practice under analysis. In their humorous exchanges, conversational alignments mirror the positions the four women take in the friendship group.

In the discussion of terms of address, I have argued that in constructed dialogue it is possible that a humorous remark aims at the audience in front of the screen rather than at the participants on screen. I have therefore only analysed sequences, in which the

participants on the screen orient towards the humour, for example, through laughter. These humour and teasing sequences are frequently initiated or maintained through the use of questions. In Freed and Greenwood's taxonomy, these questions are labelled "humour questions," defined as expressing "information from an unexpected point" (Freed 1994: 631). In my corpus, humour questions can establish an incongruity with some item in the preceding discourse, employ verbal play, and display irony or sarcasm. All three types can constitute a teasing challenge, which corresponds to Goody's (1978) notion of the joking-challenge question noted above. Depending on who is addressee, side participant (Goffman 1979), and butt of the joke, humour questions establish alignments amongst the interlocutors. Consider the following two examples, in which Miranda makes ironic remarks and Carrie plays along, thereby affiliating with her:

SC_19.5 INVISIBLE

```
   8   M   guess what,
           the guestbook person is also the put the gifts in
           the van person.
→          does anybody want to help me?
→          >or should I just go stand out in the street,
→          and wait for somebody else NOT to see me,<
→          so I can end it.
   9   C   I'll help you.
           what street do you want to stand in?
```

The women are attending a friend's wedding. Miranda is in charge of the guestbook and also responsible for taking care of the presents. She implores her friends to help her by using an alternative question (turn 8): "does anybody want to help me? >or should I just go stand out in the street, and wait for somebody else NOT to see me, < so I can end it." The fast delivery of the second part of her question contextualises it as self-directed irony, so that the question can be considered a humour question. Typical of irony amongst friends is that it is based on a shared background (cf. Kotthoff 2003). In this case, the shared background consists of the friends' joint experience the night before, when Miranda's doorman did not recognize her, which made her wonder whether she was invisible. In turn 9, Carrie replies to the *dictum*, thereby entering the playful frame and aligning with her friend (cf. Kotthoff 2003).

The four friends also regularly play along, if they are the butt of a teasing remark. The following excerpt is a case in point.

SC_25.2 FLY STRIP

```
  16  C   I do not pick the wrong guys,
          they pick me.
  17  M   so,
→         what?
          you're like a fly strip for dysfunctional men?
  18  C   (1.5)
          yeah,
          but one of those .. really pretty,
          floral,
          scented ones.
```

In turn 17, Miranda challenges Carrie's preceding utterance, "so, what?", and continues with a humour question, comparing Carrie to a fly strip. This declarative question allows Miranda to beg to differ without explicitly disagreeing with Carrie. By responding to the *dictum* rather than to the *implicatum* Carrie then affirms the playful modality established by the humorous juxtaposition: "yeah, but one of those .. really pretty, floral, scented ones." (turn 18). The one-and-a-half second pause at the beginning of Carrie's utterance may indicate that she needs some time to process Miranda's question or to formulate her response to it.[60] Through Carrie's affirmation of a teasing frame she accepts Miranda's critical evaluation and signals affiliation. This is in keeping with Kotthoff's (2003) findings that teasing practices can shed light on the conversational negotiation of friendship, because they are one of the devices that friends have at their disposal to signal differences. These sequences also show that friendship "is apparently not totally oriented toward displaying harmony" (Kotthoff 2003:1400).

While in the preceding two instances, the recipient of the irony plays along and thus directly aligns with the questioner, the following stretch of conversation illustrates a more complex example of how alignments are achieved and shifted through the use of humorous questions and responses to them. The complexity is mainly due to the fact that all four women actively participate, while in the preceding section Samantha and Charlotte were merely side-participants to the humorous exchange.

SC_27.1 WESLEY & LESLEY

```
  8   S    here's what I think.
  9   M    m-hm
  10  S    round up all the divorced men,
           and keep them in a pound.
  11  M,   ((giggle))
      Ch,
      C
```

	12	S	that way you get their whole history before you take one home.
	13	Ch	just because a man's divorced doesn't mean he has a problem.
			like my brother Wesley.
			he's just separated from his wife Lesley,
			[and he is,]
	14	S	[uh]
			Wesley and Lesley?
			I don't think so.
	15	M	((laughs))
	16	C	what is that,
→			marriage by Mother Goose?
	17	M	definitely a candidate for the pound. ((laughing))
	18	Ch	okay.
			.. >I was going to ask you all to meet him,
			because he's coming to visit me,<
			and now,
			.. forget it.
	19	C	no no no honey.
			we want to meet Wesley.
			((Charlotte smilingly shakes her head))
			of Wesley and Lesley.
			and P.S.,
→			does he work for Nestlé?
	20	Ch	[((rolls her eyes))]
	21	M, S	[((laugh out loudly))]
	22	Ch	my brother is very important to me.
			and I'm not going to have him subjected to scrutiny and ridicule.
	23	S	hm
			I'll be scrutiny.
			.. you'll be ridicule.
	24	M	I always have to be ridicule.
→			why can't you be ridicule for once?
	25	Ch	((*despairing look oriented towards Carrie*))
	26	C	I kno:w.

The four women are discussing Miranda's affair with a divorced man with a child. Samantha's sarcastic remark, in turn 10 ("round up all the divorced men, and keep them in a pound."), elicits giggles from her three friends and establishes a jocular key. The giggling response in turn 11 indicates that the three align with Samantha, presumably because all of them have experienced difficulties with divorced men. This constitutes an example of "laughing with," which promotes affiliation and bonding (cf. Glenn 1995). This kind of bonding through conversational joking is typical of all-female talk (cf. C. Davies 1984; Jenkins 1985; Kalcik 1975; Kotthoff forthcoming).

Although Charlotte joined in the giggling, she then attempts to recontextualise the conversation as factual. She denies that all divorced men are problematic and offers her brother as an example (turn 13). In so doing, she also shifts alignment, excluding herself from the anti-divorced-men-alliance. When she mentions the rhyming names of her brother and his wife, Wesley and Lesley, Samantha poses a clarification question (turn 14), expressing wonder at this onomastical coincidence. This triggers laughter on the part of Miranda (turn 15), which is conducive to more jocular remarks. Carrie's following question taps into this mood relating the end-rhyme of Wesley and Lesley's names to nursery rhymes.

She achieves this by posing a question consisting of an interrogative clause, "what is that." and a self-supplied answer (Biber et al. 1999) with a rising intonation contour, "marriage by Mother Goose?" Structurally, this construction corresponds to what Norrick (1992) labels "wh-questions with guesses in tag position." Considering the sequential context of turn 16, however, this instance is different. The wh-questions with a guess in tag position described by Norrick elicit a confirmation of the guess, thereby implying a yes/no question or a negative response in the case of the addressee judging the guess wrong. In the latter case, the utterance is treated as a wh-question "just as if no guess were appended" (Norrick 1992:87). Turn 16 is followed neither by a confirmation nor by a response to the wh-question. Instead, Miranda takes up what Samantha said about divorced men seven turns back: "definitely a candidate for the pound." The fact that Carrie's question does not receive an answer but evokes the utterance that set the jocular key allows the conclusion that her wh-question with guess in tag position is a humour question. This is confirmed by Miranda's laughing. Her laughter and her evocation of Samantha's original remark in turn 10 signal disaffiliation with Charlotte but affiliation with Carrie and Samantha. At this point in the conversation, the "laughing with" has shifted to "laughing at" Charlotte and an interactional team of Carrie, Samantha, and Miranda has been established (cf. Glenn 1995).

Charlotte's subsequent effort to recontextualise in turn 18 is cued by the discourse marker "okay." This marker here functions as a closing device (cf. Schegloff and Sacks 1973), which wraps up the humorous banter by announcing the result of this raillery, namely her decision not to introduce her brother to her friends. Still, in the consecutive turn (19), Carrie switches back to the humorous key with wordplay on the brother's

name: “no no no honey. we want to meet Wesley. of Wesley and Lesley. and P.S., does he work for Nestlé?” The multiple saying “no no no” (cf. Stivers 2004) at the beginning of the utterance signal that Carrie’s intention is to stop Charlotte’s course of action – her refusal to introduce her brother to her friends as well as her shift back towards a factual key. The final move of her utterance is a humour question, which elicits laughter rather than an answer. The non-verbal reactions to Carrie’s utterance clearly illustrate the participants’ positions: while Charlotte smilingly shakes her head during Carrie’s first two apologetic moves, thus benignly signalling that she is prepared to make concessions, she rolls her eyes when Carrie proceeds with verbal play, thereby disaligning from her friends. Miranda and Samantha, contrarily, align with Carrie by laughing out loud, further maintaining the interactional team.

When the laughter has died down Charlotte insists that she will not expose her brother to this (turn 22). However, her overblown language in “I’m not going to have him subjected to scrutiny and ridicule.” prompts a teasing reaction on the part of Samantha. The consecutive turn may be considered as an example of “joke first” (Schegloff 1987b): Samantha does not produce a relevant second part to Charlotte’s turn, but constructs an ambiguous reading of “subjected to scrutiny and ridicule.”, in so far as she assigns the role of “scrutiny personified” to herself and of “ridicule personified” to Miranda. In turn 24, Miranda extends this theatrical image by complaining about her role assignment: “I always have to be ridicule. why can’t you be ridicule for once?” In this jocular context, Miranda’s rhetorical question in her role as a nagging actor can be considered another humour question, which aligns her with Samantha. The teasing here presumably functions as a form of social control of Charlotte’s almost theatrical indignation and persistent refusal to share her friends’ anti-divorcee attitude (cf. Drew 1987).[61] Interestingly, Carrie then re-affiliates with Charlotte, signalling understanding for her despairing look: “I know” (turn 26). Whether a relevant second to Charlotte’s turn 22 follows cannot be concluded from the data as the scene ends after turn 26, but during the course of the episode Charlotte introduces her friends to her brother after all.

The analysis clearly illustrates that questions can be used to create and maintain humour and shared amusement. Humour questions can establish a bond between the interlocutors, if they are directed against a shared opponent, in this case the divorced

men. Furthermore, these questions establish and reinforce customary joking relationships found amongst close friends, who "can afford to eschew the more obvious demonstrations of mutual respect and affection associated with public behaviour, because they share a private bond" (Norrick 1993: 75). The teasing here serves as a mild reprimand for Charlotte's opposing community values. This confirms once more that Charlotte is a somewhat more marginal member of the group. Typically, it is she who deviates in her attitude and receives teasing challenges for it. Although she rarely plays along and instead receives those teases po-faced, she never explicitly complains and seems to accept the social disjunction knowing that there is no real hostility. As in this excerpt, the teasing sequences are typically concluded by one or several of the women re-aligning with Charlotte, signalling that the friendship bond is intact. Thus, these sequences can be considered "felicitous teasing" in Straehle's (1993: 226) terms.

While humour questions can function as mild challenges or staged disagreements and are not treated as offensive by the recipients in this community of practice, the following section will turn to instances of questions whose propositional content or sequential context render them hostile.

4.4.5 Are questions always friendly?

Adversity is the touchstone of friendship.
(French proverb)

The preceding section on the use of questions in humour and teasing practices suggested that questions have a disaffiliative potential. Likewise, the discussion of questions with respect to gender-related usage patterns has revealed that in certain contexts, questions engineer authority and dominance rather than equality and solidarity. Considering the reactions to potentially challenging or hostile questions, there seems to be a continuum ranging from mild to aggravated disagreement. Coates (1996a: 186) shows that questions are typically used to display diverging viewpoints without overtly disagreeing, because such open disagreement would threaten the collaborative floor characteristic of all-female conversation. One type of questions frequently used to achieve this is rhetorical questions. This accords with Frank's (1990) findings that these

questions can simultaneously have multiple functions producing short and long term relational effects:

> It may well be that the value of RQs lies in their capacity to serve a dual role; by strengthening assertions and mitigating potential threats to face, they enable people to win an argument (short term), while not jeopardizing a relationship (long term). (Frank 1990: 738)

Consider the following example, in which a negative interrogative by Miranda can be seen to accomplish these combined effects:

```
SC_29.1 SUMMER SHARE
    1   Ch  it's a really .. cute,
            three bedroom cottage.
            and they are giving us a fanTAStic deal for the
            month of August.
    2   C   yeah of course it's a good deal.
            it's haunted with cheating boyfriends,
            and sexual rejection.
    3   S   we can always burn sa:ge.
            ((broad grin))
    4   M   hey.
            sharing a house with your girlfriends,
            is fine in your twenties.
            but I feel like in your thirties,
 →          isn't it a tiny bit pathetic?
            like being the oldest kid at summer camp?
    5   S   she has a point.
            my twenty-five-year-old assistant,
            Nina Grubelski,
            has a summer share in Bridge Hampton,
            with EIGHteen other girls.
            they have to sleep in shifts.
```

In this excerpt, Charlotte is trying to convince her three friends to share a house in the Hamptons, a holiday area on Long Island, for a summer break. Neither of her friends displays a willingness to go, but they achieve this by different means. While Carrie and Samantha resort to sarcastic comments in turns 2 and 3, Miranda in turn 4 explains why she declines in a more factual key. The overture, “hey,” functions as a contextualisation cue. She calls her friends to order shifting from sarcasm to more serious debate. She sets up a contrast between women in their twenties and women in their thirties to argue that

while in the former age-group the kind of behaviour suggested by Charlotte is acceptable, it is no longer so in the case of thirty-somethings.

It is striking that the first part of her utterance, which expresses partial agreement with the idea of female friends sharing a house for a summer break, is fluent and straightforward compared to the second part. The contrastive discourse marker "but" (Fraser 1998) indicates that she is about to display disagreement. Miranda then proceeds cautiously. She uses the "egocentric sequence" (Rubin and Greene 1992) "I feel" to indicate that this is just her personal impression. This is followed by "like" functioning as a hedge to cushion the impact of what she is about to say. Finally, she uses an interrogative structure to challenge Charlotte's plans rather than straightforwardly state "It's pathetic to do this at the age of thirty." This is certainly not merely a matter of expressive style, but can also be interpreted as politic behaviour: the interrogative format epistemically downgrades the criticism (cf. Koshnik 2002: 1872). This interpretation is supported by the fact that the force of the strongly evaluative adjective "pathetic" is dampened by the modifier "a tiny bit." Furthermore, Miranda's turn increment (Ford et al. 2002) "like being the oldest kid in summer camp?" carries a rising intonation pattern, thereby not totally committing herself to her words.

Nevertheless, Miranda's turn is also challenging. Her negative interrogative compares to Bublitz' (1981: 862) second type of negative conducive yes/no question, which is based on a "pretended discrepancy" between old and new assumptions. Miranda's old assumption, "sharing a house in your thirties is pathetic," conflicts with the new assumption introduced by Charlotte, "sharing a house in your thirties is fine." If Miranda accepted the new assumption, the question would merely express surprise and the expected answer would be negative. However, the following increment displays that Miranda does not subscribe to this new assumption and knows the answer is positive. Still, Miranda does not receive a positive answer from Charlotte and it is dubious whether she really expected one.

Instead, Miranda's question receives a positive response from Samantha: "she has a point." (turn 5). With this formulaic clause from the debating register, Samantha orients to the more factual key Miranda has introduced. She agrees with Miranda, though the use of the third person pronoun "she" indicates that she does not directly address Miranda, but rather Charlotte. This displays a structural alignment with Charlotte, but

on the plane of interpersonal alignment affiliation with Miranda against Charlotte. Samantha then goes on to account for her agreement with Miranda by giving an extreme example of a summer share.

In essence, Miranda's negative interrogative functions to align herself with Carrie and Samantha – opposite Charlotte. Her question is a device to challenge Charlotte's assumptions and to "teach" her about appropriate behaviour for thirty-year olds. This also implies that Miranda considers herself to know better than her addressee constructing a teacher-pupil relationship. As already noted above in the section on direct address in knowledge display situations, Charlotte frequently finds herself in such a novice situation, which accounts for the fact that such questions typically occur in response to something Charlotte says. Hence, these questions can be considered to have a didactic function in the Socratic tradition, challenging assumptions and thereby nurturing new insights.

The following excerpt can also be considered to contain a challenging question, though at first sight it may be categorised a confirmation question in Freed and Greenwood's terms. These questions serve to request a repetition of the semantic content of the preceding utterance(s), i.e. the current speaker is merely "checking on the accuracy or understanding of newly received information" (Freed 1994: 628).

SC_18.2 CHEATING

```
    30  C   I just don't think that you can define cheating in
            absolute terms.
→   31  Ch  you're saying you think it's okay to cheat?
    32  C   well,
            I think that maybe there is a cheating curve,
            that,
            in someone's definition
            of what constitutes cheating,
            is in direct proportion to how much,
            .hh they themselves want to cheat.
```

The women are discussing cheating and Charlotte offers a formulation (Heritage and Watson 1979) of Carrie's preceding utterance. The rising intonation pattern may be interpreted as checking for accuracy, but the statement is double embedded in reporting clauses: "you're saying that x" and "you think that x.", distancing Charlotte from Carrie's statement. Carrie's response in turn 32 indicates that she does in fact not interpret Charlotte's question as confirmation request, but as a challenge. The discourse

marker "well" indicates that Carrie considers her friend's summary as insufficient (cf. R. Lakoff 1973a) and gives her a little time (cf. Svartvik 1980), to plan the following intricate explanation.

In my data, questions which function like Freed and Greenwood's confirmation questions do not occur. Their sequential context shows that all of them are interpreted as a challenge: they are followed by justifications rather than a repetition of the information conveyed in the preceding turn. The same holds for clarification questions, as we have already seen in the analyses of SC_17.4 REBOUND (section 4.2.6.1) and SC_18.1 MAKE NEW FRIENDS (section 4.3.4.2). In the following exchange between the four friends, turns 48 and 49 at first sight look like clarification and confirmation questions or repair initiators. Still, they do not elicit confirmation, clarification or repair.

SC_18.3 BACK WITH BIG

```
     45   M    wait a second.
               aren't we skipping a beat here?
               who are you sleeping with?
     46   C    (2.0)
               H it's something that started again a few weeks
               ago,
               I don't know if it's real or not,
               so I didn't want to say anything.
               but,
               .hh it's Bi:g.
     47   S    [oh my God.]
→    48   Ch   [WHAT?]
→    49   M    [you're] SLEEping with BIG?
     50   Ch   Carrie,
               he was such an asshole to you.
     51   C    not really.
               I mean maybe sometimes.
               but,
```

Research on repair (e.g. Drew 1998, Schegloff et al. 1977) has so far neglected instances such as the above, in which a question generally used to initiate repair displays an affective stance towards the preceding utterances such as surprise, indignation, or horror. Drew (1998: 97) following Sacks (1992b: 412) notes that "the use of 'open' class repair initiators need not correspond with the actual cognitive states of not having heard or understood." However, he only looks at two contexts in which these forms of repair initiation occur: abrupt topic shifts and potentially disaffiliative utterances resulting from an alternative understanding of a preceding turn. In the excerpt

presented above, neither of these applies. The repair initiators do not follow a disaffiliative turn, but they constitute disaffiliation by signalling a negative affective stance towards what was said in the preceding turn.

This phenomenon compares to Selting's (1996) "astonished questions": with the help of an "astonishment overtone" (Selting 1996: 240) the speaker indicates that the question signals a problem of expectation rather than cognitive understanding, distinguishing it from normal repair initiation.[62] The astonished overtone requires the recipient to treat the problem of expectation on the level of content and sets up a preference for agreement. If the recipient chooses to ignore the astonishment overtone, the initiator indicates dissatisfaction. Selting (1996) mentions that prosodic marking may also indicate indignation, but she does not give an example nor elaborates on this. Mandelbaum's (2003) investigation of repair sequences as relational work includes a mock version of such an indignation overtone. In her data, a repair initiator functions to teasingly take an interlocutor to task for something she said in the preceding turn. Another mention of the capacity of repair initiators to signal a negative stance can be found in Koshnik's (2002) discussion of an example from Schegloff (1995). She shows how an open class next turn repair initiator ("hah?") signals a possible disagreement and how the recipient orients to the repair initiator as a pre-disagreement.[63]

In the excerpt presented above, Carrie's three interlocutors simultaneously express alarm upon hearing that she is seeing Mr Big again, thereby disaffiliating with Carrie. While Samantha, in turn 47, does so by using an expletive, Charlotte and Miranda use questions. Charlotte's open class next turn repair initiator "WHAT?" is prosodically marked and its sequential context supports the conclusion that it signals astonishment and a negative stance towards this unexpected twist. It never receives a clarification from Carrie, and Charlotte's anaphoric use of "he" referring back to Big in turn 50 indicates that she cognitively understood what Carrie said. What Charlotte requires Carrie to clarify is not what she said but why she is seeing Big again, considering that he behaved so badly towards Carrie (turn 50: "Carrie, he was such an asshole to you."). Charlotte's use of the taboo word "asshole" emphasises her outrage, further supporting the interpretation that her open class repair initiator in fact functions to display a negative affective stance. Similarly, Miranda's prosodically marked confirmation question "you're SLEEping with BIG?" does not elicit a response from Carrie. Instead,

Charlotte takes the floor and accounts for the friends' outrage by giving her negative evaluation of Mr Big (turn 50). Carrie then responds directly to this judgement about Big, in an attempt to explain her behaviour. She thereby reacts to the emotional overtones of her friends' questions. Still, her counter-opposing turn vacillates between disagreement and partial agreement: "not really. I mean maybe sometimes. but," (turn 51).

In summary, questions that are generally used to initiate repair – or in Freed and Greenwood's framework elicit confirmation or clarification – here clearly serve to display a negative affective stance and to disaffiliate. However, in the excerpt above, Carrie does not orient towards conflict and attempts to realign with her friends by downgrading the disagreement. Contrarily, the following excerpt shows how participants can make explicit their interpretation of questions as hostile. In this case, a barrage of social information and opinion questions, which at first sight may be interpreted as merely eliciting the requested information, is perceived as aggressive.

SC_92.1_LEAVING FOR PARIS

	1	C	and I've always wanted to learn French,
			and drink wine before noon,
			so ... basically it's my fantasy,
			complete with .. Parisian parties and museum openings.
→	2	M	but .. f:or how long?
	3	C	as long as it's fun.
			indefinitely.
→	4	M	so you'd be moving there?
	5	C	no:
			cause I still have my apartment here.
→	6	M	which he'd be paying for?
	7	S	a:h he can certainly afford it.
→	8	Ch	do you think you might get married?
	9	C	no: that's-
			I- I don't think that's the point.
→	10	Ch	then what is he promising you?
	11	C	um .. the wo:rld?
→	12	M	but what about your job?
			your column is all about New York,
			you're all about New York.
			how would you
	13	C	I- I don't know.
→			how can you people still have questions?
			I got all your questions answered,
			and .. and they were good answers by the way.
			so,
			this is the time .. <when everybody sh- should be

```
           really excited for me.>
   14  S   but we are excited.
           it's fabulous.
   15  C   no.
           forget it forget it.
   16  Ch  no I think it's really romantic.
→  17  C   then stop killing it with questions.
→  18  M   we just want to make sure you think this through.
   19  C   I am thinking it through.
           but it's a nice offer,
           and it would be nice,
           <if my friends could be happy for me.|
           (1.5) especially .. when I've always been happy for
           them.>
   20  Ch  °Carrie,
           we are happy for you.°
   21      (3.0){Carrie concentrates on her plate while the
           others look at her}
   22  S   anyone want to talk about cancer?
           (1.0) anybody?
```

Carrie has revealed to her friends that she is going to move to Paris with her current significant other and is raving about it at the beginning of this excerpt. Her friends, however, bombard her with questions. Miranda asks three, of which the first two are answered by Carrie. The third in turn 6 is responded to by Samantha and then followed up by another question on the part of Charlotte. When Carrie does not answer this question satisfactorily Charlotte backs it up with yet another question (turn 10). Carrie's response to this is succeeded by a fourth question on the part of Miranda (turn 12).

Up to this point, the conversation resembles a cross-examination with several people asking questions requesting similar information and the questioned party struggling for answers as indicated by the fillers, pauses and false starts.[64] Samantha, Charlotte, and Miranda thereby exhibit conjoined participation and construct an interactional team against Carrie (cf. Gordon 2003 and section 4.2.5). Labov and Fanshel (1977: 95-96) note that due to the cumulative nature of pragmatic force repeated requests, including requests for information, can be perceived as challenges. Indeed, Carrie perceives this barrage of social information questions as hostile, as can be gleaned from her reaction to Miranda's final question: "I- I don't know. how can you people still have questions? I got all your questions answered, and .. and they were good answers by the way. so, this is the time .. <when everybody sh- should be really excited for me.>" In her first move she states that she does not have an answer to this question, then she challenges the

questioning itself. Note the use of "you people," which functions to distance herself from her friends.

In the following turns (14 & 16), Samantha and Charlotte try to make up for their behaviour and to meet Carrie's expectations, but Carrie does not buy into this and once more brings up the issue of questions: "then stop killing it with questions." (turn 17). Miranda then accounts for their cross-examination: "we just want to make sure you think this through." She thereby alludes to the work done by questions in opinion interchanges, which have precisely the function to come clear about situations and to help the friends find ways to handle their concerns. In this situation, however, Carrie does not expect such an interchange, because she does not perceive the situation as problematic. On the contrary, she is happy and expects her friends to share this feeling with her. Conflicting expectations therefore provide for diverging interpretations of linguistic practices, turning social information and opinion questions, which generally express involvement and hence affiliation, into aggressive, disaffiliative acts. This is in keeping with Tannen's (1993) notion of the polysemy of linguistic entities and compares to the example mentioned in section 4.4.1 of a barrage of personal questions being perceived differently by questioner and addressee: while the addressee considers the questions as intrusive, the questioner considers them an expression of interest in the other person (Tannen 1984). Through their potential to elicit personal information and to elicit a refusal to provide personal information, these questions can serve both sides of the dialectic process of balancing closedness and openness, constituting a key locus for the negotiation of friendship.

In this section, I have shown that questions can be used to challenge the (verbal) behaviour of interlocutors. Considering that a speaker has a choice between displaying opposition in a question format or in the shape of an assertion, the former generally is the less face-threatening alternative. Brown and Levinson (1987) consider questions an off record strategy for doing criticism and accordingly, they can be viewed as politic behaviour. This is borne out by the fact that none of the addressees in the first three excerpts presented here takes offence or aggravates the disagreement, although the interlocutors clearly orient to them as oppositional turns, either by agreeing with the opposing viewpoint, by counter-opposing or by justifying their position. Surprisingly, the seemingly innocuous social information questions in SC_92.1 LEAVING FOR

PARIS are interpreted as hostile. This supports Tannen's (1993) theory of the relativity of linguistic entities, and shows that questions cannot generally be considered practices for affiliation. Their potential to accomplish both affiliation and disaffiliation renders them potent tools in the process of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation.

4.4.6 Summary

In the preceding sections, I have investigated the use of questions amongst the female friends in *SATC* and given an overview of prior research on questions, touching on syntactic, semantic and pragmatic issues. I have based my investigations on a pragmatic-sequential definition of questions, taking into account utterances which display an interrogative form as well as utterances which can be considered questions due to the responses they receive. My analyses bear out findings that questions not only elicit information but have important interpersonal functions. They are, in fact, a chief resource for displaying conversational alignments, and they thereby negotiate relationships at the macro-level of social organisation.

While most research has focused on questions in asymmetric speech situations such as courtroom investigation, I follow Coates (1996a) in considering questions to be vital in the establishment and maintenance of connectedness amongst female friends. I also follow Freed and Greenwood who have established a useful taxonomy of question functions based on elicited conversations between friends (cf. Freed 1994). However, their categorisation does not fully match the use of questions in the fictional circle of friends under analysis. Furthermore, due to the complexity of the data and the multivalence of questions, it has proven more informative to look into question-centred activities rather than single occurrences of specific question functions.

I have found four major question-centred activities: 1) catching up on friends' lives, 2) interchanging opinions, 3) evoking a shared background, and 4) accomplishing humour and teasing. With one exception, these are activities which Coates (1996a) shows to be constitutive of female friendships. Coates (1996a), however, neglects the work done by so-called social information questions, which elicit specific and often intimate details about a friend's life. My analyses show how the act of posing such

intimate questions is a bid for closeness, and how the revelation of details from her private life signals that the interlocutor has accepted the bid, thus aligning herself with the questioner and constructing an intimate relationship at the macro-level. Social information questions therefore are not only crucial in getting acquainted in conversation (cf. Svennevig 1999), but also in the maintenance of intimate relationships. They generally serve in the dialectic process of balancing openness and closedness in interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, asking for and offering news in conversation is “reflexive” to the relationship of the conversationalists:

> As participants observe peer (kinship, friendship) rights and obligations for letting each other know the latest news, they are, *in their practices*, behaviorally accomplishing or achieving the visibility of those relations. That is, when potential deliverers *offer* news, they partially signify in that offering the very relation that obligates their telling. Also, when potential recipients *ask* for news, they are, in their attentiveness, performing particular concerns and enacting a social connection with their interlocutor. (Maynard 2003: 123; author’s stress)

I argue that this reflexivity also holds for the other three activities: they are indicative and at the same time constitutive of friendship relations at the macro-level of social organisation.

The second friendship constructing activity predominantly managed through the adroit usage of questions is the interchange of opinions. With the help of various questions the four friends elicit and offer viewpoints and advice. They thereby help each other to think difficult situations through and to get a fresh perspective on the trouble at hand. My analyses also show how questions can simultaneously display and elicit perspectives, and that the verbs “think” and “mean” contextualise think talk. Moreover, the data suggests that eliciting and giving opinions and advice is a rule-governed activity in this community of practice, and that behaviour which does not accord with these rules is oriented to in conversation.

The evocation of a shared background is one of the most important functions of questions in Coates (1996a) naturally occurring data. Instances of this can also be found

in my corpus of constructed dialogue. The four women use questions to check whether attitudes are shared and to construct joint oppositions. This establishes affiliation and corroborates group values, strengthening the friendship bond. Surprisingly, question tags do not play a significant role – an upshot of my research which is not in line with findings on naturally occurring conversation.

Finally, questions accumulate in humour and teasing sequences, which contribute to friendship relations in two ways: first of all they create shared amusement and lead to the enjoyment of each other's company, and secondly, they nourish customary joking relations, which in turn establish and maintain the specific alliances amongst the four friends. My analyses show that various interrogative structures – from alternative questions to wh-questions with guesses in tag position – can function as humour questions and thus receive laughter or a jocular uptake rather than answers. As for the interpersonal implications, the investigation of the usage of humour questions and sequences confirms that Charlotte takes a somewhat more marginal position in the community of practice: she is often the butt of teasing activities due to her expressing a different – typically more naïve – attitude. Still, she does not take offence and her friends generally re-align with her. Teasing questions – and teasing sequences in general – clearly constitute a device to handle differences without highlighting them.

The discussion ends with a note of caution. I show that questions, due to the relativity of all linguistic entities (cf. Tannen 1993), can also be perceived as hostile. In the example presented, conflicting underlying expectations cause Carrie to interpret a barrage of intimate questions as aggressive. Nevertheless – as in teasing exchanges in which questions only denoted a bite instead of being perceived as a bite – challenging questions do not lead to a breach in the friendship relation. They are part of a conflict-in-friendship frame, which enables intimates to negotiate their positions and at the same time provides for high involvement. Through this process friends calibrate the balance between association and dissociation so that conflict is part and parcel of a healthy relationship (cf. section 2.3). The overall effect of question usage in the conversations among the four friends thus is to do friendship.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented detailed analyses at the character level of screen-to-face discourse in order to show how friendship relations are constructed through talk-in-interaction. Since friendship ties are established and maintained through the negotiation of a set of attributes such as equality, intimacy, enjoyment, and social support – based on the overall dialectic of association versus dissociation – the goal of this chapter was to pin down these negotiations in the details of talk. I have argued that the most relevant details of talk in this enterprise are the patterns of the interaction commonly termed alignments. I have distinguished three planes of alignment: the cultural, the interpersonal and the structural. Interpersonal and structural alignment can be subsumed under the term conversational alignment and concern the lining up of participants' utterances and moves necessary to accomplish intersubjective understanding and joint acts. While on the structural plane, the conversationalists line up as ratified speaker, addressee, and side participant, on the interpersonal plane, interlocutors establish affiliation and disaffiliation. Finally, cultural alignment concerns the interrelation of the ongoing interaction and the participants' cultural background.

I have given an overview of conversational practices commonly considered to establish alignments on either one or several of the three planes, amongst others backchannelling, prefaces and discourse markers, repetition, side- and repair sequences, response stories and intimacy pursuits. This selection reveals that these practices can be found at all levels of conversational organisation ranging from prosodic elements to extended sequences and that they can establish alignments either proactively or retroactively. My analyses of complete conversational exchanges reveal that the four women use these practices for the establishment of alignment patterns on the structural as well as on the interpersonal plane and that those patterns on the structural and interpersonal plane may diverge, combining structural alignment with disaffiliation, which intensifies the disaffiliation. The cultural plane of alignment is also relevant for the maintenance of friendship relations, since it warrants an orientation of the interactional practices towards the expectations shared by the community of practice of what friendship means. I have demonstrated how explicit alignment practices are used to indicate and negotiate deviations from those expectations.

The complexity of alignment patterns has been shown to increase with the number of speakers. In multi-party conversation, one practice can simultaneously contribute to alignment/affiliation with one participant and disalignment/disaffiliation with another. Furthermore, interactional teams may emerge and shift during the course of a multi-party conversation. These shifts in alignment patterns accomplish micro-transformations of social structure, which in turn construct social relations at the macro-level. Due to the sociation-inherent dialectic of association versus dissociation, a simple correlation of affiliation at the micro-level and friendship maintenance at the macro-level does not hold. Both affiliation and disaffiliation are indispensable to achieve an appropriate balance between openness/closedness, autonomy/connection, and novelty/predictability.

The flexibility of alignment patterns allows the four women to venture precarious manoeuvres, upsetting and then re-attaining a state of equilibrium in the sense of Watts (1989). My analyses have revealed how the women adroitly re-align after disaffiliating sequences and how they use affiliative practices in the context of disaffiliating moves. Hence, these practices of talk-in-interaction allow for criticism and disagreement in friendship relations.

The distribution of affiliative/aligning and disaffiliative/disaligning moves reveals that the four female friends have dissimilar relations with each other. Overall the shifting alignment patterns at the micro-level allow the conclusion that Miranda and Carrie form the core friendship pair and that Charlotte and Samantha constitute more marginal members. This intra-community differentiation has been confirmed in the sections that focused on two specific alignment practices: familiar terms of address and question-response sequences.

Terms of address are commonly considered to negotiate social relationships. With respect to conversational alignments instances of direct address are of particular interest, since they may combine expressive and identifying functions thus accomplishing structural as well as interpersonal alignment. Rather than categorising the occurrences of direct address in my corpus according to their semantics and pragmatics, I have analysed their functioning in the local contexts in which they accumulate. This allows for a description of how familiar terms of address can pro- and retroactively accomplish alignment. The four women use two types of familiar forms of address: first names and endearments. The frequency with which they use and receive the one or the other varies

from woman to woman. The fact that Charlotte receives most addresses and that Samantha also uses endearments with non-intimates indicate that these two women deviate in their practices and constitute more marginal members of the friendship network.

Endearments and first names as direct address accrue in the following five local contexts: 1) access rituals, 2) apologies, 3) orders/requests, 4) comfort/support, and 5) knowledge displays. All of these contexts are characterised by a temporary suspension of some fundamental component of friendship relations, in particular proximity, similarity and equality, along with imbalances in the association/dissociation dialectics. My analyses show how familiar terms of address in these contexts assuage disequilibrium by pro- or retroactively signalling affiliation in the face of disaffiliation. The dual alignment they establish in the event of an imbalance caused by one interlocutor's leave-taking, authority, well-being or remedial work creates an intricate pattern of politic behaviour. Dual alignments also entail dual contextualization such as solidarity/conflict or expertship/equality. However, familiar terms of address like any other linguistic pattern are multivalent and first names and endearments may be perceived as affiliating or disaffiliating, depending on the local context and the interactants' goals. If the recipient perceives them as signalling indignation or rebuke, they have the opposite effect and aggravate disaffiliation. Their polysemy generally renders terms of address versatile tools in the balancing out of the association/dissociation dialectic, but in my corpus, there are hardly any occurrences of terms of address whose prosodic marking or sequential context signal disaffiliation or aggravation. In essence, they can be considered a practice for doing (re)affiliation in the community of practice under analysis.

The close investigation of typical contexts of terms of address also allows conclusions about the group's inner differentiation: the finding that Charlotte receives most addresses in knowledge display sequences further corroborates her marginality in the community of practice. More specifically, the analyses of these sequences have revealed that the verbal interaction establishes her as a novice in the sense of Lave and Wenger (1991) with less symbolic capital in the form of knowledge of dating and men than the other members.

The second alignment practice I have investigated more closely is question-response sequences. These sequences are of particular interest because questions may initiate affiliative sequences such as intimacy pursuits and because responses are the most obvious indicators of how participants align. I have based my investigations on a pragmatic-sequential definition of questions, taking into account utterances which display an interrogative form as well as utterances which can be considered questions due to the responses they receive. Since categorisations of question functions proved inadequate, I have applied the same procedure I used for the investigation of direct address, i.e. I have classified local contexts in which question-response sequences accumulate. Four question-centred activities have emerged: 1) catching up on friends' lives, 2) interchanging opinions, 3) evoking a shared background, and 4) accomplishing humour and teasing. These findings compare to Coates' (1996a) study of naturally-occurring conversations amongst female friends insofar as Coates (1996a) shows questions to be vital in the negotiation of the autonomy/connectedness dimension. My results not only confirm but also add to Coates' (1996a) findings, since I report on the workings of social information questions, which initiate and sustain the activity I have labelled "catching up with each other's lives." These are not examined in Coates (1996a) and have to my knowledge only been briefly discussed by Athanasiadou (1991).

I have argued that eliciting details about a friend's life is a bid for closeness, connection, and predictability and that by providing the relevant information the recipient affiliatively aligns with the questioner. This process entails reflexivity, i.e. by asking for and offering news and intimate details interlocutors signify a particular social connection that allows for their asking and obligates their telling respectively. The same holds for the other three question-centred activities: their occurrence is simultaneously indicative and constitutive of a friendship relation at the macro-level of social organisation. In these activities, questions enable the friends 1) to think through difficult situations and to get a fresh perspective on some trouble at hand, 2) to test for and reaffirm and shared attitude and evoke a shared background, and 3) to establish and uphold customary joking relationships.

The activities in which questions are prevalent and the alignment patterns they establish render them a rather different practice from direct address. While familiar

terms of address occur predominantly in activities which threaten the friendship relation, questions initiate and sustain activities which benefit the friendship relation; and while familiar terms of address thus typically function to achieve affiliation in the face of disaffiliation, thereby accomplishing a dual alignment, questions enable affiliative sequences such as self-disclosure, troubles talk and banter. Still, there are also questions which can be considered politic behaviour oriented towards sustaining a state of equilibrium in the face of disaffiliation: criticism veiled in question format can be considered a conventional politeness strategy. These utterances accomplish disaffiliation by opposing the interlocutor at the content level of conversational organisation, yet simultaneously – through the indirect format of their opposition – work towards re-attaining a state of equilibrium.

As I have also shown for terms of address, prosodic marking can stress the disaffiliative potential of linguistic entities: in the case of questions, open confirmation and clarification questions, which generally signal problems with cognitive comprehension may indicate indignation or reproach through emotional overtones. Finally, due to the relativity of linguistic entities, even prosodically unmarked questions can be perceived as hostile, disaffiliating the interlocutors while at the same time closely aligning them on the structural plane.

In essence, their versatility renders question-response sequences a potent tool in the establishment and shifting of alignments at the micro-level of talk-in-interaction, accomplishing the negotiation of friendship relations at the macro-level of social organisation. The investigation of question-response sequences has also shed light on the inner differentiation of the friendship circle and confirmed the patterns which the discussion of alignment practices in general and terms of address in particular have established. The investigation of the use of humour questions and sequences has corroborated Charlotte’s marginal position in the community of practice: she is often the butt of teasing activities due to her expressing a different attitude. Furthermore, Samantha’s openly playing the expert in troubles talk sequences, while the other women resort to more indirect advice and attitude displays with the help of question formats, again confirms her more marginal position, diametrically opposed from the novice, Charlotte.

To conclude, micro-level alignment practices amongst the four friends have been shown to do friendship at the macro-level of social organisation. Familiar terms of address and question-response sequences constitute important tools in the establishment of these alignments and thus in the process of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation. The analyses of these practices in their typical conversational contexts also reveal that the friendship group consists of a core dyad, Carrie and Miranda, and two more marginal members, the expert Samantha and the novice Charlotte.

Notes Chapter 4

[1] For a detailed discussion of compound turn-constructional units and the completion of utterances in progress see Lerner (1991).
[2] An extended discussion of the discourse marker "so" can be found in Schiffrin 1987; Aijmer (2002) discusses the discourse particle "actually."
[3] For a more detailed discussion of parting sequences see section 4.3.4.2.
[4] In their essay, they list the following actions that are used to re-align participants' actions: motive talk (C. Mills 1940), accounts (Scott and Lyman 1968), disclaimers (Hewitt and Stokes 1975), remedial interchanges (Goffman 1971), the definition of the situation (McHugh 1968), and quasi-theorizing (Hall and Hewitt 1970).
[5] Cf. also Maynard's (1984) work on footing and alignments in plea bargaining.
[6] The terms (dis)affiliation and (dis)affiliative have been used for various purposes. Sacks (1992a) uses them to describe the relationship of a speaker to her utterance; for example, he states that a joke is generally "unaffiliated", because "the speaker does not disclose his [sic] position by using it" (1992a: 101). Furthermore, he employs the term affiliation as a synonym for claiming or asserting membership in a certain category (1992a: 383). Other CA scholars have also applied the labels (dis)affiliative to describe the relationship between a speaker's current and her prior utterance (e.g. Goldberg 1978).
[7] For openings/closings cf. also section 4.3.4.2.
[8] For the negotiation of phatic communication following "How are you?" inquiries see Coupland et al. (1992). Ylänne-McEwen (2004) investigates how alignments in travel agency interactions can shift from server-client to casual acquaintance relations.
[9] Goffman restricts his concept of "tie-statements" to information about a relationship to a third person rather than information of how an interlocutor perceives her relationship to her addressee.
[10] One approach not taken into account here is accommodation theory. A good example of a study looking at alignment processes from an accommodation theoretical point of view is Coupland et al. (1990).
[11] Qualifiers and prefaces/discourse markers cross-cut with the notion of hedges and more generally modality. However, as far as I have been able to establish, these notions have not been investigated with respect to their aligning potential aside from Coates' (1990) account of modal meaning with the help of politeness theory à la Brown and Levinson (1987).
[12] For an extended discussion of preference see Bilmes (1988). Related to this is the discussion of how preference organisation is connected to matters of face and politeness (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; Lerner 1996).
[13] A related phenomenon of multi-party conversations is that they frequently split up into two or more conversations (cf. Egbert 1997; Ch. Goodwin 1987; Sacks et al. 1974). These schismings (Egbert 1997) do not occur in my corpus, presumably since simultaneous conversations would be hard to follow on the TV screen.
[14] Carrie's way of describing her troubles certainly also functions to create humour on the level of audience-screen discourse. Since Miranda does not laugh or smile, the amusement on the character-level is not definite.
[15] The pauses and the hesitator may also suggest that Miranda is at a loss. She has to choose between either confirming Carrie's prior statement and telling her that she would not make a good mother or rejecting Carrie's assessment and telling her that she has motherly skills. Both answers are potentially face-threatening (Brown and Levinson 1987, Goffman 1967), insofar as either Miranda declares Carrie's assessment to be wrong or she challenges Carrie's femininity, which conventionally incorporates motherly skills. Consequently, both potential responses cause dispreference markers as found in Miranda's turn. This suggest that in such cases there is no preferred second pair part, both answers are dispreferred.
[16] The functions of such open class repair initiators with overtones of indignation will be discussed in the section on questions and responses (4.4.5).
[17] Cf. Wolfson (1983: 91), who comments that between status unequals it is mostly the person in the higher position who pays the compliment. Considering status as something constructed and negotiated through interaction, this allows for the conclusion that status differentials can be evoked through such moves and compliments can be perceived as patronising. As for the act of comforting, the comforter is clearly in a superior position since she is unaffected by the problem.
[18] For a cross-cultural treatment of rules of address see Braun (1988).

[19] This concurs with Biber et al.'s (1999) claim that one important social role of first names is to acknowledge individuality.
[20] This has been corroborated by diachronic discourse analysis (cf. Taavitsainen and Jucker 2003).
[21] In American English, there also seems to be a tendency for women to use "sweetie" and for men to use "honey." (Kristy Beers-Fägersten 2005, personal communication). This confirms Samantha's dissimilarity with the other women and adds to her more marginal status in the community of practice. However, as far as I have been able to establish there are no scholarly studies of this phenomenon.
[22] According to Biber et al. (1999), overtures are multi-word expressions which function as stock utterance openers and typically signal a new direction in the conversation. They will be discussed in more detail in section 4.4.4.
[23] Open class repair initiators will be discussed in detail in the section on questions (4.4.4)
[24] One could also argue that this is an individual dispreferred turn as Carrie indirectly refuses to comply with Samantha by reinforcing, via conversational implicature (Grice 1975), that she needs to leave: people who do not feel well should go home.
[25] An analysis of apologies as a speech act in the sense of Austin (1962) and Searle (1976) yields similar lists.
[26] This is an example of a well-written sitcom script. The humour works on two levels: first, it has a function within the interaction of the two characters on screen and second, it is designed to make the overhearer in front of the TV screen laugh.
[27] One could argue that this term of address solely functions to identify Charlotte as addressee. However, there are two other levels on which the addressee is clearly specified: first, the content of the utterance, since the gift is from Charlotte and Carrie only (cf. Hartung forthcoming), and second, Carrie's bodily orientation – she turns to Charlotte and touches her arm.
[28] The camera does not even show Carrie at that moment, but remains on Samantha's face and pans to Miranda after her "hello," thus following Samantha's head movement towards the current speaker.
[29] Biased questions will be discussed in detail below, in the section on questions (4.4.4)
[30] Note that this is one of the few occurrences of overlapping turns, here clearly functioning to intensify the argument.
[31] This may be due to the fact that *SATC* is a show about dating ethics, relationships between men and women, and sex, so that viewers expect expert revelations.
[32] Carrie's "he can caulk your tub." in turn 7, also has sexual innuendo, so that Charlotte's answer "yes, you can" in turn 8 takes on double significance, too. It is unclear here, whether this works on both the character and the screen-audience level, since both women retain a straight face.
[33] For the deprecating usage of "dear" see also McConnell-Ginet (1978).
[34] Pragmatic homonymy and polysemy are often not distinguished and generally referred to as "ambiguities," although the term ambiguity is problematic. It "suggests a certain defectiveness and does not stress the selection of possible hearings and the elegant ways in which such selections are made to *produce* contextual effects" (McHoul 1987: 469; author's stress). I generally use the term "multivalence of utterances" – whether the interlocutors interpret the ambiguous utterances differently, or whether they simultaneously have multiple meanings is revealed by the sequential context.
[35] For an extended discussion see, for example, Quirk et al. 1985, Biber et al. 1999, and Huddleston and Pullum 2002. Rising intonation is not an authoritative question marker, since it more generally marks non-termination, and since there are questions types which have falling intonation (wh-questions) (cf. Ch. Goodwin 1981: 27fn).
[36] McHoul (1987) stresses that the disambiguation of questions is not only an analyser's problem, but also poses a problem for the participants themselves. According to the ethnomethodological notion of reflexivity, the definiteness of a scenario is not fully available to the addressee until she or he works the question as a certain type of question and thus decides what the occasion is to be.
[37] However, these must not be confused with high-rising terminals or uptalk, i.e. a high rising tone at the end of a declarative utterance without question force: a feature which was first observed in the speech of young American women and which is spreading fast (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 173ff.).
[38] This terminology is commonly used in syntax and semantics as well as in communication studies. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) use the terms "open" and "closed interrogatives/questions" as primary categories. Closed questions are then subdivided into alternative and polar questions.
[39] Note that Labov and Fanshel (1977:64fn) use the term "question" to refer to expressions of doubt.
[40] Amongst others Antaki (2002); Corbin (2003); Freed (1994); Freed and Greenwood (1996); Heritage and Sorjonen (1994); Heritage and Roth (1995); Heritage (2002b); Heritage (2003); Houtkoop-Steenstra

and Antaki (1997); Ilie (1999); McHoul (1987); Puchta and Potter (1999); Selting (1992); Stenström (1984, 1988).

[41] Sacks (1992a: 287) also views questions as entities which can be recognised through "various markings ... , e.g. rising intonation, a special grammar, inversion, etc." (cf. also Sacks 1992a: 371).

[42] For an extended critique of Schegloff (1984) see Geis (1989). He finds that Schegloff deletes part of the basic meaning of questions and claims that it is not possible "to account for the s[ocial]-meaning of an utterance in conversation without appealing to its l[iteral]-meaning," although "an account of l-meaning is insufficient by itself to account for s-meaning" (Geis 1989: 55).

[43] Likewise, Mishler's (1975) study of first-grade classroom talk yielded "interrogative units" composed of three successive utterances: question, response, and confirmation.

[44] This contradicts Burton's (1978) and Edmondson's (1981) claims that third parts in question-response interchanges are rare in ordinary conversation.

[45] Another explanation for the lack of certain categories in my corpus is of course that constructed dialogue avoids certain practices found in everyday talk, in order to avoid what may seem redundant talk on the screen. An example would be Freed and Greenwood's repetition questions. These questions request "a repetition of the actual signal, not of the semantic content of a previous utterance" (Freed 1994: 628). They do not occur at all in my data, presumably because literal repetitions, which have no function but to ensure auditory comprehension, are redundant on the level of audience-screen communication.

[46] Echoic questions, or talk questions in Freed and Greenwood's terms, typically constitute other-initiated repair as described by Schegloff et al. (1977), for example "what?", "excuse me?", or the repetition of some element of the preceding utterance with rising intonation. See also Schegloff (2000).

[47] Another option would be to respond with "that's none of your business" or the like.

[48] While various authors (ten Have 2001; Jefferson and Lee 1981) report that talking about troubles is an activity bound to cause difficulty, this can not be confirmed for the talk amongst the four friends. This may be due to the artificiality of the talk, which generally does not feature much repair or many hesitation phenomena.

[49] In the context of disagreements, such *oh*-prefaces can intensify a negative response (cf. Heritage 2002a: 216).

[50] I treat asking for and giving advice under this heading, because these processes are hard to separate from requesting and offering opinions, in particular because the responses of the receivers of advice or opinions are similar. Interactionally, both are followed by acceptance or rejection and both typically have effects on the behaviour of the counselled friend in the course of an episode. Furthermore, the women frequently base the counsel they give on their own personal experiences in similar situations and the opinions they have formed in the course of going through these troubles. This type of counselling is very personal and as such can only be elicited from a specific person, just as personal opinions can only be elicited from specific persons.

[51] Carrie's voiceover comment in turn 2 remarks on Samantha's outstanding knowledge of sexual relations and indicates that Carrie considers her able to give herself a fresh perspective on her worries.

[52] There are also related formats like "What do you think it means?", which have the same function. Other yes/no questions containing a mental verb, however, function to display the speaker's interpretation of some event and more specifically ask for confirmation, for example:

SC_7.4 CODED MEA CULPA

```
   1    C    he said I miss you baby.
→            do you think that was meant to be some kind of coded mea
             culpa?
   2    M    you mean like what he really meant was,
             I've been a complete idiot,
             please forgive me for having dinner with that other woman.
   3    C    yeah exactly.
   4    M    could be.
```

[53] It is used most by Carrie, which is not surprising, considering that she is the main protagonist and writes the column on the sexual relationships of the New Yorkers. The thinking that goes into her column is made accessible to the viewer in the conversations she is having with her friends. This can also be seen in the expository questions which function as a theme for each episode and the relevant column Carrie is

writing. As noted in section 3.3, these questions occur either explicitly in the four women's conversations or emerge after one of their meetings from a discussion they were having.
[54] Prosodically marked questions carrying emotional overtones will be discussed in detail in section 4.4.5 below.
[55] It can be argued, though, that the sarcasm is not considered aggressive here, because Miranda and her friends are in a customary joking relationship and Miranda regularly reverts to irony and sarcasm in the context of troubles talk (cf. Norrick 1993; also discussed in more detail below).
[56] "Cashmere connection" refers to the fact that Susan gave Carrie an expensive cashmere shawl as a present.
[57] My use of the term suggestion deviates from May's notion (1989). He considers all inferences invited by questions to be suggestions, for example, the inference that the addressee is capable of answering the question, that the item asked for exists, or that a certain demeanour is preferable.
[58] It also implies that Miranda and he frequently have sexual intercourse, but in her next turn Carrie only orients to the showering itself.
[59] Freed (1994) compares conversational focus questions to pre-announcements. However, pre-announcements as described by Terasaki (1976) and Levinson (1983) take up a complete turn and are followed by an answer, which makes relevant a third turn, in which the variable contained in the actual pre-announcement is instantiated; in the example above the interrogative phrase "how." Whether there is a response to such questions as "you know what?" or "you want to know X?" also seems to be a stylistic issue. If the question is responded to verbally, however, the question-recipient hardly ever gives an appropriate answer to a polar question but typically repeats the wh-word with rising intonation, cf. Terasaki (1976: 53):

```
   D: Y'wanna know who I got stoned with a few w(hh)eeks ago? hh!
→  R: Who?
   D: Mary Carter'n her boy(hh)frie(hhh)nd. hh.
```

[60] Hesitations in naturally occurring conversation generally crop up when the addressee replies to the *implicatum* of the irony (Kotthoff 2003). Hence, this can be considered an example of constructed dialogue deviating from naturally occurring conversation.
[61] An alternative reading of this stretch is that Charlotte's overblown and theatrical utterance is a way of playing along with the teasing. However, this is not borne out by her reaction to the consecutive turns.
[62] Selting (1996: 239) lists two possible prosodic markings for astonished questions: 1) a combination of high global pitch and greater loudness and 2) a combination of at least one global parameter, high pitch or increased loudness, with at least one locally marked accent (larger pitch range or greater loudness in an accented syllable).
[63] While in naturally occurring conversation, repair initiators which display astonishment, indignation, or disagreement are somewhat shrouded by repair initiators, which aim to ensure cognitive understanding, in constructed dialogue, these repair initiators with emotional overtones are much more prominent, because repair initiators aimed at clarification or repetition hardly occur due to the redundancy of "normal" repair sequences on the screen-audience level (cf. section 3.3).
[64] The fact that false starts and pauses rarely occur in the constructed dialogue under analysis render them even more marked in this excerpt.

Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. (Rick Blaine to Capt. Louis Renault in the last line of Casablanca)

5 GENERAL CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

In this study, I have engaged in "scholarly eavesdropping" (Abrahams 2005) in order to illuminate how overhearers in front of the screen recognise the interpersonal relationships between the characters on screen. Since the four protagonists of the TV series under analysis are commonly considered the epitome of female friends, I have first explored the notion of (female) friendship. Next, I have looked at the type of data and appropriate methodologies for this project; and finally, I have presented detailed analyses of the *SATC* characters' talk-in-interaction, focusing on the relational work done in these fictional interactions. In this chapter, I will present the results of these efforts and explain how the audience of *SATC* infer that Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha are close friends. Furthermore, I will discuss the implications of this project for the various fields of research it straddles.

PERCEIVING FRIENDSHIP THROUGH OVERHEARING TV DIALOGUE

My exploration of the notion of friendship has revealed that it varies with contextual factors such as culture, historical period, and gender. In current Western culture, friendship is constituted of a fuzzy set of the following core components: equality, similarity, reciprocity, intimacy, enjoyment, trust, understanding and acceptance, solidarity, social support, self-clarification, being oneself, voluntary interdependence, and (positive) affect. I have argued that friendship is not a state but a constant process in

which these components are negotiated through talk between the members of friendship groups. Depending on contextual factors, some components may be more significant than others and some may be absent altogether. The driving force behind these negotiations is the duality of association and dissociation inherent in all human interaction, realised in close relationships in three interrelated antagonistic tendencies: autonomy versus connectedness; openness versus closedness; and novelty versus predictability. Hence, friendship can be conceived of as a dialectic process through which an appropriate balance between those tendencies is accomplished. Whether this balance tilts towards the association or dissociation end again is dependent on the friends' gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, social background, individual preferences, etc.

At the macro-level of social organisation, I consider friendships to be made up of relationship histories and their interpretation, current impressions of relationships and expectations of them. Unlike other human relationships, friendships in Western cultures are not institutionalised; there are no documents proving that two individuals are in a friendship relation and no legal obligations, rights or responsibilities, which renders friendships particularly delicate social bonds. Macro-level notions of friendship are brought along to any interaction between friends and brought about in their talk-in-interaction through an orientation towards the significant components of friendship determined by the need to strike a balance between the three antagonistic tendencies. If, for instance, an individual has established a relationship with a second individual through reciprocal self-disclosure in several conversational exchanges, the interpretation of this as friendship behaviour and the expectation of further such behaviour are brought along to their next get-together. By providing and responding to further, perhaps even more personal self-disclosure at this meeting, the interactants then simultaneously indicate and re-constitute their friendship relation, orienting towards more intimacy and thus shifting the overall balance towards more openness, connection, and predictability. So, the verbal interaction between friends is crucial in the establishment, maintenance, and dissolution of their interpersonal relationship. This in turn renders the negotiation at the micro-level of talk-in-interaction the ideal locus for an investigation of the friendship process, revealing in detail, for example, how friends accomplish and respond to self-disclosure in conversation.

The fact that friendship is accomplished through talk allows the discourse analyst to draw conclusions about the interlocutors' friendship ties based on transcriptions of their talk; and likewise, it allows the overhearer in front of the screen to infer the characters' interpersonal relationship. In order to anticipate which components the audience expects the characters to orient to in their conversations as women friends, I have reviewed research on all-female friendship. Laboratory and questionnaire studies as well as ethnographic research, including participant observation, have yielded the following findings: female friends highly value talk as an activity. Their talk provides for intimate self-disclosure, informational as well as emotional support, self-clarification, and enjoyment. Overall, research indicates that female friendships are balanced more towards connection, openness and predictability, but there is also potential for conflict, if boundaries are overstepped and a need for more autonomy, closedness and novelty is perceived. In these situations, factors such as moral worth, physical appearance and knowledge function as symbolic capital, which is claimed and challenged.

After having presented the notion of friendship, in particular of female friendships in Western culture, I proceeded to establish a backdrop to the type of data used in this study, i.e. my own transcriptions of scripted, acted out, filmed and edited dialogue between the four protagonists of *SATC*. My choice of data is founded in the controversial discussion of the TV sitcom in the media, from which emerged that the friendship between the four women is its most widely approved feature. The conversations between the four protagonists thus provide a rewarding locus for research on how friendship relations are inferred. An interesting fact about the *SATC* data is its complex authorship: some of the dialogue was adapted from Candace Bushnell's homonymous book, a collection of columns she wrote for the *New York Observer,* and has moved through the hands and mouths of story-board editors, screenwriters, directors, actors, camera staff, producers, and cutters.

Aside from multiple authorship, *SATC* dialogue in particular and screen dialogue in general is also characterised by multifunctionality: it supplies the episodes' themes, characterises the four women, provides narrative causality and constitutes the main source of humour. Furthermore, screen dialogue is generally one of the mechanisms used to evoke the illusion of reality. Consequently, it contains features such as discourse markers, hesitation phenomena, and utterance prefaces, which sometimes not only

function to make it appear less scripted but also to mark specific aspects of the speech situation such as embarrassment or confusion. However, any features which render pieces of dialogue unintelligible or redundant hardly occur in screen dialogue. Consequently, *SATC* dialogue displays hardly any repair sequences or overlapping speech. While screen dialogue differs from naturally occurring speech in these structural-sequential aspects of talk-in-interaction, stylistic analyses have revealed that it matches everyday conversation on the pragmalinguistic level, since the film production team have recourse to the same schema for the production of talk in its creation of screen dialogue as they have in its production of natural speech (cf. Tannen and Lakoff 1994).

I argue that not only does the film production team resort to this underlying communicative competence in the production of screen dialogue, but so does the audience in front of the screen in the effort of comprehending and interpreting the conversations between the characters on the screen. In order to illuminate this process, I have developed a model of screen-to-face discourse, which takes Goffman's (1976, 1979) notion of the "overhearer" as a starting point and stresses the audience's central role in the co-construction of meaning based on Clark's notion of "common ground" (1996). I argue that the processes in the spectator's mind are parallel to those that we encounter in everyday overhearer situations. In Goffman's participation framework (1976, 1979), overhearers are unratified participants in a conversation, which means they have no rights and no responsibilities in it. The same holds for the audience in front of the screen. Like individuals overhearing a conversation in everyday life, they are at a disadvantage in their process of understanding in two respects: firstly, they are unlikely to fully share the participants' common ground; and secondly, they cannot directly negotiate meaning with the participants. Consequently, the process of understanding is different from that of participants in a conversation, insofar as overhearers have to reconstruct the common ground on the basis of which the speakers make their utterances. This reconstruction of common ground works via the retrieval of knowledge patterns prompted by the speakers' utterances.

Pertinent to my research project are those aspects of screen-to-face discourse that can be subsumed under the term "relational communication." The audience compares relational cues from the screen dialogue to their knowledge patterns of interpersonal

relations and draws conclusions on what kind of relationship holds between the interlocutors on the screen. Adapting Culpeper's (2001, 2002) terminology on characterisation, I refer to this process as "relationship impression formation." In relationship impression formation, any orientation in screen dialogue towards the above listed set of friendship components and tensions – which are part of the overhearers' knowledge patterns – serves as a relational cue, leading the overhearer to infer that the characters are friends.

In my empirical work, I have also made use of the set of friendship components determined by the dialectic process of striking a balance between association and dissociation. One caveat here is that most of the research done on female friendship has been conducted through a binary lens, comparing them to male friendships. This results in a picture tainted by essentialism. Hence, I have applied the community of practice framework, which avoids such black and white generalisations by shifting the focus from the general to the local, i.e. to the interactions of a particular group of individuals, which has established specific practices through mutual engagement and joint enterprise. I have argued that friendship groups in general and the fictional group of friends in particular can be considered such communities, and that some of the (verbal) practices they conventionally use serve to signal and constitute their friendship relation. Applying a community of practice framework to the investigation of friendship relations thus allows for an investigation of how and to what extent the commonly acknowledged components and tensions of friendship are oriented to and ascertained in a particular friendship cluster.

I conceive of practice as a site where societal and interactive forces merge, allowing for a combination of practice theory with social constructionism, and this in turn permits an analytic approach to the data which I have labelled "inclusive discourse analysis": a combination of (applied) ethnomethodological conversation and membership categorisation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and theories of face-work and politeness. This methodological array has facilitated the investigation of both micro- and macro-discoursal patterns, yielding tools for the detailed analysis of utterances with respect to their form, content and sequential placement and relating those details to the macro-level of social organisation. Furthermore the variety of approaches has

sometimes also revealed multiple meanings, which would have been obscured by only one methodological lens (e.g. turn 6 in SC_2.2 Models, section 4.2.6.1).

Applying this methodological framework, the analyses on the character level of screen-to-face discourse have revealed how the four women's friendship relations are constructed through talk-in-interaction, more specifically how the dialectic process of striking a balance between association and dissociation is anchored in conversation. I have shown that the most relevant details of talk in this enterprise are the patterns of the interaction order commonly termed "alignments," which can be found on three planes: the structural, the interpersonal and the cultural. On the structural plane, conversationalists align themselves as ratified speakers, addressees and side participants; on the interpersonal plane, alignments can affiliate or disaffiliate interlocutors; and on the cultural plane, the ongoing interaction is lined up with the cultural background and expectations brought along to the interaction. Clearly, affiliation and disaffiliation contribute most directly to the dialectic process of striking a balance between association and dissociation, realising degrees of openness/closedness, connection/autonomy, and predictability/novelty as well as the components of a particular friendship relation.

The four friends use a variety of linguistic patterns on all levels of conversational organisation to pro- and retroactively indicate their alignment on each of the three planes:

- proximal and distal pronouns and demonstratives (e.g. SC_4.3 FLING in section 4.4.4; SC_5.3 BIOLOGICAL DESTINY in section 4.3.4.2)
- prefaces (e.g. SC_10.6 BREAST FEEDING in section 4.4.4)
- discourse markers (e.g. SC 17.7_PANIC ATTACK in section 4.3.4.2)
- qualifiers (e.g. SC_15.1 MR. PUSSY in section 4.3.4.2)
- repetition and reformulation (e.g. SC_13.7 BUYING A PLACE ALONE in section 4.2.6.1)
- collaborative turn production (e.g. SC_10.9 OVARY OVERLOAD in section 4.2.6.1)
- accounts (e.g. SC_18.1 MAKE NEW FRIENDS in section 4.3.4.2)
- formulations (e.g. SC_18.2 CHEATING in section 4.4.5)
- response stories (e.g. SC_10.9 OVARY OVERLOAD in section 4.2.6.1)

- intimacy pursuits (e.g. SC_16.2 FAKE IT in section 4.4.4)
- humour and laughter (e.g. SC_27.1 WESLEY & LESLEY in section 4.4.4).

If the alignments on the structural and interpersonal level diverge, combining structural alignment with disaffiliation on the interpersonal plane, disaffiliation is intensified (e.g. SC_7.1 WOMEN WE HATE in section 4.2.2). The cultural plane of alignment is evident whenever interactional practices run contrary to the expectations shared in the community of practice. I have shown how membership categorisation devices, more specifically the utterance "you are my friends," function as tools for explicit (re-) alignment (e.g. SC_39.1 FUNKY SPUNK in 4.2.6.2).

Aside from the patterns listed above, I have concentrated on two particularly interesting practices that contribute to the interlocutors' alignment patterns: familiar terms of address used in direct address and questions. In both cases, I have focused on the conversational contexts in which they accumulate in the community of practice under analysis. Familiar terms of address occur in contexts which are characterised by a temporary suspension of some fundamental component of friendship relations and function to assuage this disequilibrium by pro- or retroactively signalling affiliation and establishing a dual alignment (cf. section 4.3.5). This renders terms of address a potent tool in accomplishing a balance between association and dissociation. Questions predominantly initiate and maintain extended affiliative sequences such as intimacy pursuits and humorous exchanges (cf. section 4.4.4). Hence, terms of address can be considered politic behaviour in the sense of Watts (1989, 2003), while questions have a more active part in friendship processes by permitting friends 1) to work out difficult situations, 2) to probe for shared assumptions and evoke shared experiences, and 3) to manage customary joking relationships.

My analyses of alignment practices have revealed that the women shift between aligning and disaligning, between affiliation and disaffiliation. Moreover, they have shown that the complexity of these shifting alignment patterns increases with the number of speakers. In conversations between three or four women, interactional teams emerge and shift in the course of the conversation (e.g. SC_17.3 BUYING A PLACE ALONE in section 4.2.6.1). I have argued that these shifts in alignment patterns accomplish micro-transformations of social structure, which in turn construct social relations on the macro-level. Due to the dialectic of association versus dissociation

inherent in close relationships, there is no simple correlation of affiliation on the micro-level and friendship maintenance on the macro-level. In the community of practice under analysis, continual shifts between the one and the other function to achieve an appropriate balance between openness/closedness, connection/autonomy, and predictability/novelty. These practices of talk-in-interaction also permit criticism and disagreement and establish unique ties between the individual women within the friendship network.

Moreover, the shifting alignment patterns on the micro-level allow the conclusion that Miranda and Carrie constitute a core friendship pair, and that Charlotte and Samantha are more marginal members: Charlotte receives most familiar terms of address, in particular in knowledge display situations, and she is often the butt of teasing activities. Samantha broaches the most transgressive topics and is the only character playing the expert in troubles talk sequences. This not only renders Charlotte and Samantha more marginal, but also positions them at diametrically opposed poles of an expert/novice as well as a prudish/permissive continuum.

My inclusive analyses have revealed how these specific interpersonal ties between the four characters are established and that the four women work to achieve a balance in the association/dissociation dialectic thereby accomplishing friendship. I claim that the processes in the mind of the overhearer compare to this analytic route. Based on the shared background knowledge between the sitcom production team, the fictional speakers and the audience in front of the screen, overhearers from this audience recognise such activities as self-disclosure, troubles-talk, evoking a shared background, banter, and catching up with the other's life as indicative of friendship relations. Since these activities are made up of verbal practices, it is predominantly the underlying communicative competence that permits these inferences. The overhearers need to recognise verbal practices such as asking and responding to rhetorical questions, reformulating another's contribution, using discourse markers and familiar terms of address to assuage precarious situations as constituting these activities. Put more abstractly, they need to recognise the shifting of affiliating and disaffiliating moves as striking a balance between association and dissociation. From the emerging patterns of affiliation and disaffiliation the overhearer can then also infer the group's inner

differentiation. Hence, my analyses of the fictional talk-in-interaction have pinned down the details of talk, the textual cues which allow the overhearer to make those inferences.

My study is restricted to a linguistic analysis of fictional conversational data with respect to relationship formation and maintenance and a theoretical account of how this relational work in conversation functions as a textual cue from which the audience infers the characters' interpersonal relations. In order to properly validate the account given an extensive focus group study is required, in which participants also report on the textual cues used to arrive at their relationship impressions. The scope of this study has allowed only for a few informal interviews with regular viewers of *SATC*. These interviews have yielded relationship impressions which correspond to my findings, i.e. that the four women are close friends with Carrie and Miranda as the core friendship pair and Charlotte and Samantha somewhat more marginal. The correspondence of my results with these relationship impressions indicates that applying discourse analytical methodology can yield valuable insights into the workings of screen-to-face discourse. Furthermore, this correspondence suggests that overhearers indeed recognise affiliation and disaffiliation as key contributors to the dialectic process of striking a balance between association and dissociation which constitutes friendship.

IMPLICATIONS AND OUTLOOK

This study has implications for the various fields it has touched upon. First and foremost, it has demonstrated that the investigation of scripted dialogue is a rewarding project, enriching the field of linguistic stylistics. I have shown that existing models developed for mediated discourse can account neither for the complexities of scripted screen dialogue nor for the overhearer's comprehension of the text. My own model attempts to make up for this and describes the processes involved in such screen-to-face discourse, stressing the role of the overhearer in the co-construction of meaning. It describes how the overhearer makes sense of the screen text, accomplishing imagination and appreciation. While I have applied the model to investigate TV sitcoms, it also provides a tool for the investigation of other genres of scripted screen-to-face discourse such as feature films or computer games.

Furthermore, my detailed analyses of sitcom dialogue have confirmed and expanded findings on the differences and similarities between scripted and naturally occurring

dialogue. My analyses corroborate the claim that pragmalinguistic features in scripted talk correspond to those in naturally occurring conversation with respect to relational communication. Moreover, my data also substantiate that utterance form and sequential structure differ to some extent. A phenomenon conspicuously absent from the scripted dialogue I analysed is the tag question. This raises the point whether this form is a less prominent part of the screenwriters' communicative competence and calls for further research. Aside from this, my analyses confirm Kobus' (1998) findings on scripted versus naturally occurring talk: while the scripted lines display a high frequency of discourse markers and utterance prefaces, there is hardly any overlapping speech and only few pauses. Over and above that, my data contain no conversational sequences clarifying mishearings or misunderstandings. This can be accounted for by the fact that TV dialogue avoids unintelligible and redundant talk, since screen time is limited and dialogue on the screen purely functional. If such features occur, they serve to stress a specific emotional state or affective stance. In naturally occurring talk, they may also display these psychological states, but to a lesser extent, because there they also have other functions. This holds not only for hesitation phenomena, but also for those sequences which structurally compare to conversational repair as described in the CA literature. TV dialogue thus exposes such phenomena, and may thereby point to areas in linguistics which have not been sufficiently explored. All sequences in my corpus which structurally compare to conversational repair, function to signal astonishment, reproach, or dismay. This seems to also occur in everyday talk, but has to my knowledge not as yet been explored.

Another neglected phenomenon, which is evident in my corpus, is the competitiveness of all-female talk – not only with respect to symbolic capital such as moral worth, knowledge, and outward appearance, but also with respect to self-disclosure and troubles talk. While Guendouzi (2004) comments on the competitive edge of gossip amongst women, i.e. talk about other people's problems, looks and behaviour, such patterns have not been investigated in exchanges about the participants' own troubles and experiences. Another project in the field of language and gender studies suggested by my data is the investigation of whether the gender of the author/director impacts on the characters' dialogue. Biber and Burges (2000) find differences in the portrayal of male and female linguistic behaviour in drama depending

on whether the author is male or female. Comparing excerpts from my data produced by all-female teams with those produced by all-male teams seem to support this finding. Comparing SC_10.9 OVARY OVERLOAD (cf. section 4.2.6.1), which was created by an all-female team and SC_11.1 HORRIFIED (cf. partially in section 4.3.4.2), which was scripted and directed by an all-male team, revealed that the interaction scripted by men is much more confrontational and contains fewer practices deemed typical of all-female talk (cf. Coates 1996a). Since the production of scripted dialogue is based on the authors' underlying communicative competence, it is feasible that female teams accomplish dialogue which is closer to the naturally occurring equivalent. However, a much larger corpus containing comparable speech situations written and directed by all-male and all-female teams would be needed to corroborate these findings.

Further implications for the study of naturally occurring conversation derive from my focus on alignment patterns, direct address, and question-response sequences. With respect to the former, I have clarified the notion of alignment by investigating existing definitions and prior uses of the term. My distinction into structural, interpersonal and cultural alignments and my compilation of alignment practices simplifies future research and allows for comparison between different studies which investigate these micro-relations in talk. In particular, this study has implications for the study of relational communication, since it reveals the significance of shifting interpersonal alignments for the dialectic process of striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation.

Considering direct address, I have shown that its function neither depends on its position in an utterance nor on its semantic meaning. Furthermore, my analyses support Zwicky's (1974) intuitive judgement that there is virtually no affectively neutral direct address; it always accomplishes some kind of interpersonal alignment. My finding that prosodic marking can stress this affective component calls for detailed analyses of such incidents in naturally occurring conversation (cf. Norrick and Bubel 2005). Aside from shifting the focus to the level of prosody, a change of focus to another context may also be rewarding: since direct address has crucial interpersonal functions, institutional contexts with complex power structures may yield interesting findings.

Finally, my discussion of question-response sequences refines findings on questions in naturally occurring conversation. While Coates (1996a) had already established the

significance of questions in interchanging opinions, evoking a shared background, and banter, my analyses have revealed the relevance of questions in the process of re-establishing common ground after a period of separation and in initiating and maintaining self-disclosure. I have also demonstrated that categories such as conducive or rhetorical questions tend to restrict the analyst's view. In fact, for both focal points, question-response sequences and terms of address, I have shown that no (functional) category bears up against the realities of talk-in-interaction. Hence, I have developed an alternative method which consists of establishing a catalogue of situations in which the relevant linguistic entities accumulate and then focusing on the particulars of their usage in these local contexts. This procedure also takes into account the relativity of linguistic entities (Tannen 1993): My data confirm this relativity for both questions and familiar terms of address; both can be perceived as affiliating as well as disaffiliating, depending on their local context and the interlocutors' goals. I have also shown that this relativity of linguistic entities serves the dialectic of association and dissociation inherent in the interlocutors' relationship with each other.

Aside from contributing to and opening up areas of investigation within the field of linguistics and more particularly discourse analysis, this study also has implications for the investigation of friendship relations. Notwithstanding the fact that I have studied a fictional friendship network, my analyses bear out that friendship is best conceived of as a dialectic process – more specifically a process of striking a balance between association and dissociation – and that talk-in-interaction is an essential locus of this process and thus for establishing and maintaining friendship relations. Furthermore, my cataloguing contexts in which specific alignment practices accumulate, which either make up for relationship-threatening behaviour or initiate typical friendship activities, points to the fact that these local contexts are crucial sites for the investigation of the friendship process. Altogether I have discovered nine contexts, which call for further research: 1) access rituals; 2) apologies; 3) orders/requests; 4) comfort/support; 5) knowledge displays; 6) catching up on friends' lives; 7) interchanging opinions; 8) evoking a shared background; as well as 9) accomplishing humour and teasing.

Finally, my research has implications for film and media studies. Firstly, my model follows Bordwell's (1989) call for a cognitive approach to film, taking into account the frames which audience and film makers apply in their understanding and production of

the screen text. My contribution to this effort is an account of how the verbal components of the film text are created and comprehended based on underlying knowledge patterns of conversation. Future studies should address how this process links up with the comprehension of other components of the screen text. Consider the inner differentiation of the friendship group into a dyad and two more marginal members. This relationship impression gained from the characters' dialogue goes along with the interlocutor constellations presented on the screen: half of the dyadic interactions are taken up by conversations between Carrie and Miranda, and in the scenes which present three women, we find either Carrie, Miranda, plus Samantha or Carrie, Miranda, plus Charlotte (cf. section 3.6.1). This correspondence then allows for a coherent interpretation of the characters' relationships through the audience in front of the screen. Aside from relationship characterisation, such correspondences can certainly be discovered with respect to other functions of scripted screen dialogue, for example, how the establishment of common ground in the conversations between the characters contributes to narrative causality.

Overall, this study has proved the value of a linguistic analysis of scripted screen dialogue. Firstly, such analyses can yield valuable insights into how scripted dialogue accomplishes specific functions such as the characterisation of screen personae (cf. Culpeper 2001, 2002) and their relationships. Secondly, since scripted dialogue can be considered a distillate of underlying communicative competence, it has the potential of exposing some crucial mechanisms of talk that have so far gone unnoticed in the analysis of naturally occurring conversation and of clarifying other already known mechanisms, in this case the workings of shifting alignment patterns in striking an appropriate balance between association and dissociation. Hence, the results of this study contribute in various ways to the investigation of screen-to-face discourse, interpersonal relationships, and above all talk-in-interaction.

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