



Analysing women's talk and gossip between two female friends

Sara Ahmed

Introduction

This essay will analyse recorded spoken data between two female friends with specific reference to the social function of gossip. Gossip has been denigrated as 'idle talk', mostly between women based on 'trifling or groundless rumour' and that which is 'tittle-tattle' (OED). This paper will examine the linguistic processes within what can be perceived as 'gossip' with a view to discovering the purpose of it between the participants and whether it deserves its negative reputation. The analysis will be theorized in the work of Coates (1996) who has characterised 'women's talk' into several categories and Tannen (1991) who has explored what she considers to be the function of gossip. Their work has been robustly criticised or expanded upon by several theorists and therefore the data will also be analysed with reference to Mills (2003), Holmes (1995) and Cameron (1996) amongst others. This essay will use these theories to explore whether gender is an appropriate variable to discuss the findings in the data or whether it is one which restricts understanding and imposes stereotypes.

Background

According to Coates (1996), women's talk is based on establishing a connection between participants that leads to a discussion of shared values. The notion of 'sharing' is an important one in Coates's work as the participants will share their thoughts during the process of the conversation in order to arrive at a shared understanding. It is in this sense that the talk may be termed 'collaborative'; it is jointly constructed by all participants. Women take turns and their utterances compliment previous ones in order to build on the conversation as a whole. This forms a 'linguistic parallelism' designed to 'maximise solidarity' (p.80). This notion of 'solidarity' is a feature also found in Tannen's (1991) work in that women's talk is about establishing a rapport with other speakers and 'telling secrets' (p.80) or 'gossiping' is one way in which this can be achieved. Both theorists seem to agree that the primary topics of conversation for women are about other people and their own personal experiences. Tannen claims that this is in order to reinforce shared values with someone who *is* there by talking about someone who isn't there. Some of the key features of this shared experience include, according to Coates, repetition and jointly-constructed utterances whereby speakers add to and finish each other's utterances in order to achieve a jointly-constructed whole. Minimal responses are used to offer support and encouragement and allow the listeners to participate in the talk even when they are not holding the floor. In addition to this, hedges allow the speaker to primarily tend to the face-needs of other speakers in order to preserve the 'openness' (p.265) of a collaborative floor and avoid conflict.

However, whilst these may be common features found in women's talk, where Coates's and Tannen's work falls down is that it fails to recognise that gender does not operate as a variable independent from 'race, social class, culture, discourse function and setting' (Bing and Bergvall, 1996, p.5) amongst others. They imply that women's talk is just

so *because* they are women and this is problematic. More recent theorists have suggested that categorising talk into that which is 'male' and that which 'female' is 'over generalised and stereotypical' (Cameron 1996, p.44). We must abandon the idea that gender works independently of other variables and focus on the linguistic manifestations in individual communities of practice in their own right. Rather than being defined by location or population, a community of practice appears through mutual social engagement (Eckert 1992).

Further to this, Mills (2003) asserts that we should 'move beyond the binary oppositions of male and female' (p.169) in order to focus on individual groups of women or men in their own particular circumstances. Variables such as class, familiarity and education invariably affect the talk of women and thus it can be argued that studying gender in isolation does not lead to a true understanding of women's behaviour. Gender only exists as being inextricably connected to race and class (etc) in the way that it is negotiated by speakers in interaction (McClintock, 1995). As gender cannot be separated from other variables, if we avoid analysing women's talk as one side of a dichotomy and purposefully finding features 'characteristic' of women's speech, we also avoid strengthening a super-imposed gender polarization on language (Bing and Bergvall, 1996). Cameron (1996) adds to this assertion by stating that instead of seeing certain styles of speech as resulting from 'pre-existing gender identity' it is more worthy to understand that individuals produce these styles according to how they wish to produce '*themselves* as gendered subjects' (p.45).

It has more recently been considered that power relations greatly affect how speakers produce their gender. In her criticism of Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand*, Freed writes that disassociating gender from the power roles between speakers that are 'enforce[d] and enhance[d] as well as reflect[ed] is intellectually naive' (Freed 1992, p.146). Mills (2002) describes what she terms 'interactional power' in which individuals position themselves in relation to the power relations within a particular community of practice. Thus the interactional power an individual holds in one particular community of practice does not necessarily relate to the power that may be attributed to them in another. Therefore it is arguable that 'power' may be a more worthy variable for study than 'gender'.

Coates (1996) does aptly note that true friendship can only exist if it is a 'symmetrical relationship' in which participants treat each other as 'equals' and 'adhere to an ethic of reciprocity' (p.42). This is also a theme in Tannen's (1991) work in that women see it as essential to establish 'symmetrical connections' (p.180) through talk. Whilst it is simplistic to categorise women in this way, this notion of 'symmetry' can be applied to the power roles created and maintained through talk. In Troemel-Ploetz's (1998) very scathing criticism of Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand*, she argues that we *produce* equality and symmetry (or inequality and asymmetry) through our utterances in each conversation we have. The more powerful speakers are able to negotiate this balance more easily than the less powerful. Therefore, if equality and symmetry can be found within a conversation, it is plausible to argue that, rather than this being a direct result of the speakers' gender, it is a product and display of the symmetrical power between participants.

Following this, it is possible to suggest that power relations also play a more important role than gender in who gossips. This then sheds light on the social function of gossip. Whilst Tannen seems to think that gossip is done by women *because* they are women, it is perhaps more insightful to understand gossip to be a feature in, yet not limited to, women's talk in order to establish and maintain power relations. If gossip is a language of solidarity between women based on linguistic reciprocity (Jones, 1990) and symmetry then this may be a result of total trust between speakers and the fact that they share an equal status of power.

It is essential to note that Coates's work is not redundant as whilst the features she has noted in women's language are not specific nor limited to women, they are worthy of analysis in relation to the power roles between female friends. Holmes (1995) furthers the idea that hedges are used to tend to the face needs of other participants as they are a mark of solidarity. Pragmatic particles such as *you know*, and hedges such as *sort of* can function as a positive politeness strategy. *You know* may appeal to the participants' shared values, attitudes and experiences whilst *sort of* is an appeal for a relaxed relationship between participants. These are used with a goal to 'reduce power and status differences and emphasis[e] what participants share' (p.91). The data analysis will search for these elements (as well as for minimal responses and evidence of collaborative talk) in order to see if they do create and or reflect the power balance between the speakers.

Methodology

The data was recorded in the private bedroom of one of the participants in the home where the two friends lived together with four other people. The bedroom was chosen as it is a usual place where the two choose to converse privately and the private domain, according to Coates (1996) and Tannen (1991), is where women's talk is allowed to flourish. The participants, aged 21 and 22, became close friends as they both attend the same university and have lived together for two years. I used the participant-observer method in recording a conversation between myself and a close friend in order to collect data from a true community of practice where conversation could happen naturally and in which I could be considered a member of the community of practice rather than an observer of it. I felt that this method would produce data that was less affected by the Observer's Paradox as the imposition of an observer and third person was removed. However, in recording any conversation there are limitations as recording devices may inhibit the speakers and affect the 'naturally-occurring' data. However, whilst it was evident that the first few minutes of the conversation were stilted, and this I put down to a slight awkwardness of the participants knowing that they were being recorded, I felt that, in general, the conversation flowed naturally and that the presence of the Dictaphone was soon forgotten. For this reason, I have rejected the first few minutes of the conversation and have transcribed and analysed only the parts of the recordings where I feel that conversation was not affected to any significant degree by the recording device. The data collection was carried out according to the School's ethics policy. The participants were fully informed of the purposes of recording the conversation and had given written and verbal consent before any recording took place. They understood that their identities would be concealed and the data would be treated with the strictest confidence. It is for this reason that the names of both participants have been changed. The right for the participants to access the data and their freedom to withdraw their consent at any time were explained clearly. I provided a summary of the research findings after the project was completed.

Data Analysis

The data consists of two sections of conversation both recorded during the same night. Both sections may be categorised as 'gossip' if by 'gossip' we mean talking about oneself and the lives of others and that the speakers would perhaps not want the 'spoken-of' to know that they had been discussed (Harding, in Reiter 1975). In section A of the transcript, both participants embark on a detailed and rather serious discussion of Amy's actions whereas in section B the conversation takes a lighter tone in which various people's behaviours are talked about.

Minimal Responses

Interestingly, both participants use eleven minimal responses throughout both conversations:

Conversation A:

Jennifer = 7

Olivia = 6

Conversation B:

Jennifer = 4

Olivia = 5

This equal use of minimal responses in each conversation reflects an equal desire on the part of each speaker to encourage and/or agree with the other speaker and thus create solidarity. Most of the minimal responses take the form of 'yeah' and are non-intrusive utterances signalling either agreement or approval of the speaker's previous utterance. When Jennifer talks about her friend Kate wishing that Natalie was 'a good enough friend' to know that having romantic relations with her brother were 'off limits',¹ Olivia responds with a 'yeah' almost immediately after Jennifer has said 'off limits'. This minimal response serves to represent Olivia's understanding that Kate would wish this and in doing this, she lets Jennifer to know that she shares the value that friends' brothers are 'off limits'.

Jennifer's minimal responses in the following extract show another function of the linguistic device as they seem to be more of an acknowledgment of what Olivia has just said:

- O: Amy's like *god* I want to have *so* much *sex* [with him], I was like →
 J: [yeah] ((laughs)) her track record
 you're just like
 O: ←please don't
 J: **Yeah**

In agreeing with or acknowledging the other's utterance, the women are creating a supportive linguistic arena and the fact that they are both equally concerned about supporting the other's utterances reflects and reinforces their equal status of power in this particular small community of practice.

Further to this, for the most part, one speaker will not take the floor from the other without acknowledging the previous utterance:

- O: ...she does *really* like him it's not just like a (1) () kind of thing
 J: **Yeah** but at the same time she will find someone else
 O: **Yeah** this is what *I* said to her erm ...²

This is just one many examples that shows the speakers not only use 'yeah' as a minimal response but also as a polite acknowledgement of what has previously been said before moving on to make a contribution of their own. Even when presenting another point of view that commences with 'but', Jennifer let's Olivia know that she has taken note of her previous utterance that Amy does really like Nick by preceding it with a 'yeah'. Both women ensure that, when in the role of listener, they create an appreciative audience backdrop for the speaker and thus can both be considered to be sharing the power of the linguistic arena equally

¹ Section A; lines 150-3.

² Section A; lines 60-4.

Hedges

The subject of Amy's behaviour is spoken of by both speakers with several references to their own shared values exemplified in more overt statements such as, 'I would never expect a good friend to do that'.³ The purpose of the exchange is to re-evaluate their opinions of Amy's behaviour. It is evident from Olivia's statement 'basically I'm sort of on her side now...'⁴ that she has changed her opinion of the situation and wishes Jennifer to understand why. She uses the hedge 'sort of' in order to avoid tensions or disagreement that may arise from the fact that she has changed her opinion, presumably from one that they both shared of Amy's behaviour. In doing this she maintains the relaxed relationship between her and Jennifer and thus does not hinder the equal balance of power.

In addition to this, three out of four instances of *you know* in section A can be said to be attempts to create solidarity based upon a system of shared values between the speakers:

1. Olivia: You know if you were really upset...⁵
2. Jennifer: ... you know I wouldn't say that unless I wanted him to...⁶
3. Jennifer: ...you know we give you advice beforehand...⁷

The first instance of *you know* used by Olivia is to invite Jennifer to reflect on how she would act in the same situation and thus more clearly explains the reasons as to why she has changed her mind. She is appealing to Jennifer's understanding based on a system of shared attitudes and feelings and is taking care to deliver her change of opinion so as to not provoke disagreement. Jennifer appeals to the values she shares with Olivia in the second example as she invites Olivia to agree with her in her criticism of Jackie's behaviour by comparing it to how she would act herself. These examples of *you know* invite agreement even if it is only in the form of paralinguistic nod and are reflections of the camaraderie between the speakers reducing any potential power differences by pointing towards the common ground that they share.

Collaborative Talk

Collaboration is particularly evident in section B in lines 52-74 and takes the form of repetition. It is evident that 'that's pretty gay'⁸ stems from a joke privately shared between the speakers. The phrase is repeated six times within a short sequence of conversation by both speakers and creates a lot of laughter. The phrase is then extended to 'pretty great'⁹ by Olivia and is immediately repeated by Jennifer.¹⁰ In this repetition, both speakers are participating in the joke and reinforcing the comic matter. The laughter creates an open, fun collaborative floor and Olivia's laughter in particular during lines 58-62 where Jennifer holds the floor shows her delight at Jennifer's utterances and encourages her to continue. This is very much a jointly-constructed sequence.

In fact, for the most part, the transcript is laden with evidence that the conversations are a jointly-constructed whole. In beginning a new utterance, the participants often connect it to the previous not only in subject matter but in grammatical structure too. Conjunctions are one way in which this is achieved: 'and also'¹¹ and '(yeah) but'¹² are two examples. The

³ Section A; line 86

⁴ Section A; line 24

⁵ Section A; line 46

⁶ Section A; line 55

⁷ Section A; line 97

⁸ Section B; lines 57, 58, 59, 60, 61 and 74

⁹ Section B; lines 66 and 67

¹⁰ Section B; line 67

¹¹ Section A; line 33

¹² Section A; lines 40, 62, 102, 112, 121, 144 and 163.

effect is the creation of unity and solidarity in the sense that it can be perceived that there are **two** speakers but **one** shared understanding. Jennifer even finishes Olivia's sentence:

O: ... I was like has your knee stopped shaking[cause] you know how like he does that *all* the time erm

J: [yeah]

J: ((laughing)) out of frustration¹³

This collaboration on both topic matter discussion and grammatical and structural coherence proves that the speakers are in tune with each other at intricate linguistic levels. The collaborative floor has been achieved due to the fact that the speakers are unified in their desire to reduce power differences and emphasise what they share.

Discussion and Conclusion

From this analysis, it is arguable that to view gossip in this instance as 'idle talk' is to view it at face value. There are, in fact, much more complex processes happening within this 'gossip' which are embedded within the structure and psychology of the language used. The equality between the two close friends has arisen from the fact that they are both of equal status in the community of practice to which they both belong: they are educated students in the same university setting with similar opportunities and future prospects. From the data it is evident that maintaining this equal distribution of power is an important aspect of their friendship. Therefore, to denigrate the gossip in this data as 'rumour', 'bitching' or 'tittle-tattle' is at best simplistic and at worst offensive. Instead, it performs a social function in that it provides the speakers with a linguistic arena in which they can display and build upon this equality of power.

Whilst features of what Coates deems 'women's talk' such as hedges, minimal responses and collaborative talk can be found in the data this is not solely, nor particularly primarily, due to the fact they are female. It is more insightful to view the linguistic features found in the data as a result of equality in power between the participants. It is, in essence, a melange of other variables such as setting, social status and identity that has resulted in this equality of power and the linguistic features discussed serve to reflect and nurture this equality as ultimately, it is what constitutes the friendship.

This essay has studied the features of 'women's talk' as it is defined by Coates and Tannen. It has attempted to demonstrate how viewing gender as a variable that affects talk independently from other variables is limited. It is true to my data that power relations play a more important role than gender in the creation of a collaborative floor. As the data focuses on the language of only two individuals, no great assertions about talk in general can be made. However, the study has provided an insight into the claims made by the discussed theorists that power status significantly affects how the speakers have produced their gender. Finally, this essay has demonstrated that 'gossip' is one way in which power relations can be manifested in talk.

¹³ Section B; lines 115-8

Bibliography

Bergvall, Bing, Freed, Addison Wesley, eds. 1996, *Rethinking Language and Gender Research*, Essex: Longman Ltd.

Bing, Janet and Bergvall, Victoria, 'The question of questions: beyond binary thinking' in *Rethinking Language and Gender Research*, 1996, ed. by Bergvall, Bing, Freed, Wesley, Essex: Longman Ltd.

Cameron, Deborah, 1990, *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, London: Routledge.

----- 'The language-gender interface: challenging co-optation' in *Rethinking Language and Gender Research*, 1996, ed. by Bergvall, Bing, Freed, Wesley, Essex: Longman Ltd.

Coates, Jennifer. 1996, *Women Talk*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

----- 1998 ed. *Language and gender: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Eckert, Penelope and McConnell-Ginet, Sally, 'Communities of Practice: Where language, gender and power all live' in *Locating Power*, 1992, eds. Hall, Bucholtz and Moonwomon, 'Locating Power, Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference, April 4 and 5, 1992, Berkeley California', Vol. 1, Berkeley Women and Language Group (pp.89-100).

Freed, Alice, 'We understand perfectly: A critique of Tannen's view of cross-sex communication' in *Locating Power*, 1992, eds. Hall, Bucholtz and Moonwomon, 'Locating Power, Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference, April 4 and 5, 1992, Berkeley California', Vol. 1, Berkeley Women and Language Group, (pp.144-53).

Hall, Bucholtz and Moonwomon, *Locating Power*, 1992, eds. 'Locating Power, Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference, April 4 and 5, Berkeley California', Vol. 1, Berkeley Women and Language Group.

Jones, Deborah, 'Gossip: notes on women's oral culture' in *The Feminist Critique of Language: A reader*, 1990, ed. Deborah Cameron, London: Routledge, (pp. 242-51).

McClintock. A, 1995, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Imperial Contest*, London, Routledge.

Troemel-Ploetz, Senta, 'Selling the Apolitical' in *Language and Gender: A Reader* ed. Jennifer Coates, 1998, Oxford: Blackwell, (pp.446-58).

Appendix**Section A – near the beginning of the tape**

(Tape is inserted in the Dictaphone on the correct side for both sections of transcript)

- J: Had you missed Ben? Or was it nice having a break?
 O: Erm (1) I did on (1) Sunday, I think cause I'd done work all day and I was really bored
 J: Yep
 O: But Friday () as long as he's been taken down a peg or two. ()
 J: It's his birthday though! You've got to giv[e him ()]
 O: [I know but it's a bit bloody arrogant ()]
 J: My sister Ellie was like god he's so hot I was like how do you even remember him? She was absolutely fucked.
 O: (2) Ben?
 J: Yeah cause she saw him [at Bodega ()]
 O: [Oh yeah course she did didn't she]
 J: But like he wasn't around for that long ([)]
 O: [never tell him that] ((laughs))
 J: Yeah don't.
 O: Amy's like *god* I want to have *so* much *sex* with [him, I] was like →
 J: [yeah] ((laughs)) her track record
 you're just like
 O: ←please don't
 J: Yeah
 O: Oh she was telling me all about it today.
 J: Why what did she say? Tell me all the gossip.
 O: (2) Basically I'm sort of on her side now because on Thursday apparently Nick had like a really long conversation with her like a 45 minute long conversation with her erm and was basically he told her everything he was like I really like Amy I'm really sorry for like what happened between us but like she's obviously not that into him anyway because
 J: she's mo[re after Jamie]
 O: [she was she w]as after Jamie *that* night
 J: Yeah
 O: Erm
 J: and also when she came back in from like that conversation she didn't seem too
 O: Well this is the thing like Nick and Amy were being all over each other *all* night and on Saturday night as well cause they went to Disconnected.
 J: What's that?
 O: Well I thought it would be really good but Amy says it was crap erm but apparently it's supposed to be a really good night I'm not sure where it is it's a bit a bit of town. I also really want to go to Warehouse
 J: Yeah, but it's quite far away but [yeah
 O: [but taxi there taxi back it's not gonna be]
 J: [when it's] a good
 night]

- O: Erm so yeah so they were being all over each other and Jackie absolutely fine with it. You know if you were really upset about it and you saw them together you would be (1) upset but like she was carrying on as normal making loads of jokes and stuff like there was no difference and then in the conversation she like had with Nick she was like no it's completely fine like go for it so he did and then like the morning after she went absolutely sick at Amy like you're such a bad friend like I can't believe you've done this to me all the time she's been trying to get with Jamie (1) and so I'm not r[eally sure what her motivation]ns are
- J: [also was that like a was that] like a bit of a test as well cause like say like if that whole thing between me, you and Will like say if he hadn't been a complete dick and he was like look I'm really sorry but I really fancy Olivia and I said *go* for it you know I wouldn't say that unless I wanted him to and it almost seems like either she was doing it to try and test Amy and see what would happen ([to see if she would go f]or it
- O: [but then like Amy Amy]
- J: ←[you shouldn't test people though]
- O: [I've spoken to her, i've spoken to] her a lot about this now and she does *really* like him it's not just like a (1) () kind of thing
- J: Yeah but at the same time she will find someone else
- O: Yeah this is what *I* said to her erm but I'm not exactly sure what Jackie's reasons are for [getting] in their way →
- J: [yeah]
- O: ← because she doesn't want him for herself (2) so I just think she's
- J: well I don't know like my sister was telling me over the weekend when I went down to see her that like you know when her and John broke up for like a year and a half and she was seeing this guy she saw this guy for a bit erm (1) and I don't think they were ever official but they were seeing each other for quite a few months and slept together and like it was (1) like I dunno it was quite special like it was () the first person since John and she'd been with John for like 5 years erm and they broke up eventually cause Ellie was like no not kind of like you're not right for me blah blah and eventually she got back with John but one of her best friends best friends has just started sleeping with him (1) and Ellie's. I can see why she's upset cause you would be irrationally it's one of those things that's hard to explain but Ellie was just like just like
- O: (Did she tell her)
- J: don't just don't go through my stuff. Well no cause basically
- O: Did she tell her best friend to go for it though, that's the difference
- J: No cause she had already done it beforehand and then came to my sister and was like oh I've done this and my sister was like oh it's fine cause you're not gonna say all the time ohh that's out of order cause you might feel stupid and also she's with John so she's like well I don't really have a reason but at the same time she's like just don't go through my stuff. She said that to me not her friend. She was like it's a bit disrespectful. I would never expect a good friend to do that unless they spoke to me about it personally but yeah she shouldn't have said go for it if she didn't mean it at the same ti[me bu]t I don't know I think it's I *told* [Amy]
- O: [yeah]

- O: [things] are so (messed up)
between them two
- J: I know, I said to Amy I said look whatever on Thursday whatever you decide to do I was like look well I would say don't do it if Jackie's important to you cause it's always going to be messy unless you wait like a year then it'll be fine but whatever you decide to do I was like me and I'm pretty sure Olivia will always support you and always be friends with you like even if like if you decide to go for it like that's fine like you know we give you advice beforehand but like once you've once you've decided to do whatever we'll support you whatever you do cause that's what friends do like even if someone you you wouldn't necessarily make the same the right the same decision.
- O: Mm
- J: But Jackie shouldn't have said go for it but at the same time if that happened with someone that you'd () I would just never like you were saying like if I slept with someone you would just that's it it's o[ff ca]use it will make it messy
→
- O: [mm]
- J: ←and even if sometimes irrationally you don't know why but Ellie's with John and she's so happy now but still
- O: Yeah well I wouldn't want any of my friends to date my ex-boyfriends and stuff
- J: Yeah
- O: Even like I dunno if someone started dating Chris would be a bit weird
- J: But I guess like
- O: But then it wasn't a one night stand so
- J: Yeah and you'd be like I wonder what kind of stuff are they saying to them I wonder if they feel the same but still like it's it's just like it's a week and I said to Amy like if it is really something special you should be able to stay friends and get to know each other a bit more they haven't known him that lo[ng]
- O: [mm]
- J: ←and then like if it's like really like that important
- O: They've only got till June anyway this is what I said I was like seriously like what can actually happen between now and June
- J: Yeah (2) but I know what you mean like I wanna be on Amy's side and I'm always going to support her cause you know I'm friends with her and Jackie's is does seem a bit kind of a bit unhinged and I don't think treats Amy that well all the time but at the same time like I always said to Amy like if you want to stay really good with Jackie like just don't do [it]
- O: [mm]
- J: ←and even if you said cause also like if Amy I would have understood like Jackie shouldn't have said that at all but if someone came up to me and said is it ok it would be really hard to be like no, why? [(You'd be like mm)]
- O: [I've done that befo]re though, you know Liam
- J: Yeah
- O: erm when I went through my faze of being absolutely in love with him my horrible friend Emily this was when we were like 15 erm my horrible friend Emily erm started like flirting with him and obviously like Liam responded and whatever cause he was like((mocking voice)) there would never be any passion

between us erm and he they started like almost getting together and I remember the conversation like it was yesterday it was in Subway and

W[e were] both →

J: [subway] ((laughs))

O: ← eating 6 inch meatball subs erm and she's talking about him and then I just said to her is there something going on between you two and she's like well there could be but not if you don't want there to be and I was like. I don't! And that was the end of the conversation

J: But it's like (2) it's like my friend Kate and Natalie (1) and Natalie slept with Kate's brother who's like the older brother that's kind of like given as off limits like that's weird seeing as we've all known each other since we were 10 and then like erm like Kate found out that they'd slept together one time through someone else possibly but Natalie sat down and told her anyway she was like look I really like him blah blah blah is it like ok and Kate was like well I don't really want to stand in their way but like it was like the kind of thing where she like I wish that she was a good enough friend to know that it's off limits [but at]the same time if something really good is →

O: [yeah]

J: ←going to happen between them like they've been going out for like two years now and are still together and it's fine and Kate's kind of got used to it

O: Yeah (1) I dunno just like I would never do it, I would never go there

J: Yeah I I I completely understand [what] you're saying when you're on Amy's side →

O: [but]

J: ←because Jackie shouldn't have said that and I think they're both

O: (To be honest I think it's) just a bit of a fucked up friendship

J: same. But i also do think that like Amy would be a hard person to be really close friends with in some respects

O: seeing how much of a sexual person she is ((laughs))

J: but do you know what I mean and it does seem that likes what other people have (1) only from that past thing as well

Section B – (near the end of the tape)

J: Was it it really nice seeing Mark and Karl I don't know who Karl is

O: Mmm they both sent me a really cute message [()]

J: [Do they both do French]

O: Hm?

J: Do they do French?

O: No I met them both at the open day (1) for Nottingham uni (1) erm Mark sent me a really cute message being like it was so nice to like come over and chat like we should hang out more and stuff

J: Was it really normal or was it still quite intense?

O: Mark?

J: Cause only cause in class he seems quite intense

O: No he's normal like to chat to. he's a good guy we had a really good laugh

J: That's fun. What time. did you get drunk?

O: Yeah but we ate a lot as well so we had a bottle of wine each but

- J: Did you get really do you remember the time when the French boys came over and we were absolutely fucked cause we carried on drinking and they all stopped.
That [was the first time they came over]
- J: [(that that) that was at Mik]e's house wasn't it?
- O: Nooo at our [house]and we cooked
- J: [you got] absolutely fucked
- O: Oh yeah when you didn't
- J: () it was when we cooked as well and the asparagus
- O: To be fair most of the time we have those dinners we get fucked (2) we should organise more I just don't have any time in my life anymore
- J: I have loads of time but I like time to do nothing that's important time as well
- O: It's Mike's turn anyway I think
- J: Oh have you spoke to him since he was like you text him and then he text back saying like we need to talk or something
- O: No I haven't heard anything from him
- J: So he's acknowledged it and moved on
(both laugh)
- O: I dunno like I'm kind of a bit like () like 11 weeks left of term and I'm not going to see half these people again
- J: I know. Does that make you a bit sad?
- O: Yeah but it also makes me like (1) I dunno I'm supposed to be seeing Mike tomorrow, other Mike
- J: What for dinner?
- O: For chats. I'm not sure if he'll feed me. He feeds me quite a lot. Erm
- J: You could always bring food round to his
- O: (2) I'd rather. He fed me.
- J: Yeah but you could always bring round something houmous and dips and that way you've contributed and you don't have to feel bad.
- O: Yeah
- J: Not that he cares he's the kind of guy that likes that I thin[k ()]
- O: [I reaaaaaally] want to know
what's happened with that girl
- J: I saw poopoo today in the erm supermarket with his dad. I guess it was his dad it was a very old man
- O: ((Laughs)) Was it a very old ginger man?
- J: No he was grey silver fox and he had a French accent
- O: I reckon poopoo will be really good looking when he's older
- J: Yeah he's got a very like handsome face]
- O: [cause he's very cutesy] now
- J: [Yeah]
- O: [Quite] young looking
- J: But his hair annoys me I'm just like why do you gel it up () stop it
- O: That's pretty gay
- J: That's pretty gay (1) ((laughs. Olivia laughs a lot during Jenny's dialogue)) I just love how there was such a big jump between like you working in a bar and that's pretty gay you not going to France that's pretty gay and then all of a sudden it was like you liking it in the bum that's pretty gay (2) god I wish I had a clear memory of that [conversation]

- O: [oh it was such] a great moment but I only know that cause I know it was a great moment I can't [(remember exactly)]
- J: [it was just a great night.] That was a great great night
- O: That was a pretty great night
- J: Pretty great
- O: That was when he came up to me and was like Ohhh sorryyyy like pushing his body against me sorryyyy just moving past moving past
- J: I just love that he had like all these plans like didn't[he have an]other job
- O: [go to Birma]
- J: Yeah he was gonna go to Birma
(laughing and talking over each other)
- J: And a year later (2) pretty gay (2) erm oh yeah I wonder if he's seeing that girl
- O: That's another thing about those those boys they just don't care about sleeping with the same girls. Cause I thought cause that girl had come that night to see Jonny erm
- J: yeah I'd just feel really embarrassed if I'd slept with [someone]
- O: [yeah she]was she was texting him being like oh pick me up in the taxi blah blah and then she spent like half the night like being Jonny's shadow cause Jonny didn't give a shit Jonny wanted to dance
- J: Yeah that's probably why she liked him so much
- O: Yeah erm (1) and then all of a sudden like I disappeared for a bit like wandered off [came back] and like
- J: [oh yeah?]
- O: ((laughs))
- J: Wonder where you were? ((laughing)) Just wandered off into a corner somewhere oh yeah?
- O: And then I came back and Mike had his arms around her and I was like that's a bit weird and[then Jonny was like] →
- J: [that's pretty gay]
- O: ←he was just like in the corner he didn't care and I kind of like overheard a sort of conversation between them just before Mike left think it was a bit like is this alright mate can I take her home (and he was like) YEAH mate it's fine GO for it I was like
- J: I think firstly boys are a bit different also cause Jonny obviously doesn't give a shit about any of the[girls he sleeps with]
- O: [yeah well yeah I would] have thought that [Mike would I would] have→
- J: [yeah YEAH i know]
- O: ←thought that Mike wouldn't be sloppy seconds
- J: but I think Mike needs to get laid at the same time.
- O: yeah
- J: When's the last time you saw him with a girl
- O: It had been since like September for him like the next day I was like did you go home with that girl I was like did you go [boumboum erm he was like]
- J: [that's 5 months 5 months] is quite a long time
for a boy
- O: yeah
- J: they don't care as much about the whole like I kind of I would like to like them as a person

- O: ((laughs))
- J: It's like. Vagina's fine
((laughing))
- O: Errrm
- J: Did you go boumboum
- O: Yeah erm boumboum and he was like yep and I was like has your knee stopped shaking cause you know how like he does that *all* [the time] erm
- J: [yeah]
- J: ((laughing)) [out of frustration]
- O: [he was like he was like] no but I've stopped ripping the papers off bottles
- J: Oh yeah that's like
- O: And I was like are you going to see her again and he said yeah probably
- J: Although it might be not to be rude but for her she might have just wanted
- O: () the thing is she seems like such a lovely, sweet innocent girl
- J: Yeah
- O: but then just does stuff like that
- J: yeah (1) it's pretty embarrassing to go out to get with someone be rejected and go home with someone else I [dunno]I'd in the same friendship group →
- O: [yeah]
- J: ←So obviously (1) But then again Mike's really nice and maybe he made her feel really good about herself after being like
- O: Yeah I reckon he'd be a good boyfriend
- J: Yeah he'd be a great husband
- O: Yeah
- J: I just don't find him sexually attractive
- O: Although like I disagree with him on possibly *everything*
- J: In what way. I disagree with him quite a lot I'm always like *no* don't be silly [()] he's probably just [joking though]
- O: [()] [Yeah yeah but] I just don't think there's anything that we agree on apart from that we both like France
- J: What did you text English Mike back? Did you text him back after he was like we need to talk
- O: Yeah erm what did I say I was like(3) erm maybe I didn't no I'm pretty sure I did yeah i was like sure sometime next week or something(1) to be fair I think it should be me to make the effort i think cause he's asked me out for dinner a couple of times but I just can't be bothered
- J: yeah (3) cause also if I'm not necessarily going to go out this weekend obviously you're going to want to go out I guess you could go out with Ben or you could go with the French boys and then if he came you'd want to have the talk before the drunken night out otherwise
- O: I think there's been enough time now for it to have just blown over like any sort of silly tension that was there for no reason
- J: Yeah
- O: Erm but I don't want to meet up with him on my own unless it's like at the Bag or something