

‘We Was Playing Naked Football the Other Night’: Introduction

What is men’s talk like? If the stereotypes are to be believed, men either don’t talk much (strong and silent) or talk compulsively and competitively about sport, cars and drinking exploits. Are these stereotypes accurate? Do they apply to men’s talk in all contexts or just to all-male talk? In other words, do men talk differently when they are with other men rather than in mixed company? And does all-male talk differ from all-female talk? These are some of the questions that will be explored in this book.

Everyone will have their own views on men’s talk, but we can only find out what men’s talk is like by examining examples of real conversation. Here is an extract from a conversation involving four men, Dave, Chaz, Ewan and George:

George: we was playing naked football the other night, like it was only about half eleven, er-

Chaz: play that often, do you?

George: well I was- in our pants like, we were only kicking it about back I live off

Chaz: what, in your duds or wi’ fuck all?

George: duds, and boots like [. . .] fucking next-door neighbour comes out like that fucking Gareth or whatever he’s called from-

Dave: is that what he’s called?

George: ‘I’m from Wales’ <MOCK WELSH ACCENT> fucking

Dave: ‘hello I’m from Wales’ <MOCK WELSH ACCENT> <LAUGHTER>

George: and he comes out and says-

Dave: fucking opening line

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George: 'don't you think you're being a bit unreasonable playing football at this time on a Monday night?' I says 'Fuck off <LAUGHTER> yer bunch of knobheads, go on fuck off back inside' <LAUGHTER> full of beer, funny.¹

Anyone who lives in Britain or in any country in the Western industrialized world will recognize this as authentic men's talk. Even if the transcript did not give the names of the speakers, we would be in no doubt about their gender, and could also guess that they are younger rather than older men. What is it about this talk that we recognize as masculine? Is it the fact that the extract starts with a boast (*we was playing naked football the other night*)? Is it the topic (football)? Is it the swearing (*fucking, fuck off, knobheads*)?

Boasting, swearing and topics such as football are characteristic of men's talk, as I hope to show. But there are other points to notice about the extract that are revealing about men's talk and about masculinity. First, when Chaz queries the idea of naked football (line 4), George reveals that he and his friends had actually been wearing underpants as well as football boots. This suggests that the boasting persona he begins with is not as robust as might appear, and that there is some ambivalence about the idea of male nakedness. Another point to notice is the work George and Dave do as a joint effort to construct the neighbour, Gareth, as 'other'. They make fun of his Welshness by mimicking his accent and they pretend not to be sure of his name. In so doing they construct themselves as the 'in-group', people who understand that having a game of football at half-past eleven at night in your underpants is a cool thing to do.

Even in this short stretch of talk, the four men are collaborating in making claims about who they are and who they are not. This is George's story, but through their appreciative acceptance of the story (shown in particular through laughter) his three friends signal their concurrence with the position it marks out. They are men who enjoy a drink and a game of football; they are not people who worry about whether eleven-thirty is a 'reasonable' time to be outside playing football. They present themselves as laddish rebels against convention. It is also salient that they present themselves as not Welsh. Identity work of this kind is one of the key functions of talk among friends. In talk with close friends, we can explore who we are in a more relaxed way than in other, more formal, contexts. The reason that we get such pleasure from friendly interaction is that it has the potential for 'the exchange of recognition'. This phrase was coined by

the psycho-analyst Jessica Benjamin to describe the ideal relationship between two people where each acknowledges the real-ness of the other. 'Recognition is that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions and actions of the self.'² In this book one of my aims is to explore the way talk can perform the work of recognition, and to look at the links between talk and identity. At the same time, I want to avoid sweeping generalizations and simplistic stereotypes about men and about men's talk.

'Drinking a Quadruple Jack Daniels': Men and Masculinity

Until recently it has been women, not men, who have been the object of scrutiny in gender-orientated research, but since the 1990s the whole issue of men and masculinity has been problematized. In the past, the concepts 'man' and 'person' were often indistinguishable, while 'woman' remained a marked term. However, the elision of male person with person is now being dismantled, and the new focus on men has been accompanied by a huge outpouring of books with titles such as *Masculinity and Power; Men, Masculinity and the Media; Men, Masculinities and Social Theory; Young Masculinities*.³ These books are the result of work in a wide range of disciplines: sociology, anthropology, psychology, media studies, literary criticism. But whatever their disciplinary framework, all of them provide evidence that the idea that maleness was somehow unmarked is no longer accepted. 'Scholars have begun to examine men's lives and experiences, not simply as normative assumptions, but as gendered and socially and historically variable.'⁴

A case in point is the conversational extract involving George and his friends. It comes from an article published in *The Sociological Review* entitled 'The beer talking: four lads, a carry out and the reproduction of masculinities'. The article was written after one of the two co-authors invited his friends to his flat for a beer and a 'carry out' and recorded the evening's conversation. The authors' aim was 'a detailed exploration of one all-male gathering and the ways in which four young white heterosexual men [. . .] negotiate and reproduce a range of masculinities whilst drinking alcohol'.⁵ This aim illustrates the shift in men's view of themselves – a shift from seeing themselves as unmarked representatives of the human race to focusing on themselves *as men*. The two male authors of this article reflect on their everyday lives as men, and explore the ways in which drinking and talking in all-male groups serves to construct and maintain norms of masculinity.

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Work in sociolinguistics has followed the same trend, with a shift from male speakers as unmarked to male speakers in focus. One of the most important sociolinguistic works of the 1970s was an account of the language of Black male adolescents and pre-adolescents entitled *Language in the Inner City*. The title ignores the fact that the language analysed in the book is *male* language. By contrast, a collection of articles on the language use of male speakers in the 1990s is entitled simply *Language and Masculinity*. This latter book was the first to focus explicitly on men and language.⁶

So we are now beginning to build up a picture of men's talk, but what we know is skewed to young men and adolescents and to non-domestic contexts such as the street, the pub and the sports changing room. We know, for example, about the linguistic behaviour of Black male adolescents in Harlem; of white adolescent boys in Reading; of rugby players in New Zealand; of college athletes in Ohio, USA; of unemployed men in the English West Midlands; of young working-class men in Barcelona; and of male university students in many parts of the world (South Africa, the USA, Britain).⁷

In this book, I shall build on these earlier accounts to give a broader account of men's talk at the turn of the twenty-first century. I shall attempt to show how masculinity is constructed in talk, and to show how men's talk sustains and perpetuates 'hegemonic' masculinity,⁸ that is, "'approved" ways of being male'.⁹ Inevitably, dominant or hegemonic modes of masculinity come into conflict with other, alternative, masculinities. At any moment in time there is a range of masculinities extant in a culture, masculinities which differ in terms of class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and so on. And these masculinities intersect in complex ways. So although I shall sometimes use the term 'masculinity' as a convenience, rather than the plural form 'masculinities', that does not mean that I subscribe to a notion of some essential masculinity that can be treated as constant across time and space.¹⁰ Moreover, masculinity cannot be understood on its own: the concept is essentially relational. In other words, masculinity is meaningful only when it is understood in relation to femininity.¹¹

I shall draw on a data-base of spontaneous conversation among men friends which includes men from all social classes and a wide range of ages. I shall focus on male friendship groups with the aim of investigating men's talk at its most relaxed and informal. I shall look at male conversation in general, but will concentrate on the narratives produced within these conversations.

'A Funny Thing Happened Today': Story-telling in Conversation

We all take part in a multiplicity of conversations every day of our lives, but we spend little or no time thinking about what exactly conversation is or what it does. Conversations can be analysed in terms of two main components: discussion and narrative.¹² Discussion refers to those parts of conversation where a topic is established and conversational participants exchange views on that topic, whether it be Manchester United's chances of winning the League or the growing of genetically modified foods in Britain. Narrative refers to those parts of conversation where an individual tells a story about something they have done recently or that has happened to them in the past. One of the reasons that friends meet is to catch up, and this is usually done by exchanging stories. Story-telling is the way we present to each other what has been happening in our lives.

The discussion parts of conversation tend to involve all participants, who make brief contributions to the topic in hand. When you listen to conversation, there is a general noisiness about discussion sections which results from everybody's involvement. When somebody starts to tell a story, however, other participants listen in a different, more attentive way, at least initially. In other words, telling a story gives a conversational participant special rights to the floor. This doesn't mean that other participants remain silent – they will often chip in with comments – but there is an understanding that a story is being told and that the narrator will hold the floor until the story is finished.

Most conversations are full of stories. The example at the beginning of this chapter involves George telling a story to the others about himself. It is easier to identify it as a story if the comments from other participants are omitted:

- 1 we was playing naked football the other night,
- 2 like it was only about half eleven, er-
- 3 [. . .]
- 4 fucking next-door neighbour comes out like that fucking Gareth
or whatever he's called from-
- 5 'I'm from Wales' <MOCK WELSH ACCENT> fucking-
- 6 and he comes out and says,
- 7 'don't you think you're being a bit unreasonable playing football
at this time on a Monday night?'

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8 I says 'Fuck off <LAUGHTER> yer bunch of knobheads,
9 go on fuck off back inside' <LAUGHTER>
10 full of beer,
11 funny.

This is a typical conversational narrative. It describes an event in George's recent past ('the other night') when he came into conflict with a neighbour. The neighbour represents mainstream values ('don't you think you're being a bit unreasonable playing football at this time on a Monday night?') while George and his mates represent laddish values. Men's stories often focus on conflict, as we shall see in later chapters. Story-tellers also use dialogue or reported speech to dramatize events and animate characters. George presents the clash between the neighbour's values and his own through what they say to each other: the neighbour's words represent him as a calm adult who appeals to reason, while George presents himself as intransigent, as not open to reason, and talking with a Manchester accent. Another typical feature of this story is its ending. George's final comment 'funny' tells his audience what he feels about the story and shows them how it is meant to be evaluated. Adjectives such as 'funny', 'weird', 'incredible', are common at the end of stories. A full account of the way stories are structured will be given in the next chapter.

So why are most conversations full of stories? We couldn't function *without* telling stories, but we tend to be unaware of their significance in our lives. Every culture provides its members with what Jerome Bruner calls a 'tool kit' for constructing narratives: a set of canonical characters (heroes, villains, tricksters, etc.) and canonical plots.¹³ As fully fledged members of our culture, we use tools from the tool kit to make sense of our lives, to establish some order and to explain why things happened the way they did. These tools allow us to establish our continuity over place and time, and to give our lives shape and meaning. Try to imagine what it would feel like if daily experience was perceived as 'a series of discrete, endlessly juxtaposed moments'.¹⁴ In fact, an individual's life *could* be described as a series of discrete, endlessly juxtaposed moments, but human beings seem to need to interpret this series of moments as coherent and goal-directed. We do this by giving our experience a narrative framework. In other words, our thinking and understanding is fundamentally narrative in character.

This means that narrative has a crucial role to play in our construction of our identities, in our construction of the 'self'. Just as we use narrative modes of thinking to make sense of what we call our 'life',

so we present ourselves to others by means of narratives, shaping and selecting events to create particular versions of the self.¹⁵ And because the narrative tool box of any given culture is particular to that culture, then the stories we tell also play a key role in our locating of ourselves in a social and cultural world.¹⁶ Without narrative order, our lives would lack a sense of meaning and direction.¹⁷

Every aspect of story-telling contributes to our presentation of self: it is not only first-person accounts of our lives which do this. The characters we construct in our story-telling and their relationships with each other, our attitudes as narrators to the characters in our stories and their actions, the voices we use to animate characters in chunks of direct speech, all combine to express who we are.

'The Scary Fact of Hearing Yourself on a Tape': Collecting the Data

The focus of this book is men's talk and the stories occurring within that talk. The analysis and commentary presented here depend on data collected over several years in the form of audio-recorded talk. These spontaneously occurring conversations were recorded with the men's agreement¹⁸ and were subsequently transcribed for this project.

Thirty-two all-male conversations were collected as part of a wider research project exploring gender differences in language use. The data-base resulting from this project includes all-female and mixed conversation as well as all-male conversations. (Analysis of the all-female conversations has already been published as a book – *Women Talk*.) Participants in all cases were friends (or close family in the case of some of the mixed conversations): in other words, recordings were made of groups or pairs of people who had a well-established relationship. The choice of pre-existing friendship groups as informants was determined by the need to obtain large amounts of spontaneous speech and to guarantee that such speech was relaxed and informal.¹⁹

The methodology employed in this research is an innovative form of participant observation: after contact was made with a group, they were asked to take responsibility for recording their conversations.²⁰ My contact with the groups was often via an intermediary, whose relationship to the group – or to one individual in the group – might be that of friend, colleague, girlfriend, sister, or even housemaster in the case of a group of public school boys. (Of course, these intermediaries

were not present when the groups met to talk.) The assumption was made that any self-consciousness induced by the presence of the tape-recorder would be overcome by the strong normative pressure which such groups exert over their members. Participants were simply asked to record themselves when they were with their friends.

Even this aspect of the research produced marked gender differentiation. The women who took part in my research almost invariably recorded themselves in the home. The men, by contrast, recorded themselves in a wide range of settings: in their homes, in pubs, in a restaurant, in a university office after hours, in a youth club, even in a garden shed in the case of one group of dope-smoking adolescent boys. And because male participants in my study seemed to be more sophisticated than female in their use of such gadgets as lapel microphones, they also recorded themselves in unexpected places like men's lavatories and walking along the street to the chip shop. The pub was, however, by far the most popular setting for all-male talk, a finding which is not surprising, given that 'the pub seems to be a pivotal site for both the expression and reinforcement of traditional masculinities and gendered consumption'.²¹

This initial stage of data collection produced a large number of recordings, with some groups proving enthusiastic participants. This data-base was reduced on the principle that no one group should contribute more than five conversations to the corpus. In all, twelve separate groups are represented in the final corpus of thirty-two conversations, though this figure may be misleading, as the groups tended to vary from one recording to the next. In other words, the total of twelve groups disguises the variety of male voices involved here.²² But it would be equally false to say that there were thirty-two groups (one for each conversation) since the groups tended to have a stable core, consisting of one, two or three speakers, one of whom was always the member of the group who was liaising with the research project and who took responsibility for carrying out recording. An example of fluctuation in group composition is given by the youngest group participating, 15- and 16-year-old boys at a public school. There was a core group of three boys, but one conversation involves only two of them, while another includes a fourth boy. Among older males a similar pattern is found: one group who met in a pub after work consisted of six adult education lecturers, but there were never more than four present on any one occasion, and membership of the group varied on every occasion. This fluidity in the composition of male friendship groups contrasts with the all-female groups

involved in this research, which were much more consistent in terms of membership.

'I Hope This Professor Isn't an Ardent Feminist': Research Dilemmas

Writing this book has not been a straightforward process. I began collecting the data many years ago but was not sure initially if I wanted to use it to write a book. My observations of my own sons and the sons of friends made me curious about men's conversational norms and concerned to come to an understanding of contemporary masculinities. But I was uncomfortable with the position the research put me in. Same-sex talk is by definition exclusive of the opposite sex, so only men participate in all-male talk, just as only women participate in all-female talk. Yet I, a woman, was the person who ended up with the audio-tapes, and in order to transcribe and analyse the conversations, I had to listen to – that is, vicariously participate in – talk which involved only men and which was designed for an all-male group. This made me uncomfortable at first; it made me feel like a voyeur.

But the evidence of the conversations themselves is that participants were not worried about the involvement of a female researcher. For example, two men, Chris and Geoff, start their conversation by discussing the recording process. They have agreed to record themselves over lunch in an Italian restaurant for Chris's girlfriend, Kate, and their talk demonstrates that this is unproblematic as far as they are concerned:

Chris: Kate was telling me apparently the best thing to do is to start off with just talking about the fact that you're recording=

Geoff: =well yeah obviously

Chris: which is what makes you then forget that it's on the table

Geoff: that's right well I mean the- although to be honest I'm quite used to it because of the- as I said in my e-mail the disciplinaries . that I've done

Chris: yeah

Geoff: which all get recorded and the scary-

Chris: that's very scary=

Geoff: =fact of hearing yourself on a tape they a- they actually have to translate it all into written as well=

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Chris: =yeah

Geoff: s- she should actually have some of those because <LAUGH>

Chris: probably

Geoff: they're quite entertaining as long as she sort of scrubbed out the names

This opening fragment from their conversation shows quite a sophisticated understanding of what is involved in conversational research: they understand that initially the presence of a tape-recorder may make them self-conscious, they understand that recordings have to be transcribed ('translated into written') and that participants' names have to be changed or 'scrubbed out'. Their use of the name 'Kate' and the pronoun 'she' also demonstrate their understanding that the tape is destined to be heard by a woman.

Younger participants also make occasional comments which make clear that they are aware that the tape will be heard by a female researcher. In fact, the public schoolboys often have fun directing remarks at me. This joking exploitation of the recording situation seems to be a feature of the talk of young people; it occurred in my recordings of all-female talk and has been remarked on by John Wilson in his research on adolescent talk.²³ Their first tape starts with a discussion about the process of being taped and self-consciousness. Their talk *is* initially self-conscious, to the extent that one of them drawls 'must be bloody boring for this poor woman'. Later, the conversation develops into a competition about who drinks most, and about who has 'scored' with members of the opposite sex. (The conversation is by now relaxed and uninhibited.) Robert mentions Julie Smith:²⁴

Julian: she is such a slag

Robert: so what – she's an attractive slag

Julian: I hope this professor isn't an ardent feminist, she'll be very annoyed

In a conversation recorded nearly eighteen months later, by which time the recording process has become routine, reference to the researcher only happens at rare moments such as the following:

[Arguing about whether or not a fellow student speaks French]

Julian: but the boy speaks French

Henry: he does not . do you want this knife embedded in your face?

Julian: do you want that tape-recorder inserted up your rectum?

Henry: <LAUGHING> she'd get some pretty interesting sounds then
 Julian: yeah she would actually

In both these examples, the boys' choice of reference terms ('this poor woman', 'ardent feminist') and their use of the pronoun 'she' demonstrate their understanding that their (all-male) talk will eventually be listened to by a female.

Despite this, I still found listening to the audio-tapes an uncomfortable experience at the beginning. The men's conversations were so unlike conversations I was accustomed to as a female speaker. They struck me initially as either vulgar and aggressive, or extraordinarily tedious in their attention to (technical) detail.

I persisted with the research for a variety of reasons. First, it struck me that male researchers had for centuries studied and analysed women's cultural practices, and that I could at least bring to my study of male cultural practices a feminist sensitivity about the issues raised by cross-gender research of this kind. As a member of the marked category 'woman', I could contribute to the deconstruction of men's unmarked status and could help to bring masculinity into focus. Second, I realized that logically there was no way out of the position I found myself in: if one single researcher was to do comparative work on same-sex talk, then that researcher would inevitably feel like an intruder when it came to the conversations of the other sex. Any solution that involved, say, two researchers, one male and one female, would still have the problem that no real comparative work could be done unless both researchers listened to all the data.

My final reason for sticking with the all-male tapes and carrying out an analysis of these conversations was that, as time went by, I became more comfortable with the recordings as the all-male talk became more familiar to my ears. More importantly, my reading in the growing literature on men and masculinity, and my observations of my sons and the sons of friends growing up in the late twentieth century, made me more aware of the complexities of masculinity and more concerned to develop a better understanding of what it means to be a man in our culture today.

The Structure of the Book

My aim in this book is to use stories told by men as a way in to the basic cultural ideas which lie behind men's lives and masculine

identities at the turn of the century in Britain.²⁵ The focus of the book will be stories told by male speakers to each other in the course of everyday conversation. Previous studies of male narrative have focused on story-telling as performance, a speech event set apart from ordinary talk.²⁶ The performance narrative is a quintessentially masculine speech event: it can be described as 'a ludic exercise in dominance, control and display'.²⁷ By contrast, the narratives that are the subject of this book are the kind that every one of us produces every day of our lives, regardless of gender. They occur spontaneously as part of relaxed informal conversation involving friends or family. Such narratives are less self-conscious than performance narratives and are crucially concerned with the self and relationship, though dominance and display may sometimes be themes that are relevant to an understanding of men's stories.

The thirty-two all-male conversations I collected contain a total of 203 stories. These 203 stories range from very short (minimal narratives) to very long. They deal with incidents ranging from the trivial to the life-changing. In some of the stories, the narrator presents himself as the protagonist; in others, the protagonist is a non-present third person. Stories may be set in the distant past – they may be about childhood, about wartime experiences, about what happened in the 1960s; or they may be set in the recent past – what happened yesterday or this morning. The events narrated take place in a wide range of contexts – in the workplace, in the pub, on the sports field, on motorways, up mountains. There are stories of success and also stories of failure. There are stories on stereotypically masculine topics – cars, sport, drink, violence; and stories involving topics that are less obviously masculine – about appendicitis, probability theory, getting planning permission, buying a fridge-freezer.

In the next chapter (chapter 2) I shall analyse the structure of conversational narrative, with the aim of demonstrating what the key constituents of a story are. Chapter 3 will explore the claim that narrative plays a key role in the construction of masculinity, and will examine the range of masculinities expressed in the stories. Chapter 4 will focus on sequences of stories and will ask whether telling stories in sequence allows men to express connection with each other. Chapter 5 will explore gender differences in narrative. Chapter 6 will examine male story-telling in conversations involving women as well as men, focusing on the peer group and the family. Chapter 7 will focus on stories co-narrated by men with a heterosexual partner, and will explore the role of collaborative narrative in mixed talk. The book will close

with an overview of men's talk and of the ways in which narrative constructs and maintains the prevailing norms of masculinity.

Notes

- 1 This extract is taken from the conversational data presented in Brendan Gough and Gareth Edwards, 'The beer talking: four lads, a carry out and the reproduction of masculinities'. Spelling has in places been regularized.
- 2 Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*, p. 12.
- 3 The books referred to are (in the order mentioned in the text): Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Steve Craig (ed.), *Men, Masculinity and the Media* (London: Sage, 1992); Jeff Hearn and David Morgan (eds), *Men, Masculinities and Social Theory* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Stephen Frosh, Ann Phoenix and Rob Pattman, *Young Masculinities* (London: Palgrave, 2002).
- 4 Michael Kimmel, 'Rethinking "masculinity"', p. 7.
- 5 Gough and Edwards, 'The beer talking', p. 411.
- 6 The two books referred to here are: William Labov, *Language in the Inner City*; Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof (eds), *Language and Masculinity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).
- 7 The research referred to here can be found in: Labov, *Language in the Inner City*; Jenny Cheshire, *Variation in an English Dialect*; Koenraad Kuiper, 'Sporting formulae in New Zealand English'; Timothy Curry, 'Fraternal bonding in the locker room'; Sara Willott and Christine Griffin, "'Wham bam, am I a man?": unemployed men talk about masculinities'; Joan Pujolar i Cos, 'Masculinities in a multilingual setting'; Debra Kaminer and John Dixon, 'The reproduction of masculinity: a discourse analysis of men's drinking talk'; Deborah Cameron, 'Performing gender identity: young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity'; Gough and Edwards, 'The beer talking'.
- 8 The concept of hegemonic masculinity was developed by Robert Connell and his colleagues working in feminist sociology. According to Connell, in order to carry off 'being a man' in everyday life, men have to engage with hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity maintains, legitimates and naturalizes the interests of powerful men while subordinating the interests of others, notably those of women and gay men. See in particular R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*.
- 9 Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, *Young Masculinities*, p. 3.
- 10 For more on the plurality of gender, see Michael Kimmel, *The Gendered Society*, pp. 10–11.
- 11 Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 68; Kimmel, 'Rethinking "masculinity"', p. 12; Michael Roper and John Tosh, 'Introduction' to *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, p. 2.

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- 12 See Christine Cheepen, *The Predictability of Informal Conversation*; Jennifer Coates, *Women Talk*.
- 13 Jerome Bruner, 'Life as narrative', p. 15.
- 14 Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen, 'Narrative and the self as relationship', p. 19.
- 15 Anthony Kerby, *Narrative and the Self*; Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*.
- 16 Jerome Bruner, 'Autobiography as self'; Wallace Chafe, *Discourse, Consciousness and Time: The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing*.
- 17 Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*.
- 18 I am enormously grateful to all the men and boys who agreed to allow their conversations to be used in this project. Some of the recordings were made initially by other researchers, including students taking my Conversational Narrative course at the University of Surrey Roehampton. I would like to put on record my gratitude to the following for giving me access to these recordings: Alex Bean, Keith Brown, Noni Geleit, Jacqueline Huett, Emma Ogden-Hooper, Janis Pringle, Andrew Rosta, Karl Stuart, Simon Vivian, Mark Wildsmith, John Wilson.
- 19 See Lesley Milroy, *Observing and Analysing Natural Language*, p. 35.
- 20 I started using this methodology in 1985. Other sociolinguists who have collected conversational data using a similar approach are John Wilson, *On the Boundaries of Conversation*, and Ben Rampton, *Crossing*.
- 21 Willott and Griffin, "'Wham bam, am I a man?'"', p. 115.
- 22 Fifty-one male speakers were involved in total.
- 23 Coates, *Women Talk*, pp. 7–8; John Wilson, 'The sociolinguistic paradox'.
- 24 All names in the transcripts have been changed.
- 25 See Livia Polanyi: 'story materials [can be used] as an entry into the cluster of basic interwoven ideas which lies behind and supports our daily lives' (*Telling the American Story*, p. 112).
- 26 For example, Roger Abrahams, *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture*; Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*; Labov, *Language in the Inner City*.
- 27 Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*, p. 36.