

**LSFS31 4.10.1989**

**Vicky**

Q: Well. I wondered if you could - as it was such a long time ago in a way that you filled in the questionnaire -

A: Yeah, I remember.

Q: - and then you were working for the NHS, weren't you?

A: Yes.

Q: Can you sort of tell me what's happened since then, 'cos you've obviously gone back to college and... something at college.

A: Well, I left my job in [HEALTHCARE] and I've gone back to college to do some more A-levels. I've also... go into nursing, I had an interview at [NAME OF HOSPITAL], and they've offered me a place after I finish. There's just this A-level that I'm doing now, so - it's all sort of like making steps towards the future, I suppose.

Q: Have you always wanted to do nursing?

A: No, but it's the only thing I've ever wanted to do. I've never really considered anything else seriously. So I mean - I've wanted to do it for about - I suppose the time I've worked in the NHS, about two and a half years, since I went and worked in the... General Hospital, that's when my interest started.

Q: And what - you've already got, I remember, some A-levels, when you left school.

A: Yeah, but they weren't - I wanted sort of quite a ... academic A-level, so I'm doing biology - which I mean, hopefully - 'cos I'd like to - the course that I will do when I go into nursing will be Project 2000, which sort of is changing the whole sort of way that they actually teach a nurse, you know, that for the first eighteen months it's all purely study, you don't actually go on the wards and you're not treated as an employee. You're treated as a student. So I mean following that, you can do another year, and you can actually get a degree in nursing. That's what Project 2000 is like changing it. So - and also, I mean if I do decide in two years, at the end of this two years, that I don't wanna be a nurse, then it's always better to have qualifications.

Q: Yeah. So is the degree in nursing actually something quite new?

A: Yeah. Yeah, I mean the hospital only started it last week, that was the first group that had come in that were gonna be trained on Project 2000, so it's very new. Guinea-pigs, I think. I'm glad I won't be in... so -

Q: And are you enjoying it?

A: College - yeah, I do. I mean, mores o than I did when I was at sixth form 'cos it's an F.E., it's - there's - I just think people are a little - that more mature, you know, and the atmosphere's quite friendly. It's a nice college, it's a nice college. Just down the road - (?) [REDACTED].

Q: Oh, I know. And so you're doing biology?

A: Yeah.

Q: Just biology or any others?

A: Well, I'm gonna try and get a better grade in my maths as well, GCSE maths, so it's just those two; so I'm not there that much of the time but - I mean SWIS, which is like a political society there as well, so that involves sort of like being around a bit, you know, at college more than just sort of like lesson time, and meeting people outside.

Q: What does SWIS -

A: Socialist Workers' Student Society. Yeah.

Q: Is that to do with the SWP?

A: Yeah, it is, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it's only me and this other woman there, so I mean we're both new to the college so we're sort of like finding our feet. So not sort of - just get people interested politically in what we've got to say. It's good.

Q: Have you done that before?

A: No.

Q: I mean, were you politically interested at school?

A: Well, I've been in the SWP for about two and a half years, on and off. But not - not when I was at school, not really, I was sort of like lefty sort of thing, in the sense, you know, women's rights and that sort of thing, and trying to sort of like break - I knew what the stereotypes were 'cos my of sister and things like that, she's got like kids and that, and I've always sort of like seen that's not what I wanted to do, whereas had a career - and I, you know, thought of that first of all I suppose. That's about it - not any sort of like sound - I didn't actually put myself with any like political party, or, you know, any like tradition or whatever.

Q: Is - your sister's presumably older than you?

A: Yeah, my sister's thirty, yeah, she's a lot older than me. Ten years. Yeah.

Q: And so was it just the two of you -

A: No. My brother - my brother is in the SWP as well, my brother's a [CARING PROFESSION], so, you know - I'm following in his footsteps pretty much, you know. He's - my brother's twenty-seven. But I mean I'm closer to him, I get on better with him, more in common. There's just the three of us.

Q: And are you the only one left at home?

A: I'm not liv-

Q: You're not -

A: Well, I'm in the stage of sort of moving out but - the house we're living in is - I mean, it's - I mean it's not sort of "home sweet home" at the moment, so I'm sort of darting between there and my mum's house. So - in the process of moving out, making a big step.

Q: Have you lived away from home before?

A: No, no, never.

Q: And is it your mum and dad at home?

A: Yeah, and also because - the situation's that we only live in a two bedroom flat because my dad is actually - my dad suffered a [SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITION] and he has to have his own room, so I have to share a room with my mum, which is - as I'm getting older it's sort of, you know -

Q: ...

A: Yeah, it's not a good idea really. Creates hassle which, you know, doesn't need to happen, you should just move out and - I suppose it's better, I've been getting on with them a lot better since I moved out rather than screaming "get out" every time you want to have a bit of peace and quiet.

Q: What, them screaming at you or -

A: Ah, me - each way, you know, they scream at me and -

Q: So how long have you been sharing with your mum?

A: [REDACTED], so - since about - about five years actually, yeah, about five years.

Q: That's quite a long time.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I didn't really used to mind that much, it's just - you can't - when you're younger you don't care so much, but you wanna have pictures on the walls, you know, just silly things, you know. And you just wanna be able to - if you don't - you know, go to bed what time you want, read to what time you want, and you can't necessarily do that if someone who's a lot older needs more sleep and, you know, also needs their own space as well.

Q: That's right.

A: You know, you can't, you know, you can't pressurise them or make a big deal out of it.

Q: Well, presumably if you were sort of staying out late or something you'd feel that you were gonna wake her up.

A: Yeah. Yeah, I've done that a few times, yeah. (Laugh)

Q: Stumbling into -

A: Yeah. Embarrassing more than anything, I think. Just to sort of collapse in your own private room and things.

Q: Is that what you'll have in your new place?

A: Yeah, yeah, there's more space and the people there are, you know, just okay. Do as you want really.

Q: That sounds a lot better.

A: Yeah, it is, we get on pretty well so -

Q: Are they students?

A: One of them's a student in their last year at [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] and the other one's a [SKILLED TRADE]. So there's a sort of variety of people there.

Q: Is that women or men?

A: The student's my boyfriend, but the other woman's - the other person is a woman.

Q: The [SKILLED TRADE] -

A: Yeah, she's a woman, yeah. Yeah. Very brave, I think. (Laugh)... horrible stories but I mean - enough to put you off.

Q: I expect she gets quite a lot of hassle.

A: Yeah, she does. She's a hard woman, though. She gives as good as she gets so it's alright.

Q: Good. And in terms of like relationships, which is what - central to our research -

A: Yeah.

Q: - what would you say was the most important relationship sort of -

A: In the house?

Q: - family, friends, in your kind of life, at the moment?

A: Well, they're all sort of important at different times, I think.

Q: So it's not one that's any more important than -

A: No, no, I don't think so. Sort of - you need people at different times and - I think sometimes you feel you're losing something when it becomes more important to you. So I don't know, I wouldn't say there's anyone or anything that's more important than something else, you know. It's all quite even. At the moment anyway.

Q: And is this the first time you will have lived with your boyfriend?

A: Yeah. Yeah. But I mean it's - we're trying to work it out on the understanding that it's not - although it's living together it's not - oh, it sounds a bit sort of too good to be true.

We're not gonna sort of like have all these - our expectations aren't gonna change... outside, you know, I don't expect him to be - come home at night, and, you know, and I don't wanna know where he is every minute of the day. I mean I don't know if it'll work out. Just see how it goes, but I mean - I mean he's sort of doing me a favour because of the situation I'm in at home, and obviously if something better came up, then, you know in a house maybe with some other women, then I - then I'd move out and I wouldn't feel unhappy about it. I don't think he would either, it's just convenience at the moment to stop me tearing my hair out a bit.

Q: And if as you say, you've got your own room there -

A: Yeah.

Q: - rather than that you're simply sharing his room -

A: Yeah. No, no, I've got my own space, so it's really good. There's no sort of like pressure on us in that way, so that sort of makes it easier. Makes it a lot easier, yeah.

Q: And how long have you been together.

A: Eighteen - well, about two years, I suppose. On and off. I met him before - I met him when I was at sixth form and then I sort of - I don't know, went into a relationship with him somehow... I suppose.

Q: He must have been at university by then...?

A: He was - what he was doing was, he failed one of his A-levels and he was just doing an A-level in a year. That's I think when I was in my first year. When he was in - he's in - he's started his third term - third year next - next - at the end of this next week, so -... education.

Q: And so how old's he?

A: Twenty-one. A little bit older than me. A little bit older.

Q: And is that the first - no, you put you had... two long-term relationships -

A: Yeah. I was thinking when it was written, yeah, I have. There was someone when I was much younger, when I was about seventeen, but - was it sixteen till I was about seventeen, eighteen? Yeah. It doesn't seem like it was a long time when I think about it. It was quite short, but I suppose when I was that age -

Q: Yeah. Sixteen to eighteen is quite a long time when you are sixteen to eighteen.

A: Yeah, yeah. I think it's - I always sort of tend to go out with people that I've been friends with for a time as well, so if you - I mean, for a lot of the time, you know, you might just get along as friends, you know, even if you're not sort of like attracted to each other anymore it's sort of hard to make that break, so maybe that's why it goes on, just as friends.

Q: So you've known him before and you started going out with him.

A: Yeah. Yeah. Not as - well, sort of just like someone who you see around, sort of a friend of a friend as opposed to someone that I - that I used to get along with him okay.

Q: So how did you meet him?

A: I met him through - my best friend that I went to school with at that time, she's - I don't know - I met him through her, I don't know how she... him. 'Cos we all - we all used to be mods, you see, and I think it was just through that, just people, you sort of like get into this little crowd. You know, people in an area get to know other people who are following the same cult or whatever, so that sort of thing.

Q: So what did you do?

A: What did he do?

Q: What did you do, sort of like as a crowd of mods?

A: Just go drinking and - same as everybody else, yeah, go to clubs but - all the music is different. You think it's that different but it's not really, from what everyone else is doing, it's just the same sort of thing, it's just you dress funny. (Laugh)

Q: Yeah, I suppose it's just style.

A: Yeah, yeah. I suppose it's something you just try and relate to, you know. I mean the sixties always seems like such a great period, you know, I mean I don't really particularly think so now, 'cos, you know - but I mean at the time it was just like all new, and you try and attach yourself to that, I suppose. But it was twenty years ago.

Q: And was he your first boyfriend or were there others?

A: No, I went out with someone else before that. I went out with someone for a year before that, when I was quite young. I was probably about fourteen. But - that's a bit hard to remember actually. I think that - I mean... it was just different, we just used to sort of walk the dog and, you know. ...about six months when I never used to see her, I'd just go round his house on a Sunday and go to (?) Lee River with the dog. All summer. Like it was great, I loved it. Got on better with the dog than I did with him, I think. (Laugh). It was a nice dog.

Q: What, so you missed the dog more than -

A: Yeah, I did actually, that's the only thing I thought about when I left. The dog.

Q: And were any of those early relationships like sexual relationships?

A: Yeah, they all were. I was quite young. Fourteen. Quite young. It didn't seem so at the time but, thinking back on it, if I spoke to a fourteen-year-old now, a thirteen year old now, and they were telling me they were having a sexual relationship, I think I'd be a bit shocked. I think I would be.

Q: ... - Sorry -

A: I don't think I would sort of start moralising to them about it, I'd just feel a bit of a hypocrite. I might say, you know, "I wouldn't worry about that, you've got a lot of time" or whatever, I certainly wouldn't turn round and criticise them... say that.

Q: But how did you feel then, when you were fourteen, did you feel it was right?

A: Yeah, I think so. I think so.

Q: And were you pressured into it?

A: Looking back on it now, I would say, yeah, I was a bit. Yeah, a little bit. But I don't actually remember having any memory of saying to myself, "this is what I want to do", I just remember doing it and thinking, "it's not much of a big deal", you know, not actually worrying about it, thinking "oh God, this is disaster, this is gonna affect the rest of my life". I just thought - I didn't like have some big build-up to it in my mind, you know. It just happened. I just accepted it.

Q: 'Cos was - do you remember the first time?

A: Yeah. I remember - I remember thinking about my friend actually, who was a bit older than me. I was about fourteen, she must have been about sixteen, and I remember all the time comparing it to what she had said to me, you know; and I do remember it, just what most people say, you know, very unimpressive. Very.

Q: Was it with somebody that you were having a relationship with?

A: Yeah, it was with someone that I went out with when I was -for that year, with the dog. Yeah, it was with him.

Q: And did you - how did you feel about it?

A: I don't think I really made a big deal about it. Carried on doing it for a while.

Q: Did you enjoy it?

A: No, not particularly, I don't think so, no. Because I remember, like, you know, after a while I'd make excuses - to go round there when I knew people would be in, or want to go out. You know, I always remember, I always wanted to go out. I mean maybe it was like unconsciously me saying, you know - and - but I used to - 'cos I mean I used to - I never used to - 'cos he used to sort of think that he was, you know, some sort of like great thing, and he used to sort of like amuse me a little bit, 'cos he wasn't really. I always used to feel sorry for him a bit.

Q: How old was he?

A: He was about seventeen. Looking back on it now, I mean, he was just as young, you know, just as confused and felt as silly about it as I did.

Q: Was it his first relationship?

A: I don't know, because he - he said to me it wasn't, but thinking about it, I'm sure it was. And he was a bit confused sort of, because I mean he had had a sort of - an experience with a man, and, you know, he was saying to me at that point, "I don't know whether or not, you know, that I'm actually -" - I mean, he was sure that he wasn't gay but then whether or not he was bisexual or not. So I'm sure that he was quite confused about it all really. Yeah. He made all these things about, you know, older women, but, looking back on it now, I mean people come out with that and you just laugh at them. But I mean -

Q: ...

A: Yeah, I mean he just said that he'd had, you know, flings with older women. But - I don't think that's true.

Q: Perhaps he was trying to impress you.

A: Yeah, maybe. He used to be trying - he just used to be very aware of like the way he looked, and he used to have this image, you know, and he was - yeah. Strange.

Q: Did it just happen when you were in the house and no one was in?

A: No, people were in, yeah... We talked about it, I think, you know, we definitely talked about it, it didn't just happen, I mean we did actually talk - like the decision that that was gonna happen, you know. I don't know. I think maybe it wouldn't have gone on if it wasn't - if we hadn't gone out with each other such a long time, you know, it maybe - just have been that - I think I might have felt worse about it if it was just that one time and never again. 'Cos I mean I can't say that all throughout with it I never enjoyed any experience, 'cos I mean I'm sure I did, I mean otherwise I would have put a stop to it a lot quicker than, you know, six or seven months, I'm sure I would.

Q: And who kind of took the initiative?

A: He did. Yeah.

Q: And was that always the case, I mean if it was gonna happen was it like him starting it rather than you?

A: No, I don't - no, not all the time. I mean I don't - I used to like to sort of like - to cuddle someone and hug someone and I mean I don't know if that, 'cos of his..., I don't know if he misunderstood that. I mean I wouldn't always sleep with him, you know, I mean I wouldn't always. Maybe it was like once a fortnight or whatever or, you know, whenever, it wasn't a lot. And I would have contact with him and it wouldn't always be sexual, so - I don't think it was always him, no.

Q: Was there ever like that sense of actually wanting to cuddle and kiss and be close to someone, but then the other person sometimes gets more aroused, so you feel that you've got to follow it through, 'cos you're somehow responsible for their - for them? - if you know what I mean.

A: Yeah. I can't remember. I mean now I would say that - that there isn't that confusion, no. I mean if I just want to cuddle and kiss someone then it won't - I don't think that JASON, I mean, you know, interprets that in the wrong way necessarily. 'Cos I mean I don't either - I don't, and he, you know, wants that or needs that, so it's just understood... good.

Q: And did you use contraception...?

A: Yeah, first of all, sheaths we used to use. God. (Laugh)

Q: What was that like?

A: Terrible. Yeah, horrible.

Q: Why was it horrible?

A: It's just very complicated and - I don't know, you know - it's like, I don't mean, you know, it's not -

Q: - "hold on" -

A: Yeah, yeah, you know, and you think "oh, God". It's not - you know, it's sort of - you know, they say that you lose your desire for someone if you see them in all this, you know, like on the toilet or in the bath and that because you don't see their body as desirable, so when they're sort of like doing this really sort of like fiddly thing - "is it worth it?", you know. I always took it all quite seriously, though, I wish I'd taken it a bit sort of more light-heartedly. But I mean with GARY I can really laugh, you know, if I think something's really funny then I laugh, but - SEAN was like very, you know, very serious, he was a very serious man. I suppose it's 'cos he was young, he wasn't that confident.

Q: Yeah. 'Cos a lot of it's confidence, isn't it?

A: Yeah.

Q: So did it get better, after your relationship with him?

A: Yeah - well no - I mean the only time that I've really sort of enjoyed it is with GARY. I've only actually had - yeah.

Q: That's your current -

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: Why is it different with him?

A: I mean I - I don't know, 'cos of my age, maybe because I'm more comfortable about myself. I think I definitely am. I... I do like him a lot. Because he is sort of like - I mean, he doesn't put on any sort of like big airs and graces sort of, you know, he's sort of like quite down to earth about things. 'Cos he's just - I mean if ever he's got any hang-ups about it, you know, he always comes out and says things. So - it's not this big sort of like "hush-hush" about it all, you know, it's just funny a lot of the time.

Q: You mentioned a couple of occasions when you'd had sex against your will -

A: Mm.

Q: What were they?

A: Not actually - I mean I know that - I mean I thought - I mean I - I - it wasn't sort of physical, I mean, but in a way it was sort of like mental. I don't know. One occasion when there was this person that I knew that I wasn't having a relationship with, just that I

was sleeping with, and - that whole thing about, just because they walked me home it meant that, you know - and instead of me saying, you know - that's when I wasn't good about myself, "no, I don't want this", you know, "it's your problem if you think, just because you walk someone home", you know, "that you're necessarily gonna sleep with them". But I didn't, I went along with it, and I didn't really enjoy it, I hated it.

Q: How old were you then?

A: Probably about seventeen, eighteen. And it's just - I mean, I don't think about it and - that much, 'cos I think - I mean, I don't think "oh God", you know, it was stupid of me to be so soft with someone, someone I didn't particularly care about. But I mean, as I say, the reason that I think that on those occasions that it's ever happened, is because I haven't been confident enough, you know, to sort of stop it. And that's why it's against my will, 'cos in my normal frame of mind... you know...

Q: But he expected it, did he?

A: Yeah. He's an idiot. A stupid idiot.

Q: And did that happen twice with him, or was that somebody else?

A: I'm trying to think what I - I mean that - that time's what really stuck in my mind, and there was somebody else, but that was just - that was - I don't know. That was sort of like manipulation as well, I think. Yeah. No, I think it was different - yeah, I mean, this - I mean the person who walked me home, I mean that - that - it happened before but not - I mean not as sort of obvious, I don't think, or maybe I didn't recognise it. But as I was actually doing it I recognised that I didn't want to, it was only afterwards, you know.

Q: So what did you feel afterwards?...

A: I didn't... Yeah, I... in myself, just decided that - I just pitied him really. I didn't put myself down, I don't think... you know... it was just - it was him.

Q: Yeah. 'Cos it was very unreasonable in a way to think that you -

A: - and also -

Q: - logically have that from just walking someone home.

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And also because I know that he's not very sound, you know, in other ways, I mean he's - I do pity him.

Q: What, so a bit of you felt sorry for him?

A: Pardon?

Q: A bit of you felt sorry for him.

A: Yeah, I think I do a bit. Yeah. Yeah. It's a bit of a - bit of a fool really. Yeah. I don't ever get - I might get a bit angry at myself about it, you know, like, say "shouldn't have done that", but if you turn things over in your head too much, you make too much of a big thing about it, you know, it's just - it's just an act, it doesn't matter. So if you can come to terms - if you've got really bad feelings about it and you can't come to terms with it, that's when it's a problem, but I mean, as I can, then it isn't really a problem.

Q: And so when did you - would you say that you actually changed so that you got enough confidence that that would be less likely to happen again?

A: I really sort of started changing just before I met GARY, I think. I think maybe it's because like I - I got involved politically, and that did - I mean that, in a certain sense, 'cos you understand a lot of the reason why people act in a certain way and, you know, you don't see yourself as a victim, you know. I refuse to see myself as a victim so you don't feel so isolated in it and, also, I mean, just - just having confidence about, you

know, the way, the way that you are. I don't know where I got it from, maybe I just grew up a bit.

Q: Right. Did any of it come from sort of political involvement or -

A: The growing up?

Q: Well, just the sort of changing attitudes about ... sex and things like that.

A: Yeah, I think it did, yeah. Yeah, I think it all came - a lot of it anyway, came from political involvement, yeah. 'Cos I mean as I say, you don't - you don't feel as isolated, you know, within it, and - 'cos, you know, if you've never sat in a - in a... before about, you know,... depression, you sat there and someone actually is acknowledging that you've got this problem and - but it's not you, it's not your problem, you know, it's society's problem, and actually taking the blame away from you as a woman, you know, you as a victim, and sort of putting it on - you know, putting it away from that and actually, you know - it making sense that it isn't, you know, you - you're not creating your own oppression, it's coming from somewhere else. So I mean that helps. And it's also 'cos you don't - you're not so absorbed in your own problems, you know, 'cos you're out there trying, you know, to convince people like to fight racism or, you know, to fight the poll tax, or to fight loans and, you know, your head's just filled with all these things, and then you've got all these new ideas all the time. It's like a rush of new ideas. And you talk to people, you know, you talk to - to other women who like share your experiences, and you talk to men who aren't sexist bigots, who don't just wanna walk you home and, you know - that you realise, you know, it's not a problem. So, yeah, politics is a good thing, a good thing.

Q: And in terms of - kind of thinking back to contraception, things like that, are you still using sheaths or -

A: No, no, the pill. I think - I mean I went to - I remember going to my doctor the first time and I - I used to have this really horrible old doctor, he used to be signing the prescription before you'd even finished saying - but I walked in and there was a woman doctor there and ... I'd never seen her before, but I'd heard from other, you know, that she'd really listen to you. And I sat down and told her that - it was before my sixteenth birthday, you know, that I wanted to go on the pill. And she explained to me, you know, that she couldn't do that, I mean that was the time they had to inform your parents.

Q: What, with Gillick?

A: Yeah, yeah. And - but I think - I probably realise why it's sixteen. Valentine's Day, that's right - Valentine's Day I remember going on the pill, yeah, starting the pill. So it was about '87, I suppose. About three years. Yeah. I can't be bothered with sheaths.

Q: And would you - so you just use the pill?

A: Yeah.

Q: And is that alright - you don't get effects from it?

A: No, I don't, no. First of all, when they started me off on - was it (?) Microdyne 30 - I know all this 'cos I work in [HEALTHCARE] and I hand them out to - I got pretty bad headaches, but then they put me on a lower dose. So it's okay. If I remember to take it.

Q: Do you sometimes not?

A: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: What do you do then, if you forget?

A: Restrain myself. (Laugh) Yeah. It's just - I mean I don't usually forget days, I don't usually take it at the same time, I might take it four hours later or five hours later or - it

depends, if I'm rushing out in the morning and I forget to take it. But I've started leaving it where I clean my teeth now so I can't really miss it, so it's alright.

Q: Is it the one that you've got to take at the same hour, roughly, every day, that sort -

A: Yeah. Well, it's - well I don't know if it - I'm not sure about - it's - it says on the packet to do that, and also it's - you get marker days that you're supposed to - I mean it is for - I think it is for real idiots, because you like, you mark off the day, and the next time the red circle - the first day's red and then the eighth day has to fall on another Saturday, that's the first day, so there's no way you can get confused and think, "oh, have I taken it or haven't I?". It's all sort of mapped out quite clearly for you.

Q: Well that's good, I suppose.

A: ... head...

Q: So have you ever had any scares of thinking that you might be pregnant?

A: Yeah. Well, I had an abortion. Actually, I didn't... May, June, when did I go away? - Well, you know when I went away, about three weeks before that.

Q: That's right.

A: Yeah, I didn't - 'cos that was after I sent my thing in. So, it was pretty stupid. But -

Q: Was that through missing the pill?

A: Yeah, it was a bit weird, yeah. But I knew I was missing it, you see. I don't know... crazy frame of mind. I knew I was missing it.

Q: So you were taking a risk?

A: Mm. I don't know why.

Q: And then how did you feel when you knew you were pregnant?

A: I didn't feel any different. I don't - I didn't feel maternal or anything. Well I was sort of - when I thought about it, I was, you know, sort of - I said, "did you do it on purpose?" And I - I don't think I did, I just - I don't really know why I did it. I could have - I mean I didn't take the pill, I mean it was - I made that - I made that decision. When I got pregnant, I made the decision I didn't want it.

Q: Was that easy?

A: Yeah. It sounds a bit heartless, doesn't it. I'm not saying... it just seems like you get yourself into it and straight away, you know, you do it. It's a bit careless. Bit careless... I don't know.

Q: And did GARY mind?

A: That I was pregnant? Yeah, he did mind that I was pregnant. Anti - anti-babies. No, he just said, I mean he said whatever position I'm in he'd support me, but if I decided to have a baby then our relationship would change, which obviously it would. 'Cos he's not - it wasn't his decision, you know, and obviously he's not gonna sort of run away, but he's not gonna - he didn't want that level of involvement, which is alright. I mean, I didn't mind him saying that really.

Q: So it wasn't unexpected.

A: No. Oh, no. ...before that I'd spoken to him. 'Cos I - I still think about why - why I got into the situation though, 'cos I didn't need to.

Q: You weren't sort of stressed about something else or -

A: I don't know, maybe, I don't know. Not really. I mean it could - I mean it could - I suppose you could say it was just before I was going to college and all that, but - other things on my mind, but it just don't take much effort to take a pill every day really. It's just being stupid, a really silly thing to do.

Q: Were you relieved at all to find that you could get pregnant?

A: Yeah.

Q: In the sense that some people think...

A: Yeah, I was actually when I thought about it. Yeah. I don't know - I'd never have thought of that, I mean thought of having children, but I suppose I will, I don't know. But I was relieved. Nice to know, I suppose. (Laugh)

Q: Like putting your toe in the water or something.

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And has it made you different since, with taking the pill, or -

A: Yeah, I mean -

Q: - are you more careful?

A: Yeah, I am. As I say, I put it somewhere where I can see it now whereas I used to go out without it and, you know, things like that. I think, you know - sometimes I think about it. It wasn't really - it wasn't a (?) bad experience really.

Q: What, having the abortion?

A: Yeah.

Q: Was it straightforward to get it?

A: Yeah, I went in - I went to see my GP, then I went to see the Consultant, and she said to me, "well we've got a clinic on Wednesday". So it happened over about a week or so, you know. I mean, it was horrible before because I was really sick for about - I mean I thought it was because - not that I drink lots, but, you know, on the few occasions that I had gone out, I mean, I just couldn't - couldn't drink anything, you know, any sort of - sometimes I used to drink lager or whatever, I couldn't stomach it. It used to make me feel sick. I couldn't sit in the smoke, I was just being sick for no reason. And I think that was what persuaded me, oh my God, you know, this is gonna be like - and all that side of it was horrible before, but the actual termination wasn't that bad.

Q: And it hasn't left you with lots of mixed up feelings?

A: No. No. I think 'cos I approached it in quite a straightforward way. That's still politics as well, you know... I mean, I got that idea that at least it wasn't a baby, that it wasn't, you know, that it wasn't (?) independent of me, and it was my choice and - so, yeah. I don't feel guilty or anything like that, not at all.

Q: And do you ever think about things like AIDS and those sorts of risks?

A: I was coming up on the bus, I was saying to myself, you know, seriously if I've ever slept with anyone I didn't know very well, have I thought about AIDS, and I can't say that I have. It's very - I surprise myself really,... indifferent about it all, you know, not taking it seriously.

Q: 'Cos do you remember when you first heard about AIDS?

A: I think I saw it on a documentary on the television. Yeah, I'm sure I did, on the news, you know, when there was this big, you know, this whole like to-do about it, in the paper and that.

Q: Was that when they had the whole series of programmes?

A: I think so, yeah. There was one - it was specifically about America and they were talking about the gay community and how it had changed and - because of AIDS, you know, and everything, you know. It's going a few years back. 'Cos there was actually a (?) snippet, wasn't there, a (?) snippet of - of like - for any of this to happen, apparently,... like there was another documentary, you know, quite later on into it, that

said, you know, it just - people just got hysterical, not hysterical laughter but over the top.

Q: Can you remember any of those campaigns that they had?

A: I remember the Sun being disgusting, as it always is. That's the one that sticks in my mind. Gay plague and all that, I mean -

Q: And what did you think to that at the time?

A: Well, I mean I hate anything that the Sun puts out, and, you know, they're - they're just trying to, you know, create this, you know - just building up on homophobia, you know - attitudes. I thought it was disgusting, I thought it was wrong.

Q: Did you see any of those television programmes that were - you know, like the famous one with Ian Dury sort of doing whatever he was doing with a condom, or - loads of... directed towards young people?

A: No, no I don't remember any of that. I just remember this first one about, you know, the community in America, and then I - one a little while ago; there's a place in London they've spent like thousands of pounds on it where people go -

Q: ... Hospital.

A: Yeah, I remember seeing that. In hospital we had some patients who were HIV positive, I mean - that was the closest I've ever come to it and - I don't actually remember seeing that much, I just -

Q: And do you actually know the difference between HIV and AIDS, things like that?

A: Full blown AIDS is when - it's when you ultimately, you know, you are gonna die of AIDS, but HIV positive is if you've actually got the trace of it in your blood, and that you might - may actually, you know, you may actually die from AIDS, you may be HIV positive but never actually die of AIDS. I think basically that's what...

Q: And do you know how you catch it?

A: Sexual intercourse, anal intercourse, through blood. It's - I'm not very sure if it is from - if you've got a cut inside your mouth, I suppose, but not actually through your spit, I don't know if you could -

Q: No, you'd need an enormous amount.

A: Yeah, that's - yeah, that's it, that's why it's easier... But because, you know this thing, it was - you know, it's developing all the time and they aren't curing it, that - I mean maybe I've got caught up in a bit of the - the rubbish that's come out. It's hard to believe when you're having all these ideas thrown at you. I mean I try to sort of stay calm and not sort of like start screaming about it and whatever, I don't think that's at all helpful.

Q: Did you ever feel it applied to you at all?

A: I think - I mean I know, you know, that what they say is that, you know, the - the people - the number who are - the number of people that are actually gonna be - die of AIDS is gonna mean that at least someone you know is gonna - that's the only reason why, I never thought it would mean anything to me. I can't - that's what I was saying, I didn't actually see it as a threat to myself because - I suppose it's because I don't sleep with - I don't sleep around or whatever that much (laugh). I don't really see it as a threat to myself.

Q: Who do you feel it is a threat to, if it's not a threat to yourself?

A: Drug addicts. I don't know, I mean the thing is that the effect that I suppose that it's had on the - on the gay, you know, community is that they've actually changed their sexual behaviour, so I mean what they're saying now is that AIDS is actually more rife

between heterosexuals than it is between people who are having homosexual relationships. So, it's hard to say really, I think it - eventually it's gonna affect everyone, and anyone who denies that is just - has just got their head up in the clouds really. It's something we've all got to, you know, try and have an understanding of and - I can see that. I mean that's why I surprised myself on the bus, you know, I thought, I know this question's gonna come up and I had to think about it, and how do you feel about it, you haven't .. (tape change)

Q: No, it's quite tricky applying it to yourself. 'Cos it's the heterosexual population have been - have been much slower, as you say, in actually changing anything. And can you conceive of yourself as actually changing, or do you think that you'll always be kind of less at risk -

A: No, I think that -

Q: - because you don't sleep around. I mean is it only people who sleep around who get it?

A: No, I mean obviously there's always the odd case you get, you know, I know that... blood transfusion - I know that doesn't actually go now 'cos they have it screened or whatever, but I mean I think if I actually talk to myself seriously, you know, and say to myself that, you know, you've got to accept that it is gonna be a factor that's gonna affect everybody's lives in the future, you've got to - that if you weren't in the relationship you're in and you were faced with sleeping with someone and you didn't know, what - what decision would you make? And obviously if you were responsible, you'd take precautions. So - I mean I think I've said - started to say things like that to myself now.

Q: Would you think you would use condoms?

A: Yeah, even though I said that, you know, I find them a bit fiddly and whatever, yeah, I think I would. I mean I know I would. I think I've become more - because I've become more like responsible about sex, I think, my attitude to it.

Q: And do you think you'd be able to ask somebody to use one?

A: Yeah. I wouldn't ever feel embarrassed. I think if you're embarrassed about sex then you shouldn't actually do it until you're confident about it, 'cos if you - these little, you know, hang-ups about it then you're not gonna enjoy it. I mean if you're sleeping with anyone, it should be someone who you feel confident with. I don't get embarrassed about it, talking to anyone about sex.

Q: What, men or women?

A: ... Men or women. Like my sexual life or theirs and then, you know, whatever. Whatever comes up in the course of the conversation.

Q: Do you talk about it a lot, in general?

A: Well, not really, I joke about it a bit with my friends and sort of - not really, no more than anybody else I suppose. Joke about the idea that it's supposed to be some great thing, you know, for everybody, and - if you see some man who thinks he's like, sort of like... giggle at it I suppose. But if anyone's got a problem, yeah, sure, talk about it. You know, I wouldn't be able to turn anybody away so -

Q: Do people come and talk to you about their problems?

A: Yeah, my friends do. I think it's 'cos I started a lot - a lot earlier than they did -

Q: What, having a sexual relationship?

A: Yeah. So - I don't think they think I'm all-knowing, but maybe... (laugh)

Q: Well maybe they think you'll be more sympathetic or -

A: Yeah. I do talk to people, friends, to close friends anyway.

Q: What, women friends -

A: Yeah, yeah. Women friends. It's then - then that you sort of - I don't know, I seem to think that people have got more problems than I have about it. So it's alright.

Q: What sort of problems do they come to you with?

A: Didn't enjoy it. Don't necessarily like - think they like someone, then they've decided they don't feel attracted to them physically, you know. And also, I mean just, you know, just general things - "I wouldn't feel confident about doing this, I wouldn't feel confident about saying that", sort of.

Q: So can you advise them?

A: I don't know, I just tell them my experience, yeah. If I've ever felt like that. Try and encourage them to talk to their partner about it. I wouldn't say that I preach, I just say, well, you know, I've felt like that, I think we all do, you know.

Q: What, about not enjoying it, or -

A: About not being confident, I mean it does all come down to confidence.

Q: So do you know - in terms of people talking about safe sex, what would you think that meant?

A: Taking precautions if you didn't know anyone, using - using a sheath, you know, not actually, I don't know, indulging yourself in anything that's gonna put you at risk, you know, whatever that is. You know, just being aware that there is a problem and making sure that awareness, you know, actually sort of makes you make some moves towards safe sex.

Q: Do you see safe sex as meaning using a sheath or are there other sorts of ways of -

A: - I suppose you -

Q: - having sex or -

A: Yeah, you don't necessarily have to have intercourse, you know, you can just sort of sleep - I don't know, kiss someone or whatever, you know, you don't necessarily have to penetrate, I suppose. Penetrative sex, I don't - yeah, I mean, that... you know, just - it's alright just to be with someone isn't it, you know, you don't necessarily have to sleep with them or - in the full extent, just enjoy being with them. I suppose that's a form of safe sex, not indulging yourself to the full extent.

Q: Yes, 'cos there's other forms of sex like oral sex which doesn't involve penetration.

A: Yeah.

Q: Although I don't know how much that is used or popular or...

A: I mean, a lot of the people that I know, I mean like, if they meet anyone new, they don't necessarily go home with them. They don't think - I mean, from - more than - also, because, you know, you don't know them, so... that's not always what you want, you know. Why should everything be, you know, so rushed and that?... I don't think any of my friends actually think that sex is the most important thing in their life, you know, they don't go out - I mean I - if I go out with my friends, I don't go out in - in search of it or in search of male company, you know, just - or GARY and his friends, I don't think that that, you know, a great importance in their life really.

Q: But do you think, thinking of penetration, do you think that's more important to men than women?

A: I don't know. I don't know. I - I don't see why it should be necessarily. You're both supposed to get a form of satisfaction from it, so I don't - how can it be more important to one than the other? I don't know.

Q: I suppose I was thinking, because of men - like young men growing up often tend to see their sexual progress or whatever, in terms of actual people that they've had sexual intercourse with. So therefore, to, say, have a sexual relationship which is doing lots of other sexual things, but without actually the penetration, might be something that they wouldn't feel that happy about; whereas girls or women might have as much or more enjoyment out of that. Maybe that's not the case for you anyway, I mean maybe -

A: I just think a lot - maybe it's - it's just maybe it's the type of men I know, I don't think that I - I mean I think there are certain kinds of men that you come across who see that sexual intercourse and actual penetration is important 'cos it's about proving, you know - you know, the so-called, you know, manliness and status - I mean maybe that's how they'd see, that's how they'd put across that they're a man, you know, that's how they assert themselves. So they're obviously - if they went to bed with a woman and they didn't end up, you know, actually having penetrative sex with her, then maybe that might - they might see that as a failure. So therefore that - in that sense it might be so important to them. So I suppose you could say that. But I mean certainly, some of the people that I know, I mean sometimes you just - 'cos you won't - you know, if it's just to go to bed with someone, it doesn't have to mean that, the whole thing. Sometimes you fall asleep anyway. (Laugh)

Q: Before you ever get -

A: Just can't be bothered...

Q: What, is that both of you fall asleep?

A: Yeah. No, sometimes, you know. It's not a big deal. I sit there and have a talk with someone or a good row with them. Sometimes anyway, it depends what mood you're in, I suppose.

Q: And - if this isn't too personal a question, what do you, like, enjoy most sexually?

A: Kissing. Yeah, I'd say. I enjoy that bit.

Q: So that makes you feel the best?

A: Yeah, it's nice. I mean I don't - I don't really think about sex that much, you see, I mean I couldn't sit down and say, well this is - this is what I really wanna do, I just - take it as it comes, I suppose. I wouldn't say I was one of these people have, you know, these little - these things they like to do and that, you know. Just kissing's nice.

Q: And do you and GARY kind of experiment around together, or is it fairly straightforward?

A: Not so much - we used to experiment more than we do now, I think - I think maybe we're just a bit used to each other. I don't know, maybe we're getting a bit bored with each other. In some senses. I think you have your ups and downs, like most things in relationships. Yeah, I mean, we have experimented in the past. But - it's ...

Q: But then maybe you experiment and then sort of find things that you actually like, and stick -

A: Stick to it for a while. Yeah. (Laugh). Yeah, for the time being, yeah. It's been okay...

Q: So do you often stay at his place, is that what -

A: Yeah, I mean it's not - it's not that - I mean I haven't got a room of my own any more now so -

Q: That's right. You couldn't exactly bring him back to your room with your -

A: No.

Q: - mum.

A: No. I mean a lot of the time if - if I - I mean I'm not - I - sometimes when I don't actually go back to, you know, where we live, is - is because if no one's gonna be there, I don't really like being in the house on my own that much, so I'll stay round my mum's and that. It's more - it's getting closer, you know, that I actually spend more time where GARY lives now than - than my mum's. I mean I might be there weekends and Sunday dinner and things. Creep round on Sunday morning (laugh). But - yeah, it's always more - it's always sort of been more there than at my house anyway.

Q: Do you feel you're a person who - thinking of taking a bit of a risk when you got pregnant -

A: Yeah.

Q: - do you take any other sorts of risks, do you think?

A: Just generally?

Q: Mm.

A: No, I don't think I do. No. I don't even like not paying my bus fare or my tube fare, don't like taking the risk. I just - no, I don't, I don't like the hassle, don't like people shouting at me and - I don't like to worry really. I don't think I take any risks.

Q: Do you kind of smoke or drink to excess, or anything like that?

A: I'd say that I probably drink a bit, but I think that's just because of my - my age, and the people, you know, I mix with, and what we do, you know. Most SWP meetings are in pubs, so (laugh) - circle round the bar, you know. And smoke, no. I mean I - thing is, I smoke when I drink, which is a bit silly. I mean I don't know why. Just get this desire to have a cigarette, and then I wake up in the morning... But I never buy any cigarettes, I could never do that.

Q: What about drugs?

A: I smoke sometimes.

Q: Dope?

A: Yeah but - I sort of like - I'm sure I must be getting a bit moralistic, 'cos my friends sort of - into going to all these Acid House raves, and I really hate the whole scene, I think it's all commercialised, I think, you know, there's a lot of young people being taken - and I've never really - I've never really liked the feeling of being stoned actually. I mean I quite like the feeling of being drunk but I never like the feeling of being stoned. I can't - I don't - I can't handle my own emotions, and the times that I have taken drugs - I mean, I took speed once. It wasn't actually speed, it was slimming tablets. And I just got this immense paranoia, you know, for the whole evening I hated it. But I smoke every now and again. Socially I suppose. I wouldn't ever buy it. Seedy world. I'm not that hot on drugs. But neither are my friends, you see, so they sort of - there's just this one woman I'm not that close to, but I mean I've known for a long time, but I mean most of my friends drink. I'm not saying it's better for you, it's a drug itself, but -

Q: Yes. At least it's not injecting heroin -

A: Mm. Oh, I couldn't do any of that. No. No way.

Q: Do you know any people who do?

A: No.

Q: It's not part of your -

A: No.

Q: - your sort of circuit at all.

A: No.

Q: How - something which the questionnaire asked about - which was sex education: can you remember anything about -

A: I was sitting in my science room and the teacher got out this box on the table, and there was like caps and old tubes of spermicide jelly and a packet of three sort of - ... sort of all the ends of the durex actually bent up, and that was it, I think; we all sort of looked at them, and the boys sat at the back, you know, totally disinterested. I don't think we were that silly about it; we had a bit of a giggle, you know, and whatever. I don't actually remember actually writing any theory about it. It wasn't very - if it was, it was probably about two days, and that was it, just this box that came out and went away again, just as quickly. That was it.

Q: That's all you had at school?

A: Yeah. Yeah. I mean I don't - I don't know where I learnt it all from, probably from just friends and -

Q: Did your parents ever tell you?

A: No. Not really, no. Not anything.

Q: And things that are kind of more, I suppose, not exactly personal, but things like we've got down about masturbation and homosexuality and -

A: Did my parents tell me anything about that? - no.

Q: Well, where did you learn about things like that, because they tend not to teach you things like that at school, and if your parents don't tell you, then... personal relationships... Did you ever talk to them about anything?

A: I suppose - no, no, not really. I suppose, now as I've got older, some of my friends have been gay, I mean not - I don't actually know any gay women, I don't think, but I mean I know a couple of gay men, and I suppose just through talking to them that's - ; masturbation, I suppose just through my own experiences of it really, when you're young, you know.

Q: Was that something that you explored kind of off your own -

A: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: - initiative sort of thing, not somebody sort of saying -

A: No. "Don't do this"! (Laugh) Yeah, I - yeah. I remember when I was young feeling very guilty about it, very guilty about it. And I actually remember, like, when my body started changing, I thought my body was changing because I used to masturbate.

Q: What, you were causing it?

A: Yeah, I thought that - that was my - you know, that I was - the reason my body was changing was 'cos of that. And I had this friend who was around the same age as me but very skinny, very - you know, like, she wasn't as developing - at the same rate as I was. And I remember one day, we used to go and stay at her house, and we were in the bath, and - you know, and I was thinking, "oh, no! What am I gonna do?". You know, she looked like I'd looked, you know, six months ago, and I really remember sort of like thinking, "I'll never be able to have a boyfriend" and - so I wasn't aware what women were supposed to look like, you know, even to, you know, that -

Q: How old were you then?

A: About eight or nine. Ten maybe. Yeah, probably about - round that age.

Q: And did you think that she was so skinny because she didn't masturbate?

A: Yeah, it wasn't that, it was just -

Q: I don't mean "skinny", I mean...

A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I just thought - yeah, I just thought that maybe she - nobody else did it and nobody else, you know, knew. There wasn't a word for it, you know.

Q: Did you ever talk about it to anyone?

A: No. You're the first person that I've ever told, you know, that when you're that age you do it actually, I've never spoken to anybody about it.

Q: No, 'cos it does seem to be one of those really private things. You know, I've talked to people like who say that's the one thing that they don't talk about with their female friends -

A: Yeah, you know -

Q: - terribly intimate things, about sort of sex with their boyfriends -

A: - but when it comes to that, yeah.

Q: Yeah.

A: It's funny really, it's quite strange, thinking about it.

Q: Yeah, it does seem funny in a way, because in one sense it's the most - well, I suppose... pretty safe sex. (Laughter)

A: Yeah. (laugh) GARY's sort of funny actually... masturbation. I've talked around the subject and he seems to think, you know - I mean, he's told me, I mean he admitted that he - I says, oh come on, you can't admit that you - you can't say that you've never masturbated - "yeah, of course I have", you know, "at eight years old". You know, I won't go into details, it's not very nice, but then he goes, he said but - and I said to him, "but women - women do it like, women masturbate, there's nothing, you know, wrong in masturbation", you know. So, he sort of - (grunt) - and I was a bit surprised at that actually, I got a bit annoyed with him. But I think maybe he was just trying to wind me up a little bit. But I mean - just - I mean I didn't actually talk to him specifically about my experiences of it, I - in a very roundabout way, and because he was seemed so sort of anti, I wouldn't have dreamt to carry it on further, you know, so -

Q: And he wouldn't actually admit to masturbating himself...

A: When he was a child - yeah, yeah, you know.

Q: But I mean I think most men do...

A: Yeah, I know, I mean, just - I'm sure they must.

Q: But I don't really understand why they don't want people to know, or why he doesn't want you to know.

A: Yeah, yeah. I mean, you know, you see people doing the weirdest things, you know, not just sexual things, but I mean, you know, and then that - just - got this big taboo about it, not to discuss it, it never happens. Nobody does it, nobody discusses it.

Q: 'Cos does he kind of masturbate you?

A: Yeah, it's not as though -

Q: - he's not -

A: - you know, it's just - I don't know. I wouldn't pry anyway, into it, I mean if he just wants to have... think twice maybe.

Q: Where do you normally go - I mean, I guess it doesn't apply so much now, but where would you go to - to meet people, meet new people?

A: New people?

Q: Or just meet people... or -

A: Pubs, most of the time. Parties. Socials. Usually the pub, I'd say, (?) thinking about it too much. Yeah.

Q: And is that how you spend most of your time - I don't mean in the pub now, but I know there's meetings -

A: Yeah. Or the cinema, I go to the cinema a lot, love the cinema. We go to the park a lot as well, 'cos he lives right opposite [PARK IN LONDON], or we used to in the summer.

Q: ...

A: Yeah, it's nice. Play games and that. Get a load of people together on a Sunday morning, or just go on our own... I wouldn't say we sort of - sometimes we go to clubs, sometimes. We always sort of - I mean, I always tend to wanna sort of go to gay clubs, I don't really like straight clubs, I find them a bit - bit of a cattle market. Gay clubs are cattle markets but you can stand outside and you don't have to get involved in it, and all clubs are on the same principle, because you're a woman and you're - you know, you can be just left alone and do as you - do what you want.

Q: Yes. No, it's much safer.

A: Yeah, it's better.

Q: Is that when you're on your own or when you're with -

A: Well, both really. I mean I go with my friend, my woman - women friends go to clubs, and I go with GARY as well.

Q: He doesn't mind?

A: No, no. He doesn't mind at all. He really introduced me to it all. He's quite open-minded.

Q: And do you see your women friends a lot?

A: When I first went with GARY, not as much, but it's increasing now. I mean I've always spoken to them on the telephone - when I used to live at my mum's anyway, not so much now I have to stand in the phone box and chat for thirty-five minutes about nothing, about other people, but - yeah, I mean, I do keep in contact.

Q: 'Cos in your questionnaire you actually put that there was a - like a particular girlfriend who you did things with.

A: CASSIE, yeah. She's...

Q: Is she someone you've known for a long time?

A: I knew her from school. I wasn't really friends with her at school, but sort of came together and influenced each other over a number of things, we get on really well. Really well.

Q: And can you talk together about your relationships and things ... personal things?

A: Yeah, well men are a pact actually, we're not to talk about it 'cos we've been going on -

Q: ...

A: - we're not gonna talk about men. Just - just - there's always - we got to a point one day where when we went out, all we talked about - and I said, you know, this is really boring, can't we talk about anything else? So, we made a pact to discuss other things. GARY asked me that, and I said, there's more important things in life than talking about you, actually.

Q: ...

A: Yeah. (laughter)

Q: And do you see yourself going on with GARY?

A: Not forever. I'm a bit romantic, I've become a bit romantic... since I went out with GARY 'cos -

Q: Why do you think that is?

A: I don't know. I just - I suppose because I like him so much. I don't know why. (Laugh) I do know why, but I mean -

Q: Why?

A: I just - I don't - I'd like to. I say that, but I'm sure I wouldn't, I'm sure in five years' time, if I'm still going out with him, I'll be tearing my hair out, you know, but - I'd like to for a while, yeah, for a while longer.

Q: 'Cos does - I mean we've talked a lot about the sex, but we haven't talked much about love -

A: Yeah.

Q: And is that kind of important, as important, more important?

A: Yeah, very important. Very important. 'Cos GARY's the only person I ever went out with, first of all he was very affectionate, and a lot of the people I've been out with have not sort of - that whole thing about having a cuddle without actually having sex and being just like quite physical without, you know, there's the sexual element in it, so - and he's - I mean he's all sort of the things everyone says, you know, like funny and all that and - yeah, I mean, love is very important, but he's not - but at the same time he's not very loving a lot of the time, 'cos he's got a lot of his own hang-ups, you know, and I'm sure that he worries about giving too much. You know, all - all the - all the things that people go through. But it is important to me.

Q: Do you feel that it's kind of equivalent? - like what you give each other?

A: I think I give him more. I suppose. You never know really. My friend always says, CASSIE always says to me, "you do so much!", you know.

Q: What, you do -

A: Yeah.

Q: - for him?

A: Yeah. But - I mean he goes - I mean - if ever, I've got to admit - I mean, I'll do sort of practical things, I mean I won't wash his socks and that but I mean I'll make sure that - you know, I get things for him and just - just - I actually think it's not being selfish, but I mean he - and then again, he always helps me, like with any work I've got to do, like if I've to do a meeting or whatever, he'll help me in that sense and - when I was at college like he sorted me out loads of books and things and I mean - he does do things.

Q: Does he talk about love?

A: No. He's only ever said he loved me about five times or six times since I've gone out with him. But I suppose it's better than when someone's saying it every day.

Q: Yeah, then you wonder if it means anything at all.

A: Yeah. He's always said it at good times, so - I really like to hear it. Sometimes I get a bit - if he hasn't said it for about seven months then I start getting a bit (?) furious - "say it, say it", you know. And then he sort of says, "no, I'm not. Why should I? I don't wanna say it to you, why should I say it?" - you know.

Q: Not on demand.

A: Yeah. Get a bit childish, I think. But then I used to say it a lot to DAMIAN, but I don't think I - I don't feel the same way about it. 'Cos I wasn't really that attracted - attractive - attracted to DAMIAN physically, after a little while. Even though I went out with him for two years. But with GARY, you know, I am still - I mean I'm going out with him, you know, two years now, and just as much and even more so than I was when I first met him. 'Cos I knew GARY before and I always used to think he was an idiot. (Laugh) I used to really think - not an idiot, I just think - used to think he was alright, you know, no big deal. It sort of, like, increased. I've never actually met anyone and I've liked them more as it's gone on, I've always liked them less. I've actually -

Q: But this is more.

A: Yeah.

Q: And has the - in terms of the sexuality, has that increased as well, that you've -

A: No, it's declined. It's funny, the love goes up and the sex goes down. Yeah. We were never sort of rabbits - ... you know, not like that, I mean, you know, I've never - we already - 'cos when we first met we used to do so many like different things, you know, we were always out every night and, you know, so I mean that was better than just doing all of that really. Got to know him a lot better. Yeah. I would say it's gone down a bit. But then again, it's sort of like up and down, it's not like a pattern, it doesn't follow - like they're not once a week. You know, sometimes you sit there, and you say, oh, once a week, you know. Sometimes we might not have sex for three weeks and then over the weekend or whatever, you know - depends how lucky I am, or unlucky. (laugh)

Q: What does that depend on?

A: Oh, I don't know. How much I've had to drink I suppose.

Q: What - you what?

A: How much I've had to drink. It's always a bit - sort of sounds a bit crude, but I mean - just - how tired we are. It depends what we've got to do in the morning, who's got to get up. Whether I wanna stay in my own room, whatever. So. I mean it's not like a big deal; if I say I'm going to bed and I go to my room, then that's it, he doesn't say... or anything, you know.

Q: So do you think when you're actually living there it'll get - it'll change?

A: I can imagine - no, not really. I think we'll worry less about it. And also because when you're - I'm around him all the time, you know, and I sit and watch telly with him and that, I've got that physical contact, and sometimes - some people just have sex 'cos that's the only physical contact they get, so that's why they have a need for it, but because I've got contact with him in other ways, you know, that I can sit - I mean he can sit on my lap and watch the telly or whatever, you know, or we just joke about in the kitchen whatever we're doing, because there's that contact there we don't necessarily need to sleep together. We get on in that way. So, I mean, it's alright.

Q: What do you see as - do you see a sort of future planning out in terms of your work and -

A: No, I don't really like to. Workwise, yeah - workwise, yeah. I know that I'm gonna go into nursing.

Q: What, and get a degree?

A: Yeah.

Q: And then do you think you'd stay being a nurse or -

A: No -

Q: - can you go into other things?

A: - you can do - I mean, you can go into other things, I mean I would like - that place I was talking about, London Lighthouse, I mean I'd like to actually do, you know, some sort of nursing related to AIDS patients in a way. I mean I don't know how seriously I'd take that when I actually know, you know, what it involves or whatever, but on the surface I'd say it would probably interest me, you know. 'Cos I think it's important that people have a positive attitude to it and I think that I have anyway, you know. I could help once I've been through my training. But I mean, in terms of relationships, I wouldn't really wanna plan, I don't think we should presume anything of anybody really.

Q: I mean do you see marriage and children as part of your -

A: Not with GARY. Not - not with any - not marriage, no. No. I don't think I'll get married. Never thought about it - even - even though I like GARY very much I've never... you know -

Q: Does he want it?

A: No.

Q: I mean - I don't mean necessarily with you, I mean...

A: No, never, he says, this is what he says. GARY tries to be very sort of - the opposite of everything, you know, you'd expect, you know, a man to be. You know, he doesn't try to be sort of macho and he doesn't try to sort of tell me what to do, and he doesn't try to sort of have that image, you know, "you're mine" and all that, you know, it's not - it's not - we're just good friends. He doesn't think about marriage.

Q: And do you think you'll change at all in terms of your kind of relationships, sexual behaviour, things like that, say if the relationship with GARY did finish for whatever reason?

A: I can't imagine that I'd do what I've done over the previous years and go into another serious relationship, I don't think I would. No, I don't think I would. I've never - I'm not that interested in men, do you know what I mean? I mean I sort of - I never actually - all the relationships I've had, I don't know how I ever get into them because I don't ever go out and sort of consciously say to myself, "oh I'm gonna have a relationship with this person". It just happens. You know.

Q: So you don't envisage yourself sort of going out, having a good time sort of thing, but with lots of people and - ?

A: No, I mean I don't - just I'm quite happy to be with my friends.

Q: And if you had to describe yourself - I don't know if you can do this... - what sort of person would you describe yourself as? It's a bit like putting yourself into somebody else's shoes, saying this is what... like.

A: I don't really know. I know what I'm not, I don't know what I am.

Q: What are you not?

A: I'm not very independent. I always like to have - I always want someone to sort of say "no, that's alright" - not - especially on things that I say, I mean, a lot of the time. Politically I mean, that's just the stage I'm at. I suppose with things I do as well. I'm not very independent. I'd say that I am quite strong-willed and like if I get an idea in my head it takes - it's very hard for someone to shift me and argue me round, I'd say that. I think I'm quite positive about the things I believe, which is good. I don't know what else - it's hard isn't it? You don't really think about yourself, you think about other people. Don't think about yourself.

Q: I mean, do you think you're quite open or extrovert or -

A: I'm not extrovert. I'm quite open to people. I do - I'm one of those people who tend to make it clear if I don't like someone, which is not a very good thing. In a way it is because then I don't have to - I hate pretence, you know, just like, you know - if you just come out and say it, I hate people going... if they actually want to say something to you. I'd rather it - they just come out. So I suppose really you could say the people that I'm with are quite, you know, genuine, you know. 'Cos I only have people round me that I like and anyone who I don't, then I don't - don't bother. I suppose it's alright. It's a bit rude - bit rude sometimes. (laugh).

Q: And in terms of confidence -

A: Up and down my confidence, very much, very much up and down.

Q: What does it depend on?

A: My relationship with my friends, with GARY. And sometimes, I don't know, maybe it's just sometimes it just like - just before a period or whatever, I get really down and then, you know, for whatever - PMT, you know. Or if things go wrong for long enough as well, I can't - I'm not very good if things go wrong for a long time, I'm quite easily deterred, you know, in that sense, activity-wise. Up and down, confidence. I'm always surprised when people say to me that they - they see me as being quite confident, 'cos I don't, but then again I don't think anybody does see them self as being really confident, and if they do then they're usually -

Q: Over-confident.

A: Yeah, not very - not - not liked very much, you know. You get these people just burst into a room and straight away, you know, you know they're there. I wouldn't say I was like that.

Q: Were your parents happy with what you've done in terms of work and relationships and whatever?

A: I don't really have much contact with my dad 'cos I mean, I just never really had a close relationship with him, but my mum, I think anything I do she'll be pleased with really. I think she's quite surprised that - I mean I - to the point I've educated myself and, you know, that I've been determined to do things. But I mean at the same time she would have been just as - as happy with me to sort of do nothing, maybe.

Q: What did your dad do before he had [SERIOUS MEDICAL CONDITION]?

A: He was a [SKILLED TRADE].

Q: [REDACTED].

A: Mm, yeah. There's never been that much, you know, demand to achieve academically in my family, you know, it's never - never been a -

Q: Were they quite strict on you in terms of boys and stuff like that?

A: No - no, I mean - 'cos I - I've always - I always think that my mum never realises that I sleep - that I've ever slept with any of my boyfriends. I don't know why, I mean I could never discuss - maybe - I mean, maybe I could discuss it with her but I just feel - I don't know, I'm just convinced she still thinks, you know, that I'm -

Q: What, a virgin?

A: Yeah, I'm sure she does. I don't know why. I mean, GARY was saying, you must be stupid if you think your mum thinks that. You know. He used to stay around my place, live round there half the time, you know, and - he stayed out with other - with other people, but - I mean maybe she does know about GARY but maybe she doesn't think

that there's anyone in the past. I do tend to sort of like act as her little girl a little bit. Well, I enjoy it, you know, I think it's quite nice to go home, and not having to sort of like go out for a couple of hours, you can sort of lay there and be mummy's little girl again.

Q: Be looked after -

A: Yeah. Teas and biscuits and things. It's nice. You don't have that very long in your life so you might as well make the most of it.

Q: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

Q: And she never questions you about anything, she's never even said sort of "oh, I hope you're looking out for yourself" or something?

A: She made - she made a very weird - only twice I think she's ever said it, is, "I hope you don't take advantage of each other", she said to me about - was it me and GARY? - yeah, I think it might have been me and GARY actually, when I very first started going out with him. I don't know what it meant, it just - she came out and said it. I sort of thought, oh, you know - "advantage"! (laugh). It's a weird way of looking at it. But I also think - I don't think she'd pry because I do tend to sort of say to her, "well that's none of your business", you know, so she just respects it, respects my privacy.

Q: And obviously she'd have no idea that you kind of lost your virginity at fourteen and -

A: No, no, she wouldn't, I wouldn't ever want her to know that anyway, no.

Q: Did you feel it was important to lose your virginity or was it just one of those things?

A: Just one of those things. I don't - I didn't put any importance on sex, so I don't suppose I would have put any importance on losing my virginity. I didn't have that attitude that some people have, you know, "I'll wait for the right man". I never believe there's any right man.

Q: Do people still have that attitude, or is it much more matter-of-fact now, with your people that you know?

A: People that I know, it's just - well, CASSIE my friend lost it when she was about eighteen - lost it (laughter).

Q: Sounds like... dropped it behind a chair or -

A: And it wasn't about waiting, she just said that, you know, she doesn't - I mean actually she lost it with someone who she didn't - she had exactly the same response, it wasn't worth it, but the reason why she waited is just, you know, she hadn't been that bothered and she just thought, you know, she's not gonna push it, you know, it's gonna happen. (Tape change)

Q: ... education. And in fact, I was going to ask you whether - I mean, presumably AIDS hadn't come up -

A: No.

Q: - when you were given sex education at school, so -

A: No, it hadn't.

Q: - so how would - can you think how sex education would benefit, looking back, how you would have learnt better about things?

A: I think in sex education if it - if it, you know, in school, could have maybe taught me more about the fact that it's not just a physical thing, it is an emotional thing, you know, that - that a lot of the time, if you are thirteen, fourteen, that, although you may not see any problems within it, that - the fact that it's actually - ... It's not an emotional - it's not an emotional problem but, because I wasn't confident, because I wasn't actually a

whole, you know, in the sense of a person, and I wasn't gonna get anything out of it and it was just something that could have waited, and something that could have been more enjoyable. I mean if only that I'd been able to understand - if I could understand what was going on and how I was relating to this other person, that side of it, could have been - you know, I think it's important. It's not just a physical thing, it is actually an emotional thing. I don't think that is taught. You know, it's sort of like quite a sterile thing in schools.

Q: Do you think that can be taught, or is there another way of doing it, or another way that people could speak about it or -

A: I don't know if it can be taught.

Q: ... difficult being lectured about something...

A: Yeah. I just think you could be made aware of things, definitely. And I don't see why that can't be brought into the classroom. You know, and I think, even though kids a lot of the time feel embarrassed about it, doesn't mean they don't want to know, you know, they do want to know. And once you get over, you know, that little bit of embarrassment, I think, you know, that people will benefit from it really.

Q: And things about sex and AIDS, how do you think they would be most effectively got over? - in the sense that a lot of people do, in a way like yourself, think that it's important but it actually involves other people out there and never themselves, so it's a whole population of people who think that it's always other people who should be aware of it.

A: Again, I suppose it - it would be bringing up people's levels of awareness about the problem, actually understanding firstly what it is, and how it affects you, you know. And also, just trying to stress that it isn't somebody else's problem, you know, that it is gonna become something that, you know, is gonna affect all of us really. You know, you're gonna know a person who died of AIDS or, you know, is HIV positive, whether it be family or a friend or someone living in the community, or someone, you know, that you read about locally or whatever. ...say that you read about them because they've got AIDS, I don't know. However you come into contact with it. It - it's just about educating people.

Q: And do you think there should be more about different aspects of - of sex, sexual activity such as, you know, like we were talking about, masturbation.

A: Yeah, yeah. I mean I don't - that's also another thing that's - it's always taught about, you know, I mean, how - how is, you know, a fourteen year old boy or girl sitting in the room and saying, well this doesn't relate to me because, you know, maybe they've decided that - that, you know, as with SEAN, that he wasn't actually, you know, that he was bisexual and he was actually questioning his own sexuality, you know, that it shouldn't be put forward as, you know, it's always man and woman; the fact of the matter is that you can have - you can be attracted and want to have a physical relationship with another woman or with another man, you know, and to explore that and to talk about that. It's not just about a bit box of - it's about emotions and the way people relate to each other.

Q: Which I think often teachers and people do find very difficult as well, it's not just that they're refusing to teach it, it's just that it's quite tricky probably to actually stand in front of the class -

A: (laugh)... I wouldn't like to do it myself, but - I suppose I mean you could do - I mean there's - there's a number of ways you could do it, you know, just bringing people out

from outside to talk about it or videos, you know, or books that aren't just - I always remember there was this book and it was like a puzzle, and like it was talking - it was like there was one with like a - the puzzle was going in, and a bit of it slotted in, and that was it, you know, and that was sort of, that's how intercourse took place, you know. This was - (laugh) - it was hilarious, when you think about it. Really funny. I think they went into more sort of like details of the sexual practices of a rat or something, you know, it's all very well for them to tell you the breed - you know, how a rat breeds and everything else and - just this whole stigma about it, you know, it's just -

Q: And things like sexually transmitted diseases, did they...?

A: We had the leaflets, you know you get the leaflets -

Q: Oh, yeah.

A: - but that was also very brief, very brief. I think I remember - I think they only talked about - I remember syphilis, but that was because... talked about its overall effect on you. You know, I remember the teacher talked about that she knew someone who worked in a hospital who had syphilis and it was - they didn't have syphilis, but they were treated - an old tramp came in and when they removed the top of his hat - I don't know if it's true or whether... pass through, you know, got exaggerated - but the top - the head - ... syphilis that he'd - his skull had started to - to become very soft, I don't know. Is that the one that affects you - ?

Q: Well, syphilis I think is the most - there's gonorrhea and syphilis -

A: Yeah, but the one that kills you eventually -

Q: Syphilis...

A: Yeah, it was just that - the effect it had had -

Q: - if it's untreated -

A: Yeah... hat. He wouldn't let them take it off, and that's what - I think that's the only thing that in my sexual education that really stuck in my head, you know. If you get syphilis, you know, wear a hat. (laughter)

Q: ...

A: Yeah. Well, maybe it's just this story that she thought, you know, she'd scare us so much there was no way we'd ever - but - yeah, it was just about not taking, not just seeing sex - you know, there's a whole number of issues, like, you know, like a tree, and all these things that come off from it, you know, all different branches of it.

Q: Do any of your friends now kind of talk about AIDS as a - as kind of an anxiety that they might have, or is it just not really relevant?

A: Not really. No. I don't think that - no. I can't -

Q: And are they actually kind of having sexual relationships as well?

A: Well, I mean, my two gay friends - I mean I would say from them I can see that they've changed actually. One of them has actually been in a relationship for quite a while but was quite promiscuous - I mean, I don't know why, I mean it's only - maybe they've just changed, but I mean - and their level of awareness is, you know, quite up, I think. Yeah. But it's not sort of - I mean, maybe that's just because they are - they are gay, I don't - I'm not saying that's a good thing, I'm not saying my friends, if they're straight, then they... have to have a lower level of awareness, you know, 'cos it's affecting everybody now.

Q: But do you think people do take notice of campaigns?

A: I just - I think it was ridiculous, the one run by the government, and I think - the big mountain and -

Q: What, the iceberg?

A: Yeah, the iceberg, I mean, yeah, I think you would take notice. But I mean that - that campaign was just ridiculous, you know, it was just to scare people, it didn't actually explain anything. Just put the frighteners up you, you know. But I think people do take notice of campaigns, yeah. If it's a good enough and effective campaign, then definitely, yeah.

Q: Can you think of anything else that we haven't talked about that relates to -

A: Not really. I mean the only things that I thought about coming up here was like the AIDS thing and my, you know, my attitude towards it. Probably talked a load of rubbish anyway! No, I can't think of anything else.