

**Constructing Sexual Identities:
A Discursive Analysis of Young People's Talk About
Identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.**

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Degree of
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at
The University of Leicester.

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June 2001

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Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Sam Warner, for her invaluable advice and insight, for her patience during those unproductive periods (of which there were a few!), and for managing to make fun what has also been a long, slow and, at times, painful process. Thanks are also due to Dr Susan Levey for her support and encouragement in the early planning stages of this study, without which it may not have got off the ground, and to James Lang and Zasia Todd for their helpful thoughts and comments.

I would especially like to thank all those who gave up their time to take part in this study, all of whom contributed so thoughtfully and enthusiastically. Thanks are also due to the co-ordinators and other members of the group where the interviews were conducted for making me feel so welcome.

I am hugely grateful to all my colleagues at the Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology Service in Nottingham for their ongoing support and for encouraging me to take some time off work to get this study completed.

Finally, I would like to thank all my family, friends, and PB who between them have kept faith, had patience, and given endless love and support. In particular, I would like to thank my partner, Shazzi, who has supported me in every way imaginable, who has borne the brunt of my frustration and moments of despair, and who has somehow managed to keep me sane throughout the process.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my Gran, Betty Kerr.

Constructing Sexual Identities: A Discursive Analysis of Young People's Talk About Identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

Thesis submitted by Anna Engel in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at The University of Leicester. June 2001.

Abstract

In this study I adopt a social constructionist perspective to consider how young lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (LGBs) construct their experiences and their sense of self as LGB within the context of broader cultural understandings of LGBs and LGB sexualities. Firstly, I discuss the literature on LGB sexualities, tracing the ways modernist and postmodernist perspectives have produced varying discursive constructions of LGB sexualities. I then describe the present study in which I interviewed eight young people (aged 15 – 25yrs), using a semi-structured interview, all of whom identified as either lesbian, gay or bisexual. The accounts produced through these interviews were analysed using a discourse analytic approach. Through this analysis two metanarratives were identified. The first constructed LGB sexualities in terms of normality and abnormality and the second in terms of similarity and difference. Having described these metanarratives and the discourses of which they are comprised, I consider their functions and effects, paying particular attention to the ways in which these discourses are played out as social practices. I also consider the ways that LGBs are variously positioned within these narratives and discuss some of the strategies which may be employed by young LGBs in order to position themselves positively within the metanarratives of normality/ abnormality and similarity/ difference. A key finding of this study was that the similarity/ difference metanarrative appeared to afford greater flexibility and more possibilities for constructing a positive identity as LGB compared with the normal/ abnormal metanarrative. The implications of this for therapeutic practice, training and service provision for young LGBs as well as for challenging broader cultural practices which promote negative constructions of LGB sexualities are discussed along with the implications of adopting a social constructionist approach for theorising and researching LGB sexualities. A critical evaluation of this study is also offered.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Study

In this study I explore how young lesbians, gay men and bisexuals (LGBs) come to understand themselves and construct their experiences as LGB within the context of broader cultural understandings of LGBs and LGB sexualities. In this first chapter, I provide a critique of theorising about LGB sexualities from a social constructionist perspective and outline the rationale for using this approach. I discuss the methodological approach to this study in chapter 2, in terms of the research design, procedures for data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations. In chapters 3 and 4, I provide an account of my analysis. In chapter 3, I identify the narratives which young LGBs draw on in constructing a LGB identity and, in chapter 4, I analyse these in terms of the social, cultural and individual functions of these narratives. In chapter 5, my discussion, I consider the implications of this study for clinical practice and future research and provide an evaluation of the present study.

In this introduction, I explore the culturally available narratives on LGB sexualities produced within the psychological and broader academic literature, and within the context of LGB politics. I consider the *ways of understanding* LGB sexualities that are produced by these different theoretical approaches and trace the development of modernist and postmodern constructions of sexuality. I argue that modernist and postmodern perspectives have produced varying discursive constructions of LGB sexualities and throughout consider the implications of these different approaches to theorising LGB sexualities for understanding LGB experiences, politics and clinical practice.

1.1.1 Terminology

The use of terminology is particularly significant and problematic when discussing sexuality from a social constructionist perspective. In this review, I use a number of different terms to talk about LGB sexualities. In part, this reflects the mutability and cultural and historical specificity of terms used to denote identity categories. In part, it also reflects the range of terms used by different authors, researchers and theorists discussed in this introduction, and where their work is cited here, the authors' own

usage of specific terms has been retained. The term 'homosexual' has been used in places when I discuss literature which precedes the existence of 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bisexual' as identificatory categories. I use all of these terms to refer to people who have same-sex physical and/ or emotional desires and who identify as such and, where relevant, I make a distinction between these identificatory categories and same-sex behaviour. LG(B) is used in preference to LGB where the literature being discussed has focused explicitly on lesbian and gay sexualities, but where, in my opinion, it also has a relevance to understandings of bisexualities. The 'shorthand' term LGB is used in this study for pragmatic purposes. However, in using the abbreviation 'LGB' I do not wish to minimise or obscure the multiple differences between individuals who identify as 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bisexual', or to limit the respect that should be accorded the participants and their voices as unique, individual human beings. Further, the use of 'LGB' should not be read as implying that the sexual identity categories L, G, B refer to essential, naturally existing categories. Throughout, I refer to heterosexualities, LGB sexualities and bisexualities to reflect the plurality of these identificatory categories. Lastly, I use the term therapist as shorthand for all mental health professionals (e.g., Clinical Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Psychotherapists, Counsellors, etc.).

1.1.2 Framework for Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this introduction is examined from a social constructionist perspective. The aim here is not simply to present and critique the existing research literature on sexuality, thereby reviewing what we already 'know' about the subject. Rather, the aim is to explore how different ways of understanding and theorising sexuality constitute, construct and constrain what counts as relevant knowledge and legitimate targets for theorisation, research and intervention. I seek, therefore, to deconstruct the underlying, often taken for granted, assumptions embodied in various theories of sexualities and to explore the ways in which these assumptions produce particular ways of understanding LGB sexualities. Further, I consider how these constructions may function to control and manage LGB sexualities, the implications of these constructions for LGB theory, practice, and activism and, more specifically, how young LGBs may draw upon them in constructing their identities as LGB.

These discursive constructions of LGB sexualities are dealt with in four different sections in this review: modernist theories and politics of ‘equality’ and of ‘autonomy’, the theories and politics of ‘difference and diversity’, which I argue represent a transitional phase between modernism and postmodernism, and finally the postmodern theories and politics of ‘deconstruction’. This framework is adapted from Warner’s analysis of the relationship between feminist theory, politics and therapy for women (Warner, 2000a). The order in which I discuss these constructions *broadly* reflects the chronological development of them as ways of understanding sexuality. However, the development of these various discursive constructions has not been unilinear – earlier understandings are never entirely displaced, rather, different understandings have predominated at different times. So, whilst these stages are dealt with as separate sections for the purposes of this review, it is acknowledged that these divisions are somewhat artificial, in the sense that understandings of sexuality are fluid and overlapping.

1.2 Politics and Theories of Equality

Since the late nineteenth century modernism has been the prevailing epistemological paradigm through which dominant understandings of LGB sexualities have been produced and promoted in various academic disciplines. Modernism and the associated notions of ‘science’, ‘reason’ and the rational individual emerged in response to pre-Enlightenment epistemologies and beliefs, such as religion and superstition. Central to the modernist approach is the search for grand theories or fixed, universal laws that govern events and the notion that there is an objective reality that can be observed, discovered or measured through empirical investigation. The modernist vision embodies the belief that rigorous research leads to a gradual accumulation of value-free knowledge. Three key epistemological frameworks integral to the modernist approach are: positivism (the idea that ‘that which exists is what we perceive to exist’); essentialism (the view that objects have an essential, inherent nature which can be ‘discovered’); and realism (the idea that objects exist independently of being thought of or perceived) (See: White, Bondurant and Travis, 2000; Burr, 1995).

As illustrated later in this literature review, the modernist project does not axiomatically lead to the pathologising of homosexualities, yet a significant body of

early modernist literature on sexuality does exactly that. Whilst the modern scientific tradition is founded upon claims of objectivity and value-freedom, it is argued here, in line with postmodernist thinking that, because scientific enquiry takes place in specific cultural, historical and political contexts it is inevitably value-laden. The early modernist literature on sexuality, which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, was founded upon taken for granted assumptions and social norms regarding an 'innate' heterosexual impulse. The dominant, influential social institutions - the church and the state - had, for centuries, pathologised homosexuality and constructed any form of non-reproductive sexual activity as perverse, sinful, or wrong: in other words, as abnormal. Scientific research, informed by these 'common-sense' ideas sought, then, to explain *deviations* from the heterosexual reproductive norm and, as such, inevitably reinforced beliefs about LGB sexualities as 'abnormal'. Similarly, heterosexuality was, and is, under-researched as a phenomenon precisely because it is assumed to be normal - to be *the* norm (Davies and Neal, 1996a). As Weeks puts it:

the dominant or hegemonic form of any social position becomes the given, the taken for granted, part of the air that we breathe, from which everything else becomes a deviation at best or a perversion at worst. As such it tends to escape thorough investigation (Weeks, 1995a: 92-3).

A fundamental pre-condition for the scientific study of 'homosexuals' is the existence of 'homosexual' as an identity category. In his seminal text, *The History of Sexuality* (1990, [orig:1976]), Foucault traces the origins and development of modern homosexual identity, arguing that homosexuality is a socially constructed category which has not always existed. He suggests that the category of the homosexual emerged during the nineteenth century within the context of an increasing medicalisation of sexuality, and argues that it should be viewed as a constructed category of knowledge rather than as a discovered identity. As Foucault has argued, from the eighteenth century onward, sexuality was regarded as something to be regulated and administered rather than as something to be judged. Whilst the Church and the Law had long been concerned with the regulation of sexuality, now, modified secular versions of the confession were at the heart of a variety of techniques for internalising social norms (Spargo, 1999). The established religious notions of immorality or sinfulness did not die out during the nineteenth

century; rather, as Weeks (1991:20) argues, they became “inextricably entangled” with new “scientific” theories about the homosexual. In the quest to protect the health and purity of the population, sexuality in general and the homosexual in particular became the subject of systematic inquiry in a wide range of discursive fields including demography, education and the law. Similarly, Weeks (1977) sees the development of ‘the homosexual’ as a constructed category which emerged as “part of the new restructuring of the family and sexual relations consequent upon the triumph of urbanisation and industrial capitalism” (Weeks, 1977: 2). Both Weeks and Foucault recognise that same-sex sexual relationships existed prior to the construction of ‘homosexuality’ but, as Foucault argues, it was not until the late nineteenth century that the ‘homosexual person’ or ‘homosexuality’ as an identity was born:

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species (Foucault, 1990: 43).

The significance of this transformation is that, with the development of ‘the homosexual’ as a ‘species’, scientists now had a subject to study, and as Weeks notes, “[t]he last decades of the nineteenth century saw a spectacular new preoccupation with the scientific study of sexuality” (Weeks, 1985: 64). It is important to note at this point that, with the exception of Faderman (1985), theorising about the development of homosexuality as a constructed identity category has primarily focused on *male* homosexuality and has thus neglected the construction of lesbianism. As Jagose (1996) has suggested this is partly a consequence of the fact that lesbianism does not feature within the legal and medical discourses as prominently as male homosexuality does, and thus modern lesbian identity has not followed the same formation as male homosexuality.

Whilst homosexual *behaviour* had been subject to religious condemnation and legal prosecution for centuries, significantly, the emergence of the identity category ‘homosexual’ enabled organised protest against such institutionalised prejudice and discrimination, for it provided a collective identity for ‘homosexuals’ to organise

around (Jagose, 1996). It is no coincidence, then, that homophile¹ movements, the first organised protests against such discrimination, originated during the late nineteenth century in Europe and the early twentieth century in America, during the period when homosexuality became crystallised as an identificatory category (Jagose, 1996). These political movements were predominantly concerned with addressing inequality on the basis of sexuality, through emphasising LGBs' similarity with heterosexuals as equal subjects before the law. These movements sought legal and social recognition by gradual persuasion. Drawing upon a legalistic discourse of civil rights, homophile organisations aimed to decriminalise homosexuality via political reform, and to increase tolerance through educational programs. In Germany, for example, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, founded 1897, aimed to repeal laws which criminalised same-sex acts between men, whilst The British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, founded by sexologists Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter in 1914, focused on educational rather than legislative campaigns. Homophile organisations circulated information in magazines and newspapers, and targeted the government, police, church, medical profession, and the media in their attempts to transform public opinion (Jagose, 1996).

By emphasising LGBs' similarity with heterosexuals, homophile activists adopted a fundamentally assimilationist strategy. They argued that, apart from their same-sex sexual preferences, LGBs were model citizens, as respectable as heterosexuals and, therefore, no more likely to disturb the status quo (Jagose, 1996). This stress on the similarities between homosexuals and heterosexuals ('we're all human') by homophile activists was coupled both with an acceptance of the construction of homosexuality as 'abnormal', and a kind of homosexual apologetic ('we're harmless'). Homosexuals who were seen to threaten these notions of similarity and harmlessness, such as drag queens and butch women, who transgressed received notions of gender 'propriety', led the American homophile organisations, The Mattachine Society (founded in 1951) and The Daughters of Bilitis (founded in

¹ The literal meaning of homophile is 'same-loving'. The word has its origins in the Greek 'homos' meaning same, and 'philos' meaning dear, loving (*Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 1996).

1955), to distance themselves from these 'non-conformists'.² More broadly, members of homophile organisations advocated cooperation with experts in the fields of medicine, law and education as the best means to effect change. Homophile activists thereby acknowledged and utilised constructions of homosexuality as a congenital abnormality and emphasised that, as a natural human phenomenon, homosexuality warranted pity not persecution. For example, the earliest US homophile organisation, the Chicago Society for Human Rights founded in 1924 aimed to:

[P]romote and to protect the interests of people who by reasons of mental and psychic abnormalities are abused and hindered in the legal pursuit of happiness ... to combat the public prejudices against them by dissemination of facts according to modern science among intellectuals of mature age. The Society stands only for law and order; it ... does in no manner recommend any acts in violation of present laws ... (Katz, 1976: 385).

As suggested, for centuries homosexual acts had been the focus of moralistic discourses of religious and legal condemnation. Homophile movements saw the new, 'rational' world of modern science as offering 'salvation' from condemnation, for the modernist construction of 'the homosexual' meant homosexuality could be viewed as a 'natural', if abnormal, human phenomenon - rather than a perverted practice.

Depending on the country, 'homosexuality' first evolved into a medical illness in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century (Gonsiorek, 1991). The construction of LG sexualities as a sickness and the adoption of modernist approaches to their study resulted in a proliferation of theorising which sought to explain the aetiology of LG sexualities, and research which sought to find evidence of LGs' inherent pathology. Typically this research has only considered the aetiology of those individuals who identify exclusively as LG and therefore little attention has been paid to the causes of bisexualities (Davies and Neal, 1996a). As such, in this section, I refer to 'LG', rather than 'LGB', sexualities.

² The Daughters of Bilitis was formed in response to the failure of the Mattechine society to address the significance of gender and issues of relevance to lesbians - see D'Emilio, 1983, for a detailed discussion of homophile movements.

This scientific theorising about the aetiology of LG sexualities falls broadly into two categories: those which posit biological causes and those which put forward various environmental or social causes (Davies and Neal, 1996a; Ellis, 1996). In terms of biological ‘explanations’ theorists have, for example, argued that LGs may have sex hormone levels more typical of the opposite sex (e.g., Loraine *et al.*, 1970 and Glass *et al.*, 1940; both cited in Ellis, 1996), and that sexual orientation may be influenced by unusually high levels of opposite-sex sex hormones during foetal development and/ or the perinatal period in which the brain becomes sexually differentiated (e.g., Dörner and Hinz, 1968; cited in Richardson, 1981a). Some have theorised that specific genes may contribute to variations in sexual orientation (e.g., Kallman, 1952; cited in Richardson, 1981a), whilst others have argued that sections of LGs’ brains differ in some way from the corresponding sections of heterosexuals’ brains (e.g., Le Vay, 1994; cited in Davies and Neal, 1996a).

A range of environmental accounts have been put forward to explain the aetiology of LG sexualities, which can again be broadly divided into either social learning theories or psychoanalytic theories. Social learning explanations have variously theorised LG sexualities as resulting from LGs being deprived of the opportunity to develop opposite-sex attraction (e.g., in unisex environments) or as resulting from an early negative heterosexual experience (e.g., Gallup and Suarez, 1983; cited in Ellis, 1996) or an early positive homosexual experience (e.g., Gagnon and Simon, 1974). Other social learning accounts have argued that LG sexualities result from ‘inappropriate sex role training’ or role models and have posited a link between atypical gender role behaviours in childhood and LG sexualities (e.g., Coates, 1985; cited in Ellis, 1996; Saghir and Robins, 1973 and Wilber, 1965; both cited in Richardson, 1981a).

Within psychoanalytic theories, sexual desire is understood to be an innate, biological force or drive which is initially undifferentiated. Sexual desire becomes associated with particular objects (e.g., women or men) through the sociocultural process of psychosexual development. Psychoanalytic theories suggest that LG sexualities are the result of pathological parent-child relationships which prevent ‘normal’ psychosexual development. Within these theories, then, LG sexualities are variously defined as an ‘arrested state’ of psychosexual development - for example,

in the oedipal stage (e.g., Freud, 1905) or pre-oedipal stage of development (e.g., Klein, 1932). Significantly, as Richardson (1981a) points out, this notion of ‘arrested development’ constructs LG sexualities as incomplete and immature forms of sexual identity. Similarly, because ‘bisexuality’ is understood as the primary state from which the process of psychosexual development begins, ‘bisexuality’ in adulthood is understood as a failure to develop from this primary state, and is thus also constructed as an immature form of sexuality (arguably the least mature form of sexuality).

Whilst theories concerning the aetiology of LG sexualities – whether biologically or environmentally founded - are not axiomatically pathologising, as suggested, they arise out of, and implicitly reinforce, constructions of LG sexualities as abnormal. The ‘need’ to account for ‘what makes people gay’ exists precisely because LG sexualities are understood as a pathological deviation from the heterosexual norm. Indeed, the medical definition of aetiology is “the science of the causes of *disease*” (*Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 1996: 21, emphasis added). Correspondingly, aetiological accounts concerning the question ‘what makes people heterosexual?’ are, not surprisingly, largely absent from the psychological literature. These aetiological accounts are invariably based on unexamined, taken for granted assumptions about the pathological nature of homosexuality. Scientists hypothesised not simply about the *causes* of homosexuality but about what had *gone wrong* with individuals to ‘make them’ homosexual, and how those ‘wrongs’ might be put right. An inevitable outcome of this approach was, then, to seek to cure ‘the homosexual’ and, as such, a range of ‘cures’ were tried. These ranged from brain surgery, castration, hormone injections, and other biochemical therapies (informed by biological aetiological theories); electric shock treatment and other forms of aversion therapy (informed by social learning theories); and long-term psychotherapy (informed by psychoanalytic theories). However, as Davies and Neal (1996a) note, none of these ‘treatments’ have been ‘scientifically’ proven to result in long term conversion to heterosexuality.

As Gonsiorek (1996: 463) suggests, prior to 1957, when Hooker produced the first empirical study concluding that homosexuality *per se* is not pathological, it was an almost unquestioned article of faith among mental health professionals and

researchers that homosexuality was a mental illness. Hooker (1957) found that her sample of homosexual men were as well adjusted as and were indistinguishable from a matched group of heterosexual men. Apart from her findings, what distinguished Hooker's research from previous case studies was, first, that her sample of homosexual men was not drawn from psychiatric or prison settings and, second, that she used psychological tests, rather than diagnosis, as measures of mental health³.

Hooker's seminal research was the catalyst for a number of studies comparing demographically similar groups of homosexuals with heterosexuals. Some of these comparative studies did find differences between the two groups; for example, Hopkins (1969) found lesbians to be more independent than heterosexual women, whilst Thompson, McCandless and Strickland (1971) found that gay men were less self confident than heterosexual men. However, this body of research consistently failed to find any differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals which would support the contention that homosexuality is *in and of itself* absolutely predictive of psychological disturbance (Gonsiorek, 1996). More recently, where differences have been found between LGBs and heterosexuals, they have increasingly been attributed to differences in external stressors (i.e. societal oppression) as opposed to internal psychopathology (e.g., Anderson and Henderson, 1985).

The research into the aetiology and pathology of homosexuality discussed so far has unquestioningly accepted that the research questions: 'What causes people to be homosexual?'; 'Are homosexuals inherently pathological?' And; 'In what ways are homosexuals different from and/ or similar to heterosexuals?' are valid areas of enquiry. That these are seen as legitimate research questions is based on the underlying, essentialist assumption that the terms 'homosexual', 'heterosexual' and 'bisexual' refer to 'real' categories of people. As Stein (1990) argues:

Essentialists think that categories of sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual) are appropriate categories to apply to individuals. According to essentialists, it is legitimate to enquire into the origin of heterosexuality or

³ Hooker used the Rorschach, the Thematic Apperception Test and the Make a Picture Story Test. The test protocols were rated by an independent panel of psychological test experts, who did not know the sexual orientation of participants.

homosexuality ... This follows from the essentialist tenet that there are objective, intrinsic, culture-independent facts about what a person's sexual orientation is (Stein, 1990: 4-5).

One of the earliest challenges to the prevailing essentialised view of sexuality discussed previously came from the research carried out by Kinsey and his colleagues (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin and Gebhard, 1953; Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, 1948), who drew attention to the distinction between sexual *behaviour*, and sexual *identity*. Kinsey found that, for both women and men, sexuality was better understood as a continuum, with far more people experiencing same sex attraction, fantasy and activity than was previously thought. Data from the Kinsey studies challenged the assumption that sexuality was a dichotomous phenomenon, with people 'being' either essentially heterosexual or homosexual. In 1968, McIntosh's article 'The Homosexual Role' provided a further challenge to the essentialised medical model of sexuality. McIntosh argued that homosexuality should not be understood as a condition particular to certain individuals, rather as a socially constructed role which some people adopt or are forced to adopt. Further, she argued that the role of the homosexual was created and functioned as a form of social control. She argued that by constructing homosexuality as an essential characteristic particular to certain individuals, society could distinguish 'deviants' from 'normal' people, because only 'deviant' people (rather than 'normal' people) behaved in 'deviant' ways.

Despite these early challenges to the essentialised model of sexuality, the most common response to the scientific concern with discovering the causes of LG(B) sexualities and the assumption that homosexuality was inherently pathological has not been the rejection of essentialism; rather it has been the employment of modernist scientific methods to find empirical evidence to refute these claims. The modernist concept of the 'homosexual' and commitment to scientific methods enabled a critique of pathologising theorising about LGBs -- in a sense, fighting science with science. One of the key proponents of this approach is Gonsiorek (1991; 1996) who, for example, has deployed the methods of modernist science in order to refute the notion of homosexuality as a mental illness. He dismisses the literature which supports the pathological model of homosexuality on the grounds that it is scientifically flawed. In particular, his critique has drawn attention to a

range of methodological problems, such as the use of “poor and biased” sampling procedures and comparison groups, inappropriate statistical analysis and interpretation of data, researcher bias, research design problems and “vague, erroneous, or simplistic” assumptions about the definition of homosexuality and heterosexuality (Gonsiorek, 1991:123). He concludes that diagnosing homosexuality as a mental illness is “bad science” (Gonsiorek, 1991:115), and that:

The continuing attempt to pathologise homosexuality in the face of strong and consistent disconfirming evidence is unprofessional, irresponsible, and scientifically invalid. It is based on beliefs that have nothing to do with science, specifically dogmatic beliefs about religious, philosophical, and social concerns (Gonsiorek, 1991, 117).

The use of modernist approaches by LGB affirmative theorists in their efforts to achieve greater equality for LGBs by constructing them as being essentially no different from heterosexuals has to some extent been a successful strategy. The empirical basis for the pathological model of LGB sexualities has been called into question and as Kitzinger contends, the pathological model “no longer represents the dominant psychological approach to lesbianism [and male homosexuality]” (Kitzinger, 1987: 33). However, this is not to say that such an approach has been entirely successful.

Homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder in the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) until 1973, and by the World Health Organisation under the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) until the tenth edition in 1992. Some theorists continue to espouse ideas about the pathology of LGB sexualities (e.g., Cameron, 1985; Socarides, 1978). Further, as Rothblum (2000) has noted, a *Time* magazine survey of 2500 US psychiatrists in 1978 found that the majority considered homosexuality to be pathological and also perceived homosexuals to be less happy and less capable of having mature and loving relationships than heterosexuals. Over 10 years later, surveys of psychologists in the US (Garnets, Hancock, Cochran, Goodchilds and Peplau, 1991) and the UK (Milton, 1998) found evidence of biased, inappropriate and heterosexist practice. Similar issues about the continuing presence

of heterosexism⁴ within psychology and psychiatry are raised in relation to the provision of therapeutic training courses. For example, access to psychoanalytic training courses has been restricted or prohibited “due to [LGB’s] ‘unresolved and unanalysable neuroses’” (Davies and Neal, 1996a: 22), whilst the content of many clinical and counselling training courses has failed to consider the experiences of LGs (see Milton and Coyle, 1999).

Further, in seeking to counter research and theorising that pathologises LGBs from within an modernist framework by calling for more and better science to more ‘accurately’ represent LGBs, these theorists fail to challenge the terms of the debate. For, they uncritically accept that ‘homosexual’, ‘heterosexual’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘bisexual’ are real, distinct and unchanging identity categories, with their own aetiologies and origins.

To conclude, the theories and politics of equality undoubtedly enabled some positive change in terms of attempts to address inequality on the basis of sexuality. However the failure to adequately address the needs of LGBs both within the medical and mental health professions and more broadly within political and legal contexts set the stage for a more separatist strategy – theories and politics of autonomy.

1.3 Theories and Politics of Autonomy

The politics of autonomy were characterised by a shift away from assimilationist strategies, wherein LGBs’ similarity with heterosexuals was emphasised, towards a politics constructed around the notion of a distinctly LGB identity. Whilst a modernist, essentialist understanding of identity remained at the heart of LGB politics, within the politics of autonomy, LGBs’ essential difference from heterosexuals was emphasised. Implicit in this construction was an assumption of similarity between LGBs based upon notions of ‘shared experience’ or, in other words, an assumption that all LGBs have something in common.

⁴ Discrimination in favour of heterosexuals.

Unlike the politics of equality which preceded gay liberation, the new politics of autonomy were revolutionary in the sense that the aim was to overthrow the system, through an analysis of the structures of LGB oppression, rather than to achieve social recognition within it. The liberational politics of autonomy aimed to free individuals from the constraints of a naturalised sex/ gender system that locked them into mutually exclusive homosexual/ heterosexual and feminine/ masculine roles and which were seen as stabilising heterosexual privilege. Gay liberationists challenged these normative understandings of sexual identity, arguing instead that all individuals are innately bisexual and that this natural, undifferentiated sexual desire becomes repressed by the imperative to recognise oneself as *either* 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' (Seidman, 1993). LGB sexualities were therefore represented as identities repressed by a heterosexist power structure which privileged gender-asymmetry, sexual reproduction and the patriarchal nuclear family. Gay liberation sought to destroy the system of dominant formulations of sex and gender categories and the institutions which supported them. It sought, then, to challenge the social institutions which marginalised and pathologised 'homosexuality' and to subvert sex/ gender identity categories by not conforming to normative understandings of sex, gender and sexual desire/ practices.

As with the homophile movement, the gay liberation movement was characterised by divisions around issues of gender, as gay men were seen by some lesbian feminists as being part of the (patriarchal) system they were attempting to overthrow. Lesbian feminism arose out of a frustration with the failure of 'mainstream' gay movements to address issues of gender and the oppression of women and, the failure of the Women's Liberation Movement to address issues of sexuality and the oppression of LGBs. Whilst gay liberationists utilised a biologically determinist rhetoric in their construction of a universal, innate 'bisexuality', lesbian feminists constructed lesbianism as a social and political choice which could be made by any woman:

Any woman could be a lesbian. It was a revolutionary political choice which, if adopted by millions of women, would lead to the destabilisation of male supremacy as men lost the foundation of their power in women's selfless and unpaid, domestic, sexual, reproductive, economic and emotional servicing (Jeffreys, 1993:ix).

Though not a coherent movement, lesbian feminist theorising is characterised by a privileging of gender. It is argued that gender, not sexuality, is the primary identificatory category for lesbians, and that lesbianism cannot be usefully understood outside an analysis of the oppression of women under patriarchy and the associated institution of compulsory heterosexuality (e.g., Rich, 1980). One result of this analysis was that many lesbian feminists argued that (heterosexual) women, not gay men, were the 'natural' political allies of lesbians (e.g., Jeffreys, 1994; Frye, 1983). Indeed, as noted, some have argued that gay men - by virtue of being men - are complicit in patriarchy's oppression of women (e.g., Irigaray, 1981; Rich, 1980).

Gay liberation and lesbian feminism were characterised by an assumption that LGBs' unique experiences under heterosexism meant that they were able to provide not simply a *different* but a *better* perspective on the world (see Warner, 2000a). In this way, LGBs' personal experience was recognised as authoritative and was privileged over the 'expertise' of the medical and psychological professions, which were understood to be fundamentally heterosexist institutions functioning as tools in the preservation of heterosexual privilege. The hegemony of psychological and medical models of LGBs' distress was therefore identified and challenged. Direct political action was taken against these institutions by gay liberationists, who, for example, disrupted American Medical Association and American Psychiatric Association conferences, lobbying for the removal of 'homosexuality' from the APA's DSM. Additionally, LGB rights campaigners argued for autonomous services run by LGBs for LGBs and a LGB appropriation of theories of sexuality in which the experiences of LGBs would be accurately represented.

Within the emergent gay affirmative literature on LGB sexualities the focus of research was on explicating the ways in which LGBs and their experiences differed from their heterosexual counterparts. LGB sexualities were constructed as *normal* variations on the continuum of human sexual expression (e.g., Rich, 1980; Kinsey *et al*, 1953; 1948) and differences between LGBs and heterosexuals were affirmed and explored. This represented a shift away from the search for cause, cure and demonstration of pathology and similarly, away from competing attempts to disprove the notion of 'homosexuality' as a mental illness which, as discussed, had

dominated the early literature on LGB sexualities. A number of areas of inquiry have developed as a result of constructing LGB sexualities as ‘normal’ but different in some ways from heterosexualities. Below, I briefly consider the emergence of models of LGB identity development, research on homophobia⁵, the concept of internalised homophobia, and considerations of the ‘special’ difficulties faced by LGB adolescents.

1.3.1 LGB Identity Development

Within the literature on LGB identity development, the development of a LGB sexual identity is generally conceived of as being different from the development of a heterosexual identity, because of the cultural stigma and oppression associated with non-heterosexual behaviour and identity. This makes an important distinction between pathologising individuals and pathologising an oppressive heterosexist culture. Potential differences between LGBs and heterosexuals are constructed as resulting from the fact that LGBs have to develop an identity within a culture in which that identity is stigmatised. Additionally, the process of LGB identity formation occurs within, and is made necessary by, a heterosexist culture in which individuals are *presumed* heterosexual unless there is evidence to the contrary. As a result of this heterosexual assumption, most LGBs grow up with what Rust (1996: 87) describes as “default heterosexual identities”. LGB identity development therefore involves replacing that ‘default’ identity with a LGB one.

A number of theorists have attempted to describe the processes by which LGs realise and develop an identity as LG and a number of models of identity development have emerged from this research (e.g., Troiden, 1989; Cass, 1984; Minton and McDonald, 1984; Coleman, 1982; McDonald, 1982; Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1979; Ponse, 1978; Dank, 1971). These models have tended to be developmental stage models based on LGs’ retrospective accounts of self-discovery and coming out. They outline a linear process whereby an individual is seen to begin with a presumed heterosexual identity, to then progress through a number of

⁵ A number of theorists have critiqued the term ‘homophobia’ for being inaccurate because it is not a ‘classic’ phobia (e.g., see Davies, 1996b). Additionally, Kitzinger (1987), amongst others (e.g., Herek, 1991), have argued that because the term ‘homophobia’ pathologises the individual, it fails to locate the responsibility for the oppression of LGBs within society. The term is used here because it is more widely used and understood than alternative terms such as homonegativity or anti-gay prejudice.

developmental stages ending with a fully accepted, stable LG identity. This LG identity is then said to be integrated into other aspects of the individual's identity or self-concept which is seen to accurately reflect their 'true', essential self.

Whilst these models differ in the number of stages identified and the labels assigned to them, there is considerable similarity amongst the developmental tasks and milestones they delineate. Broadly speaking, the models begin with a stage in which the individual becomes aware of same-sex attraction and of the relevance of the label of 'lesbian' or 'gay' to themselves. The next stages variously describe processes by which individuals begin to explore their sexuality and the wider 'LGB community', experiment with same-sex sexual relationships, disclose to LGB others, and disclose to non-LGB others. The final stage in all these models describes a process of identity integration, synthesis, and stabilisation.

These models have proved useful in the sense that they describe the way *some* people experience the process of coming out and pinpoint issues that *may* arise at each stage. However, when used as the theoretical rationale behind interventions which aim to facilitate or predict an individual's sexual identity they become prescriptive, for, the assumption is that *all* LGs will follow the same developmental path and reach the same end point. Within this conceptual framework, individuals who do not follow the prescribed route are seen as deviating from the 'normal' path of identity development. Further, these models implicitly assume that any outcome other than the acquisition of a stable gay or lesbian identity (e.g., a bisexual identity or refusal to adopt a sexual identity) is a reflection of psychological immaturity. These individuals are suspected of having some underlying psychopathological issues, such as 'internalised homophobia' (discussed in more detail later), that prevents her/ him from 'completing' the process (Rust, 1996). Equally, those who do not complete all the prescribed developmental tasks, such as disclosing one's LG sexuality to others, are similarly deemed immature. This fails to account for the fact that some individuals may choose not to disclose their sexuality to certain others because of realistic fears about their reaction to the news.

Some theorists have acknowledged that not all individuals progress through this process in a straightforward, unproblematic fashion, and may either get stuck at one

stage, or revert to a previous stage (e.g. Cass, 1990; Troiden, 1989; McDonald, 1982; Cass, 1979). In an attempt to accommodate this, linear models have been modified to incorporate alternative routes, feedback loops and possible dead ends, thereby affording increased room for variation (Rust, 1993). At best, such deviations from the linear process of LG identity development are described as 'normal' and to be expected. However, such eventualities are often presented as problematic and unhealthy delays, foreclosures or regressions in the process of achieving a 'healthy' LG identity (Rust, 1993; Sophie, 1986).

In addition to the difficulty that linear stage models have in accommodating individual variation in the process of identity formation, there are also a number of problematic ideological assumptions inherent in the models. First, developmental stage models are based on the premise of an essentialist notion of a fixed and stable LG identity, and the process of LG identity development involves 'discovering' and disclosing to others this essential part of the self. This kind of conceptualisation fails to account for those individuals whose 'sexual identity' continues to change over the lifespan (Rust, 1993).

Second, these models are pejorative in that they offer prescribed descriptions of what is considered to be a 'healthy sexual identity'. Linear developmental models privilege some sexual identities over others. Because these models are based on conceptualisations of sexuality in which sexual identity is defined in terms of the gender of sexual object choice and which authenticate only heterosexual and LG identities, sexual identity development research in the 1970s and 1980s largely neglected bisexualities (although see Blumstein and Schwartz 1990, 1977, 1974). Within these models, bisexualities are either ignored or constructed as an intermediate and unstable state between LG sexualities and heterosexualities (Rust, 1993). For example, Cass (1979) acknowledges the existence of 'bisexuality' but describes it as a 'strategy' used by some people because it enables them to maintain a perception of themselves as potentially heterosexual. Others (e.g., Chapman and Branock, 1987) describe 'bisexuality' as a stepping stone on the way to an LG identity. Scientific constructions of bisexualities as a phase individuals may go through in the process of LG identity development reflect and reinforce popular understandings of bisexualities. For example, bisexuals may be criticised within LG

communities for not having the ‘courage’ to acknowledge their true LG identity and for ‘keeping one foot in the door’ of a privileged heterosexual world, whilst benefiting from participation in LG communities (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1974). Linear developmental models, then, tend to characterise bisexuals as either immature or in denial (Rust, 1996), although, more recently, the possibility of bisexualities as psychologically mature identities has been acknowledged and developmental models delineating the process of ‘bisexual’ identity development have been outlined (e.g., Fox, 1991).

Kitzinger’s (1987) critique of Cass’s (1979) model of identity development effectively highlights the prescriptive nature of such models and their associated ideas about what exactly constitutes a ‘healthy sexual identity’. Cass describes the penultimate step in developmental progression towards maturity as being marked by LG activism and ‘purposeful confrontation with the establishment’ (Cass, 1979). This is followed by the final stage of ‘identity synthesis’ in which the individual “is now able to integrate [their] homosexual identity with all other aspects of the self” (Cass, 1979: 235) and, “comes to see no clear dichotomy between the heterosexual and homosexual worlds” (Cass, 1979: 234). Within this model then, anger at institutional and individual discrimination against LGBs and political commitment to challenging prejudice and oppression is constructed as evidence of psychological immaturity. As Kitzinger suggests, this is an example of “an overt attempt to shape lesbian [and gay men and bisexual’s] subjectivities in accordance with the individualised and depoliticised ideological stance of contemporary liberal humanistic psychology” (Kitzinger, 1987, p. 56-7).

Alternatives to linear developmental models of LGB identity formation have been proposed. For example, Coyle (1991), drawing on the general identity literature conceptualises gay identity as a personal narrative that individuals construct in order to account for their experiences in relation to a same-sex sexual preference in a coherent, meaningful and purposeful way. This conceptualisation of identity as a personal narrative emphasises the creative nature of identity formation as opposed to it being a process of discovery. Sexual identity formation has also been theorised by symbolic interactionists who view it as a process of creating an identity through social interaction as opposed to a process of ‘discovering’ identity through

introspection (e.g. Richardson and Hart, 1981; Plummer, 1975). For Richardson and Hart (1981) sexuality is the product of an ongoing process of dynamic social interaction. They suggest that sexual identity may therefore change at any stage of the life cycle, and that the meaning of a given sexual identity may differ among individuals and over time. Blumstein and Schwartz (1990; 1977; 1974) emphasise the variability of human sexuality and the normality of incongruence between an individual's sexual identity and their sexual behaviour. They acknowledge the importance of social and cultural variables in their description of identity formation as a process of creation that is influenced by social factors such as dichotomous thinking about sexuality, political ideologies and gender role expectations. Finally, the area of sexual identity has also received attention from theorists adopting a social constructionist perspective whose insights are discussed in more detail later in this introduction.

1.3.2 Homophobia

Concurrent with and, perhaps as an inevitable consequence of the move away from pathologising LGB sexualities, there has been a move towards pathologising individuals who believe LGBs to be pathological and/ or abnormal (Kitzinger, 1987). Homophobia has been defined as “the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals” (Weinberg, 1972: 4) and is now commonly used within both academic and non-academic circles to refer to a range of negative attitudes towards LGBs and LGB sexualities. This shift towards pathologising homophobia can partly be explained by the rejection of a pathological model of LGB sexualities. For, whilst LGB sexualities were pathologised as ‘abnormal’, then homophobia could be considered to be a ‘natural’ phenomenon – a fear of the ‘abnormal’. With LGB sexualities being retheorised as ‘normal’, so homophobia becomes an ‘unnatural’ fear of the ‘normal’, and something, therefore, in need of theorising. The resulting increase in research and theorising about homophobia has led to the development of a number of scales to measure and facilitate the diagnosis of individuals as homophobic (e.g., MacDonald, Huggins, Young and Swanson, 1972). Using these scales, researchers have described a range of personal characteristics which are said to correlate with homophobic attitudes and beliefs. For example, it has been suggested that individuals with high scores on homophobia scales are personally deficient in other ways e.g., they are authoritarian and cognitively rigid (MacDonald

and Games 1974), or they have low levels of ego development (Weis and Dain 1979) whilst heterosexual men as a group have been found to be more homophobic than heterosexual women (e.g., Kite and Whitley, 1996).

Herek suggests that research on homophobia is important “because it offers the promise of finding better ways to combat prejudice” (Herek, 1998: viii). However, Plummer (1981a) has criticised the research on homophobia for scapegoating individual homophobes at the cost of ignoring the institutionalised oppression of LGBs. Similarly, Kitzinger argues that homophobia research reflects psychology’s tendency to locate problems within individuals and ignore social, cultural and political factors. She suggests that:

the concept and operationalized definition of homophobia advances the cause of liberal humanism by appealing to individuocentric explanations of a socio-political phenomenon (blaming individuals who supposedly deviate from the rest of society in being prejudiced against homosexuals), and through its explicit promotion of liberal humanistic ideology as the only ‘unprejudiced’ attitude to homosexuality (Kitzinger, 1987: 61).

As with the literature on LGB identity development, the psychological literature on homophobia constructs a certain way of thinking about LGB sexualities as appropriate or ‘normal’ and thereby prescribes what heterosexuals ‘should’ think about LGBs.

1.3.3 Internalised Homophobia

The concept of internalised homophobia (IH), which has been advanced as “a central organising concept for a gay and lesbian affirmative psychology” (Shidlo, 1994: p.176), has been defined as “a set of negative attitudes and affects toward homosexuality in other persons and toward homosexual features in oneself” (Shidlo, 1994: 178). The concept is based on the premise that LGBs, like heterosexuals, are socialised within an environment where heterosexism is widespread and culturally sanctioned (Gonsiorek, 1988), and that LGBs (like heterosexuals) internalise notions of societal negativity towards LGB sexualities at an early stage in their development. For LGBs, the application of homophobic attitudes internalised at an earlier stage to themselves, (such as the belief that

homosexuality is an illness or perversion), is seen as a process which may pose a threat to their psychological well-being. Theorists utilising the concept of IH have hypothesised that IH leads to suppression of homosexual feelings and an interruption of the process of identity formation⁶.

The concept of IH has been critiqued on a number of levels. A central criticism relates to the difficulties inherent in trying to arrive at a useful operationalisation of the concept. For example, two factors which have been interpreted as being indicative of IH are, discomfort about others knowing about one's LGB sexuality (e.g., Nungesser, 1983) and, an individual's belief that their life would be easier if they were heterosexual (e.g., Savin-Williams, 1990). However, these sentiments could equally be interpreted as an individual's realistic appraisal regarding the relative costs of disclosure and the difficulties LGBs face within a heterosexist society (Shidlo, 1994; Sophie, 1988). A further and related criticism relates to the fact that definitions of IH carry with them a set of implicit ideological assumptions and are prescriptive in terms of what are considered to be 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' attitudes and feelings to have about being LGB (Kitzinger, 1987). Previously, proponents of pathologising models of LGB sexualities have argued that LGBs *not* seeking conversion to heterosexuality are less well adjusted than those who do (e.g., Socarides, 1972). However, now from a gay-affirmative perspective, LGBs wishing to become heterosexual, an indicator of IH, are considered to be the *least* well adjusted. Kitzinger argues that the notion of IH, therefore, represents an overt attempt to shape LGB's subjectivities and places one more barrier between LGBs and mental health (Kitzinger, 1987).

Another criticism of the concept of IH raised by Kitzinger and others (e.g., Perkins, 1996) relates to a concern about the political ramifications of the construct and the way in which IH constructs LGBs' distress in a way that can be seen to be individualising and pathologising of LGBs and implicitly ignores the social and cultural oppression of LGBs within a heterosexist society. Kitzinger argues that IH

⁶ Theorists have drawn links between IH and a range of psychological problems: for example; depression and low self-esteem (Malyon, 1982); alcoholism (Finnigan and Cook, 1984); difficulties in intimate relationships (Friedman, 1991); fragmentation and borderline-like features (Malyon, 1982); suicide (Rofes, 1983); impaired sexual functioning (Brown, 1986); and eating disorders (Brown, 1987); whilst Finnegan and Cook (1984) have argued that IH can result in distrust and loneliness.

along with the related constructs of self-hatred (Richardson and Hart, 1980) and ego dystonic homosexuality (DSM-III; American Psychiatric Association, 1980) are examples of how psychology depoliticises and individualises lesbians' [and gay men's and bisexuals'] experiences. She suggests that the corollary of these psychological constructs is that individual change rather than system change is seen to be the solution to the distress caused by societal oppression of LGBs (Kitzinger, 1987). As Perkins states:

Structural oppression ceases to be the target [of action] and is replaced by internal psychological problems. ... Such a translation involves moving from a position where one has to change the world to a position where the oppressed individuals within that world have to be changed so that they are better able to cope with their oppression (Perkins, 1996: 75).

1.3.4 LGB Adolescents

The psychological literature on adolescence is, to a large extent, founded on heterosexist assumptions and has, in the main, ignored LGB issues. Where adolescent LGB sexualities are considered, they tend to be conceptualised as phases adolescents may pass through *en route* to a 'normal' heterosexual identity (Savin-Williams, 1994; Goggin, 1993). This conceptualisation is, of course, not consistent with the experiences of those who go on to identify as LGB as adults. Further, in general, the psychological literature on LGBs has, until recently, tended to avoid issues pertaining to adolescent development, and has instead focused on adult experiences. However, since the 1980s there has been an increasing amount of interest and research into young LGBs and the particular issues which they face (D'Augelli, 1996).

Adolescence is a period of biological, cognitive, psychological, and social development, and may be conceptualised as a transitional process whereby an individual passes from childhood to adult maturity (Coleman and Hendry, 1999). A number of key aspects have been identified as making up the adolescent experience. These include the processes of physical, sexual development and cognitive development, the latter including the development of social cognitive skills, self-concept development, changes in relationships with family, peers and partners, and

the acquisition of a number of new social roles. Since Hall (1940) theorised adolescence as a transitional period of 'storm and stress', it has typically been problematised as a confusing and unstable time. This way of understanding adolescence has, until recently, dominated the psychological literature, and it remains a popular, 'common-sense' construction.

Some researchers have begun to theorise adolescence unproblematically and to consider issues such as adolescent coping, adjustment and resilience (e.g., Coleman and Hendry, 1999; Coleman, 1978). However, whether the focus has been on cognitive (e.g., Piaget, 1932); social cognitive (Selman, 1980; Elkind, 1967); moral (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981); identity (e.g., Marcia, 1980; Erikson, 1968; 1959); or psychosexual development (e.g., Blos, 1962; Freud, 1935), all the major theories of child development construct adulthood as the successful *completion* of the developmental process. By definition, then, adolescence is constructed as always transitional and always 'incomplete'. The conceptualisation of adolescence as a distinct developmental phase of the life cycle is, itself, a relatively new and culturally specific phenomenon. For example, in earlier historical periods, the biological maturation that takes place during puberty has marked the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. However in modern western societies, various cultural developments such as the decrease in the need for young people to contribute to productivity, and the related increase in the duration of compulsory education, in addition to the trend towards earlier sexual maturation (Tanner, 1978, cited in Coleman and Hendry, 1999), have resulted in the period of adolescence becoming increasingly protracted (Coleman and Hendry, 1999; Gonsiorek, 1988).

Not surprisingly given that adolescent development, like LGB identity development, has traditionally been constructed as problematic, the emergent literature on LGB adolescents has focused on the particular problems of this 'sub-population'. Despite the difficulties inherent in defining and accessing this group (see, for example, Savin-Williams, 2001), the dominant approach to research in this area has been underpinned by modernist assumptions about essential identity categories. This has led to research being conducted within a comparative framework - comparing 'LGB adolescents' with 'heterosexual adolescents'. The existing literature on LGB adolescents encompasses many of the issues explored

within the adult literature on LGB sexualities (e.g., identity development and coming out, IH, homophobia and mental health). However, within this literature, the issues faced by adolescent LGBs are constructed as differing from those of adult LGBs (and from heterosexual adolescents) in a number of significant ways. Specifically, it is argued that LGB adolescents are faced with the dual task of adopting a stigmatised identity as LGB whilst simultaneously going through the 'normal' developmental processes of adolescence. Theorists have argued that for adolescents, LGB identity development occurs within the context of biological, cognitive, social and emotional developments that occur during adolescence (e.g., D'Augelli, 1996). Further, it is acknowledged that the process of identifying as LGB occurs within social and cultural contexts and that, for young LGBs, the contexts of the family, peer group, and of school/ college are particularly pertinent. For example, it has been suggested that because adolescents are likely to be, to varying degrees, dependent on the acceptance and support of parents, teachers, siblings, and peers amongst others, the process of coming out may be especially stressful as it carries with it the risk of rejection (D'Augelli, 1996).

A range of literature has emerged in recent years exploring the issues raised for LGB adolescents in relation to, for example: disclosure of LGB identity to family members (e.g., Malley and Tasker, 1999; Waldner and Magruder, 1999; D'Augelli, Hershberger, and Pilkington, 1998; Savin-Williams, 1998; Savin-Williams and Dube, 1998; Saltzburg, 1996; Boxer, Cook and Herdt, 1991; Bernstein, 1990; Strommen, 1989a; 1989b); LGBs' experiences in school (e.g., Harris and Bliss, 1997; Herr, 1997; Jordan, Vaughan and Woodworth, 1997; Telljohan and Price, 1993) and with peers (e.g., Anderson, 1987; Hetrick and Martin, 1987; Martin, 1982); victimisation (e.g., Savin-Williams and Cohen, 1996a; Rivers, 1995; Garnets, Herek and Levy, 1993; Martin and Hetrick, 1988) and; mental health and suicide (e.g., Morrison and L'Heureux, 2001; Hershberger, Pilkington, D'Augelli, 1997; Remafedi, Farrow and Deisher, 1993; Gonsierek, 1988). This literature has increased awareness of the difficulties which *may* be experienced by *some* LGB adolescents and has informed thinking about how the needs of young LGBs encountering such difficulties can be met, as well as how these difficulties may be prevented (e.g. Hershberger and D'Augelli, 2000; Coyle, 1998; Davies, 1996a). However, much of the literature to date has problematised LGB adolescents and, in

taking 'LGB adolescents' as their subject, has reinforced constructions of 'LGB adolescents' as a distinct and homogeneous group. More recently, there has been a growing acknowledgement firstly of the similarities between LGB and heterosexual adolescents and secondly of the diversity that exists between LGB adolescents (see, for example, Savin-Williams, 2001).

The tactics of employing modernist approaches in constructing LGBs as essentially different from heterosexuals – as autonomous – has to some extent been a successful strategy. For, as discussed, it has enabled LGBs to speak authoritatively on their own behalf, and to 'accurately' represent the experiences of LGBs in a way that is affirming and non-pathologising. However, the benefits of autonomy from heterosexuals is based on a construction of LGBs as a homogenous community - on the assumption of equality and similarity *between* LGBs. Increasingly, this assumption has been challenged and it has become apparent that similarities between LGBs have been overstated (see also Warner, 2000a). As a result, it has become more difficult to talk about *the* LGB community. These emerging conflicts over who exactly is being represented and by whom has given rise to the politics of difference and diversity, discussed below.

1.4 Theories and Politics of Difference and Diversity.

As suggested, the identity based political movements of LGB equality and LGB autonomy are made possible and sustained by modernist conceptualisations of identity, for the identity category 'LGB' has to exist in order for a LGB politics to exist. Whilst these movements differ in the sense that the politics of equality are centrally concerned with emphasising LGB sameness with heterosexuals and the politics of autonomy stress and affirm LGBs' differences from heterosexuals, both are founded upon, and in turn reinforce, a modernist notion of a distinct and unified LGB identity. As we have seen in the previous sections on equality and autonomy, the development of modernist, essentialist identity categories led to the emergence of a range of discourses about LGB sexualities which, in turn, enabled LGBs to make representational claims on behalf of themselves or other LGBs. As Foucault puts it:

[T]he appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality ... made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but it also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified (Foucault, 1990:101).

Within the psychological literature, modernist identity categories have provided a subject for 'scientific' investigation and, as noted, whilst the modernist approach has led to the pathologisation of LGBs, it has also been employed in order to counter this pathologising literature and to affirm the mental health of LGBs. Further, gay affirmative models that explore and legitimise 'lesbian' and 'gay' and, to a lesser extent, 'bisexual' as 'valid' sexual identities are also founded upon modernist assumptions. Within psychology, therefore, modernism has underpinned claims both about the abnormality and the normality of LGBs.

On a political level, one of the implications of a modernist conceptualisation of identity as an essential stable category is that it provides both a population to talk about, and a language with which to talk about it. Again, whilst this has led to discrimination against the LGB 'population', it has also provided a collective identity for LGBs to organise around politically. In other words, in order to defend the interests and rights of 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bisexual' people it has been a necessary political strategy for LGBs to self-define as an oppressed group and to organise around that identity group. As well as providing identity categories around which LGBs can mobilise, modernist arguments are often deployed as a means of furthering LGB civil rights. For example, biologically deterministic constructions of LGBs as having been 'born that way' have been utilised with some success in campaigns for the decriminalisation of consensual sex between men (Wolfenden Report, 1967), the lowering of the age of consent, and the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act⁷. As Vance contends, within an ideological and political

⁷ Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1990 in the UK prohibited the promotion of homosexuality in schools. The legislation states that: "A local authority shall not: (a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality; (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Local Government Act 1990).

context in which lesbians and gay men are defined as natural, real and are organised according to relatively unchanging biological features, it makes sense as a political strategy to claim equal status as an essential group to which members have no choice in belonging (Vance, 1989).

Despite the political efficacy of a unified LGB identity in terms of challenging LGBs' oppression, the assumptions on which this collective identity is founded have come under increasing scrutiny. One of the key implications of, and problems associated with, identity based politics is that for identity categories to be meaningful, there have to be clear membership criteria. As a result, boundaries are inevitably created around who is, or is not, represented by the identity category (Gamson, 1995). Identity categories are therefore necessarily exclusive and prescriptive in the sense that they represent some individuals and not others and that they construct particular versions of the identity category in question. The notion of a unified LGB identity underpinning identity based politics and theorising therefore evolved into prescriptive versions of 'what it is to be LGB'. As Epstein (1987) puts it:

[A] peculiar paradox of identity politics [is that] while affirming a distinctive group identity that legitimately differs from larger society, this form of political expression simultaneously imposes a 'totalising' sameness *within* the group: it says, this is who we 'really are' (Epstein, 1987: 153-4).

The notion of a unified LGB identity was challenged both from within the LGB identity group in terms of race, class and gender, and from without by individuals such as 'bisexuals', 'transsexuals' and 'somasochists', whose acts, pleasures and identifications caused some dissent within 'the LGB community' (Spargo, 1999). Within 'the LGB community' versions of gay and lesbian experience were criticised for privileging white, middle-class, able-bodied, male values. This led to a focus on differences between LGBs and subsequently a response to criticisms that the LGB movement excluded many of those it sought to represent. In theorising about LGB experiences, sexual identity was privileged almost to the exclusion of other identificatory categories. This meant that, for example, gender, race, class and (dis)ability could only be theorised as additional categories. Similarly, tensions between women and men and between the imperatives of gender and sexuality

caused friction within 'the LGB community' and made apparent the fragility of the community model of LGB politics. LGBs of colour also began to critique racism in 'the LGB community' and the assumption that LGBs of colour would have more in common with white LGBs than with their own ethnic or racial communities (e.g., Balka and Rose, 1989; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1983). In this sense, as Jagose (1996) suggests, LGB theorising was critiqued as either having nothing to say about race, or for theorising race simply as a variation on an otherwise identical sexual identity category.

In addition to the discontent expressed by some *within* 'the LGB community', those who felt they were not represented by it, including, for example, transsexuals, transgendered individuals and sadomasochists opposed and critiqued the notion of a unified LGB identity. It was argued that LGB identity politics had uncritically accepted dominant constructions of sexuality which understood sexuality in terms of the binary opposition of heterosexuality and homosexuality, assuming it to be self evident that sexual orientation is determined by the gender of sexual object choice. Debates within the LGB community about bisexualities, sadomasochism pornography, butch/ femme, transvestism, prostitution and intergenerational sex implicitly questioned the naturalisation of the heterosexuality/ homosexuality binary system of classification. As Sedgwick (1990) asserts:

Of the very many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another (dimensions that include preference for certain acts, certain zones or sensations, certain physical types, a certain frequency, certain symbolic investments, certain relations of age or power, a certain species, a certain number of participants, etc. etc. etc.), precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged from the turn of the century, and has remained, as *the* dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of sexual orientation (Sedgwick, 1990: 8).

Debates about the validity of sexual variations took different forms in gay and lesbian feminist circles, which both constructed sexuality in fundamentally different ways. The central debates within gay politics focused upon issues concerning sadomasochism and intergenerational sex (Seidman, 1993). These debates were less intense within gay politics, which had long recognised and validated a wide range of sexual variation, (e.g. monogamous and non-monogamous, private and public,

couple and group, recreational and commercial) in comparison to lesbian feminism, which was firmly underpinned by the assumption that lesbian sex was couple based, monogamous, woman identified and political (Jagose, 1996). It could be argued that this lesbian feminist construction of lesbian relationships as couple based and monogamous represents an incomplete rejection of heterosexuality because it 'apex' or conforms to the most dominant and valorised form of structuring heterosexual desire (i.e., marriage). Within lesbian feminist politics, it was argued that those forms of sexuality that did not conform to this prescribed version of lesbian sexuality, such as, bisexualities, sadomasochism, and butch/ femme were ideologically suspect assimilations of patriarchal values. From this standpoint, bisexual women are viewed as lesbians who maintain heterosexual privilege rather than identifying with a stigmatised social identity (see Däumer, 1992); sadomasochists are constructed as having internalised the eroticisation of the unequal power relations between women and men which are alleged to structure heterosexual relations (Jeffreys, 1993); whilst butch/ femme is understood as the internalisation of the requirement for gender differentiation within heterosexual sexual relationships (see Nestle, 1994; 1988; cited in Jagose, 1996). The dominant lesbian feminist construction of lesbian sexuality was challenged when women who identified with marginalised forms of sexuality began to make their own identity based claims for recognition.

Within both gay politics and lesbian feminism, then, it was apparent that the similarities between LGBs had been overstated and it therefore became increasingly difficult to talk about *the* LGB community. In the rush to embrace and organise around a unified group identity, internal differences amongst LGBs had been overlooked. A new concern with challenging the myth of equality between LGBs and addressing LGBs' difference and diversity from each other emerged. Gradually the strategy of autonomy from heterosexuals was extended to include autonomy between different groups of LGBs, resulting in increasingly specific and simultaneously 'ever decreasing circles' of identity categories (see also Warner, 2000a). As Jagose argues, "lesbian and gay liberation movements evolved into social movements so culturally concretised and elaborate that the tenets and values that they represented came to be seen as hegemonic, and were resisted in turn by further marginalised groups" (Jagose, 1996: 58).

Debates around the inclusion or exclusion of bisexuals within 'the LG(B) community' have perhaps provided some of the most well explicated critiques of identity based politics. Some argued for the recognition of 'bisexuality' as a third category of sexual identity, for the inclusion of bisexuals within 'the LG(B) community' and demanded that the rights of bisexuals be addressed by LG(B) activists. However, in contrast, others have argued that bisexualities undermine the essentialist construction of identity and identity based politics because, by the refusal to be limited to one object of desire, bisexualities denaturalise the sex/gender system which stabilises modernist notions of heterosexual and homosexual identity (Däumer, 1992; Clausen, 1990). These debates around bisexualities reflected broader tensions within 'the LGB community' between competing responses to the problematics of identity based politics, in the sense that some activists called for more inclusive, diverse and expanded definitions of LGB in order to accommodate excluded forms of sexuality, whilst others brought into question more radically the foundations of identity based politics.

The fracturing of the myth of a unified and unifying LGB identity can, then, be seen as a product not simply of the differences in personal and political priorities within 'LGB communities', but of basing politics on identity. The essentialist notion of a LGB identity inevitably constrains and excludes as well as enabling, regardless of whether gay and lesbian identities are seen as culturally constructed or biologically determined, or whether they are valued as positive identities or viewed negatively (Spargo, 1999). As Butler (1999, [orig: 1990]) has argued in relation to feminism:

[T]he presumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism is effectively undermined by the constraints of the representational discourse in which it functions. Indeed, the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of woman, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category. These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipatory purposes. Indeed, the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from 'women' whom feminism claims to represent suggest the necessary limits of identity politics (Butler, 1999: 7).

The increasing recognition of difference and diversity within ‘the LGB community’ led to the gradual erosion of the notion of a collective LGB identity/ community, and highlighted the limitations of identificatory categories, which were seen to produce prescriptive, normative versions of LGB sexualities – a sort of ‘compulsory homosexuality’. This prompted a turn toward postmodern approaches to theorising sexuality and identity and the forging of new political strategies, explored in the next section.

1.5 Theories and Politics of Deconstruction

As Jagose (1996: 78) argues: “[i]dentity’ is probably one of the most naturalised cultural categories each of us inhabits: one always thinks of one’s *self* as existing outside of all representational frames, and as somehow marking a point of undeniable realness”. The seemingly natural or taken for granted ‘truth’ of identity as an essential property of individuals (which emerged from Descartes’s notion of the self as rational, coherent and self-determining) has been problematised by postmodern theorists. Our sense of individuality and autonomy is theorised as a social construct rather than a recognition of a natural fact. Within postmodern accounts, identity is constructed as an effect of the discursive structures commonly used to describe the self through which identity, consequently, comes to be understood (e.g., Barthes, 1978). Lacan, for example, argues that identity is founded relationally and is constituted in reference to an exterior or outside that defines the subject’s own interior boundaries. Identity is understood as an effect of identification with and against others. This process of identification is always ongoing and always incomplete, and, rather than being understood as a property of the self, it is, then, constructed as a process (Jagose, 1996).

Foucault’s work has been instrumental in denaturalising dominant understandings of *sexual* identity. He theorises sexuality as a discursive production rather than a natural condition, and argues that modern subjectivity is an effect of power networks which may be repressive or negative but also productive and enabling. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1990) illustrates how a single discourse can be used strategically to different effect. ‘Discourse’ is understood by Foucault as the heterogeneous collection of words or terms relating to a specific concept which constitute and contest its meaning. Foucault insists that discourse does not function

purely 'for' or 'against' anything, rather it can be deployed for different strategic purposes. So:

we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies ... Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy (Foucault, 1990: 100-1).

Sexual identities are *both* produced and positioned by operations of power. The critiques of modernist notions of identity provided in the work of Foucault and the postmodern theorists discussed above, whereby identity is understood as a cultural myth rather than as a demonstrable fact, underpin the postmodern, social constructionist and Queer accounts of sexuality, discussed below.

1.5.1 Postmodernism/ Social Constructionism

Postmodern theorising is characterised by a rejection of the key tenets of modernism, such as the idea that the world can be understood in terms of grand theories; the notion that a single objective and rational account of the world can be reached; and the notion that there is an objective reality that can be observed, discovered or measured through empirical investigation. Within postmodernist approaches the search for absolute truths is replaced by an emphasis on the co-existence of a multiplicity of perspectives, and grand narrative accounts are replaced with more local accounts of reality. In this sense 'reality' is understood to be socially constructed, as opposed to being naturally given.

Social constructionist approaches differ from traditional, modernist approaches to psychological and social scientific enquiry in a number of significant ways. Psychology has traditionally provided explanations for social phenomena by hypothesising the existence of internal states such as attitudes, emotions and cognitions which are held to be responsible for what individuals do and say. In contrast, as Burr (1995) has argued, a social constructionist perspective regards the

dynamic social practices engaged in by people and their interactions with each other as the proper focus of enquiry, arguing that there are no 'essences' inside people that make them what they are. As Kitzinger contends:

Social constructionism does not offer alternative answers to questions posed by essentialism: it raises a wholly different set of questions. Instead of searching for truths about homosexuals and lesbians, it asks about the discursive practices, the narrative forms, within which homosexuals and lesbians are produced and reproduced (Kitzinger, 1995: 150).

From a social constructionist perspective language therefore becomes a central concern. Whilst language is viewed as a passive vehicle for expressing internal states within traditional psychology, from a social constructionist perspective language is conceived of as providing a way of structuring experience. Further, linguistic structures are seen to determine and limit the way that experience and consciousness *can* be structured. Language is understood to be a form of action, actively producing the forms of knowledge we take for granted and providing the categories and conceptual frameworks that structure the way that we think. So for example, when we think of biological sex, we are limited to thinking in terms of 'female' and 'male'. We take for granted as 'natural' that there are only two sexes, despite there being some individuals who do not 'fit' exclusively into either category. Social constructionist theorising problematises these linguistic and conceptual categories by questioning whether they necessarily refer to *real* divisions.

Central to the social constructionist approach is the contention that our ways of understanding and thinking about the world - the categories and concepts we use - are *historically and culturally specific*. In relation to sexuality, Foucault (1990) and Weeks (1991), for example, demonstrate that in different cultures and at different historical moments very different meanings are given to same-sex activity: "both by society at large and by the individual participants. The physical acts might be similar, but the social construction of meanings around them are profoundly different" (Weeks, 1991: 15). In this sense, as previously argued, same-sex activity has variously been constructed as, for example; a sinful or perverted act; as indicative of a particular type of person ('the homosexual'); as evidence of sickness

or mental illness, or; as a normal variation on the continuum of human sexual expression. Social constructionist theorising requires that we take a critical stance toward such 'taken for granted' knowledge.

Thus, as Burr (1995) and Gergen (1985) argue, the social constructionist project problematises notions of 'truth' and 'reality' and is therefore antithetical to positivism, empiricism and realism – the foundation blocks of the traditional scientific approach. It represents, therefore, a key conceptual departure from modernist approaches in that it contends that versions of reality are *constructed* between people through social interaction, rather than that knowledge is a *direct perception* of reality. Social constructionist theory posits that knowledge - the way we understand and construct phenomena – is fabricated and sustained through the social interactions between people. Truth, then, is understood as being produced rather than revealed. Further, shared versions of knowledge are constructed through social interaction, and some 'versions' or discourses become more dominant or powerful than others. This is significant, because particular constructions of the world are understood to sanction some patterns of social action whilst excluding others (Burr, 1995). Social constructionism draws attention to the role of power in determining the form and representation of social knowledge (Wilkinson, 1986), and explores "why certain knowledges that are presented as truths subjugate other knowledges; why some stories become so powerful and readily available that they function as truths" (Warner, 1996a: 97). It is argued that power is deployed through discourses which become institutionalised as practices, and in this way, discourses may serve a regulatory function. Power is understood as a complex set of relations which involves the domination of one group over another, but wherein power is never absolute. So, those subordinated may resist control, and may themselves exert power. In this way power is not conceptualised as hierarchical and immutable, rather as complex and constantly contested (Foucault, 1990).

1.5.2 Social Constructionist Theorising of Sexuality

As Foucault argues in relation to sexuality, discourses are never *absolutely* dominant and/ or repressive, rather, they are understood to invoke resistance. He argues: "[d]iscourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but it also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it"

(Foucault, 1990: 101). The exploration of the relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1990) is manifested within social constructionist theorising of sexuality through the deconstruction of science (Kitzinger, 1995). Knowledges produced by science, including psychology, are understood to be social constructs informed by the social, historical, and cultural context in which they are produced. From a social constructionist perspective, therefore, the various theories (often presented as 'objective facts') produced under the rubric of scientific inquiry to make sense of why people 'become' or 'are' LGB, are understood to represent and construct competing and *provisional* versions of the 'truth' about LGB sexualities.

Social constructionist perspectives have questioned the natural and taken for granted status of 'lesbian' and 'gay' (as well as 'heterosexual') identities. The dominant, naturalised system of understanding sexuality which categorises and stabilises sexual desires and identities, privileging some over others - the division of woman/ man and LG/ heterosexual - is deconstructed. In so doing, the very foundations of modernist approaches to LGB politics and theorising, discussed previously, are questioned, for essentialist assumptions of '*natural*', '*distinct*', and '*stable*' sexual identities are undermined.

In terms of LGB sexualities, one area in which social constructionist thinking has retheorised modernist understandings is the process of LG(B) identity development. From a social constructionist perspective, identity is conceptualised as an individual's interpretation of personal experience in terms of the available social constructs. As a result of this process, individuals describe their relations to other individuals, groups and socio-political institutions. Forming a LG(B) identity therefore becomes a process of describing oneself in terms of available social constructs rather than discovering and declaring an *essential* part of the self (Rust, 1996; 1993; Kitzinger, 1987). As discussed earlier, essentialist developmental models of identity perceive identity, once achieved, to be relatively stable and permanent. Further changes in self-identity are considered to be indicative of immaturity because developmental progress towards a stable self-identity is incomplete. In contrast, a social constructionist conceptualisation of identity would predict that an individual's identity is fluid and would change not only over time but across different cultural, social and relationship contexts. Changes in self-identity

are therefore expected and viewed as sign of psychological and social maturity because they are considered necessary in order for individuals to maintain an accurate description of their location within a changing social context (Rust, 1996; 1993). Coming out is, then, understood not as a singular process with an attainable end stage, but as an on-going process of attempting to maintain a satisfactory self-description of one's sexuality in a world of sexual meanings that vary over time and context (Rust, 1996). It is argued that linear developmental models do not adequately account for the role of social constructs in limiting the interpretations we are able to give to our experiences and the self-labels that are available to us.

A potential problem for social constructionist theorising of identity is that individuals *themselves* do not generally experience their sexual identities as variable and socially constructed. Rather, they experience their own sexuality as stable and essential and they retrospectively understand changes in their sexual identities as part of a goal oriented process of discovering and accepting this essential sexuality (e.g. Richardson, 1981b; Blumstein and Schwartz, 1977). As Epstein (1987: 135) has suggested, "perhaps there is something about the strict constructionist perspective which neither adequately describes the experiences of gays and lesbians nor speaks to their need to understand and legitimate their places in the world". He argues that social constructionism needs to account for the fact that the process of identity formation is most often understood as a goal oriented process of essential discovery by those who experience it (Epstein, 1987). However, social constructionism accounts for this by recognising that the goals themselves are constructed. So, individuals form their identities from the options they perceive, which are defined and limited by the social constructs available to them.

1.5.3 Queer Theory

Postmodern theorising of identity as provisional and contingent coupled with increased awareness of the limitations of identity categories in terms of political representation, discussed previously, enabled 'queer' to emerge as a new form of personal identification and political organisation (Jagose, 1996). The emergence of queer can be understood in the context of a political response to the AIDS crisis and the public homophobia generated by it; for example, in terms of the construction of AIDS/ HIV as a gay disease (Seidman, 1996b). 'Queer theory' is a body of

postmodern/ social constructionist theorising which has developed specifically in relation to the study of sexuality. Building on social constructionist studies which have challenged universal, essential understandings of sexual identity and sought to examine the construction of the modern 'homosexual' (e.g., Kitzinger, 1987; Weeks, 1985; D'Emilio, 1983), queer theory, has examined the operation of the hetero/homosexual binary and of heterosexuality as a social and political organising principle (Seidman, 1996b).

Fuss (1991), for example, applies Derrida's notion of the 'supplement' to the analysis of the binary hetero/homosexual opposition. She notes that the supplement (homosexual) *appears* to be an addition to an apparently original term (heterosexual) but, Fuss argues, heterosexuality secures the boundaries of its self-identity by protecting itself from what it sees as the predatory advances of homosexuality, its inferior other. Fuss argues that no opposition exists in isolation, all work through relationships with others, so: heterosexuality cannot exist without reference to homosexuality and vice versa. She explores the ways homosexuality and heterosexuality are interdependent in the context of the related opposition of positions inside (hetero) or outside (homo) the dominant culture. Through this analysis, Fuss highlights the limitations of coming out as a liberatory project. For, whilst coming *out* may be personally liberating, she argues that it inevitably reinforces the centrality of heterosexuality and marginalises those still *in* the closet. For Fuss, then, it is impossible to move entirely outside heterosexuality. Butler makes a similar point in relation to the use of the stable subject 'woman' within feminism when she suggests that attempts to deploy any identity as a foundation for representation will inevitably, if inadvertently, sustain the normative binary structures of sex, gender and desire (Butler, 1999). So, as previously argued, demanding the recognition of a distinct 'homosexual' identity inevitably reaffirms a binary and unequal opposition between 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' within which heterosexuality is constructed as the norm and all other forms of sexual behaviour as deviations from the norm.

Centrally, queer is at odds with 'the normal' – whether in terms of dominant versions of heterosexual identities or dominant gay/ lesbian identities (Spargo, 1999). Queer theory rejects both the organisation of politics and theory around 'a

homosexual subject' and the normative identity categories of 'lesbian' and 'gay'. So, it is argued that the study of LGB sexualities should be concerned with how knowledges and social practices organise and regulate 'society' as a whole, by "sexualising – heterosexualising or homosexualising – bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture, and social institutions" (Seidman, 1996b: 13). LGB sexualities and heterosexualities are seen not just as identity categories; rather, they are understood as categories of knowledge (about sex, gender, sexualities) which 'frame' and limit what we can and cannot 'know' and 'be'. Queer theory focuses on an analysis of the institutional practices and discourses which produce sexual knowledges, and on the ways these knowledges organise social life, shape moral boundaries and political hierarchies, and repress differences.

Queer undermines the notion that identities (man, woman, gay, straight) are fixed, natural, core phenomena, and therefore solid political ground. This challenge is central to queer analyses of sexuality. Any identity construction is seen as arbitrary, unstable, and exclusionary. So, instead of seeing the affirmation of identity as liberating, within queer theory, identity categories are viewed as, in part, disciplinary and regulatory structures. As Seidman (1996b: 12) puts it, "[i]dentity constructions function as templates defining selves and behaviours and therefore excluding a range of possible ways to frame the self, body, desires, actions, and social relations". Queer views collective identity categories as an obstacle to resistance and change, and seeks to deconstruct those categories and disrupt group boundaries. Partly because of this reluctance to categorise and be categorised, definitions of queer and what queer 'represents' are rendered somewhat evasive. Not surprisingly, therefore, there is no critical consensus on the definitional limits of 'queer'. However, queer's indeterminacy guarantees it against the kind of criticisms made about the identity categories 'lesbian' and 'gay', in terms of their exclusionist tendencies.

In *Gender Trouble* which, as she herself asserts, is often cited as "one of the founding texts of queer theory" (Butler, 1999: vii), Butler demonstrates the ways in which marginalised identities sustain the identificatory regimes they seek to counter. Butler theorises identity categories as "instruments of regulatory regimes,

whether as the normalising categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression” (Butler, 1991: 13-14). She develops Foucault’s thesis about the operations of power and resistance to explore gender and more specifically the category ‘woman’ in relation to feminist theories, exposing the naturalised and normative models of gender and heterosexuality. She considers gender in her analysis of sexual desires and relations, arguing that each is inextricably implicated in the other. She suggests that, rather than being the cultural extension of biological sex, gender is an ongoing discursive practice structured around the concept of heterosexuality as the norm of human sexual relations:

‘Intelligible’ genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity amongst sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire. In other words, the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the ‘expression’ or ‘effect’ of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice (Butler, 1999: 23).

For Butler, then, feminism works against its explicit aims if it takes ‘women’ as its grounding category; for, the category ‘woman’ does not represent a *natural* category but instead a *regulatory fiction* whose deployment reproduces normative relations between sex, gender and desire which, in turn, naturalise heterosexuality. This process, she suggests, results in a false association between apparently stable gender and biological sex. This apparent stability and coherence between biological sex and gender, Butler argues, masks the gender discontinuities within heterosexual, bisexual and gay and lesbian contexts. For:

The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of ‘identities’ cannot ‘exist’ – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not ‘follow’ from either sex or gender’ (Butler, 1999: 23-4).

Butler refigures gender as a cultural fiction, a performative effect of reiterative acts. She argues that the reason that “[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions

of gender; [is] that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1999: 33). Similarly, the ‘natural’ – and therefore needing no explanation – category of heterosexuality, is reframed by Butler as a discursive production of the sex/ gender system which claims merely to describe it (Jagose, 1996). Butler’s theory of gender performativity posits that rather than behaviour being *determined* by gender, the effect of gender is attained by the repeated patterns of particular bodily acts, gestures and movement which sustain gender norms. The process of repetition is “at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualised form of their legitimisation” (Butler, 1999: 178).

As Jagose (1996) has argued, Butler’s notion of performativity has often been reductively misread as ‘performance’ – implying that gender is something that is wilfully acted out or performed. Butler (1999: xv) has countered these kinds of misinterpretations, stressing that performativity is “not a singular act, but a repetition and ritual” bounded by cultural norms and taboos, which is constrained in and through these processes of repetition. Butler uses drag as an example of subversive, parodic gender performativity which, she suggests, exposes the imitative structure of gender itself, making us look again at what we think is natural in terms of gender identity. She suggests that “[t]he deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated” (Butler, 1999: 189). For Butler, therefore, the notion of gender performativity opens up the possibility for the subversion of gender norms and may therefore open up possibilities of resistance by “depriving the naturalising narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: ‘man’ and ‘woman’” (Butler, 1999: 187). This, she argues, opens up possibilities of resistance and subversion closed down by identity politics. As Spargo (1999: 57) contends, Butler’s theory of gender performativity thereby “literally destroys the grounds of political movements whose goal is the liberation of repressed or oppressed natures, whether gendered or sexual”.

1.5.4 Queer Politics

Postmodern understandings of the ways power and strategies of resistance are deployed, along with a growing acknowledgement of the limitations of identity has

led to a more pluralistic approach to politics. This shift is underpinned by the recognition that there is not a universal ‘story’ or ‘strategy’ that could work for *all* those within ‘the LGB community’. The fracturing of the myth of a ‘common LGB identity’ has seen a move away from *identity based* politics towards a more *issues based* political approach. In turn, this has resulted in a focus on ‘local solutions’ rather than ‘global change’. In other words, activists have focused their efforts on local sites of struggle and on achieving specific change, rather than universal transformations of social structures. For example, in the UK, Stonewall⁸ campaigned around issues such as the repeal of Section 28, the lowering of the age of consent for sex between men, and equal pension rights for same-sex couples. Similarly, new coalitions were formed between women and men on the basis of a shared commitment to fight AIDS and its construction as a ‘gay plague’, rather than on the basis of a shared, essential identity.

In addition to a move towards more issue based politics, the postmodern assumptions underpinning social constructionist and queer theorising of sexuality have been taken up by political activists resulting in a new ‘queer politics’, a politics marked by a reluctance to be categorised and a greater appreciation for fluidity of sexual expression. ‘Queer’ is most often deployed as “an umbrella term for dissimilar subjects, whose collectivity is underwritten by a mutual engagement in non-normative sexual practices or identities” (Jagose, 1996: 111-112). Queer describes, among others, ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’, ‘transgender’, and ‘transsexual’ individuals, and proposes a cohesion between individuals whilst simultaneously allowing for their difference. In this sense, queer comes to represent what has been called an “oxymoronic community of difference” (Louise Sloan, quoted by Jagose 1996: 112). Because of queer’s indeterminacy, it provides the site for a coalition of a potentially infinite number of ‘non-normative’ subject positions. Queer politics are therefore unlike traditional political movements founded on exclusionist identity categories.

Queer offers a comprehensive way of characterising all those whose sexuality places them in opposition to the “current normalising regime” (Warner, 1991: 16).

⁸ Stonewall is a political organisation in the UK which campaigns for LG’s civil and human rights

Queer politics stand in opposition to the inclusionary project of mainstream LGB politics, characterised as they are by “a rejection of civil-rights strategies in favour of a politics of carnival, transgression, and parody which leads to deconstruction, decentering, revisionist readings, and an anti-assimilationist politics” (Stein and Plummer, 1996: 134). The use of the term ‘queer’, it is argued, is an act of linguistic reclamation, in the sense that the traditionally pejorative term is appropriated by the ‘stigmatised’ group to whom it refers, in order to negate the term’s power to harm. Some, however, object to the reclamation of the term, because it is seen to represent the language of the oppressor (Gamson, 1995). For some, ‘queer’ is preferable to LG because it is gender neutral, although, in turn, lesbian feminists have criticised queer for being insensitive to differences of gender. For example, Wolfe and Penelope (1993: 5) argue, “[w]e [cannot] afford to allow privileged patriarchal discourse (of which poststructuralism is but a new variant) to erase the collective identity Lesbians have only recently begun to establish”. Others advocate queer because it serves as shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender, etc.. Again, this ‘inclusive’ use of the term has been critiqued for subsuming and hiding internal differences, in attempting to be multi-sexual multi-gendered and multi-cultural (Seidman, 1993). In practice, queer describes an often confrontational and provocative form of grass roots activism, embodied in organisations such as ACT UP and Queer Nation in the US, and Outrage in the UK (Epstein, 1996). Queer organisations such as these (amongst others) have engaged in direct action (e.g., same-sex kiss-ins held in straight bars; ‘outing’ closeted public figures, such as politicians, clergymen, etc. who were ‘known’ to ‘be’ LGB), claiming that such activities work simultaneously to affirm difference and to challenge conventional norms.

Queer represents a move to undermine and deconstruct the dominant naturalised system of sexual hierarchy that categorises and stabilises sexual desires and identities, privileging some over others. This process of deconstruction questions the natural and taken for granted status of ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ (as well as ‘heterosexual’) identities. Queer and issue based politics attempt to avoid the exclusionary tendencies of identity based politics of representation. However, as Duggan (1992) has argued, there is a danger that if queer is reified into yet another identity category with its own enforced (if contested) boundaries, queer politics will

simply become another variant of identity politics. Further, queer has been problematised by some who are concerned that the ambiguity over what or who it refers to may lead to queer being appropriated by “those whose sexual practices or identities [e.g. paedophiles] are understood as antithetical to the broadly progressive politics traditionally articulated by lesbians and gay men” (Jagose, 1996: 113).

Perhaps the most frequently cited objection to queer and issue based politics is voiced by those who believe that collective identity is a prerequisite for collective action. Anti-queer pragmatists argue that there is a need to identify as a group, with clear membership criteria, in order to make political gains. To be ‘seen’ demands some identity, even if that identity is culturally scripted. Further criticisms have been levelled at queer’s anti-assimilationist stance by some who argue that the queer strategy of deconstruction does little to challenge regulatory institutions such as medicine and law which create and reinforce systems of LGB oppression. Assimilationists argue that because queer demands are not channelled through the legitimate institutions of power, queer politics are too naive and idealistic to be effective.

Additionally, the postmodern, queer movement to deconstruct identity has been criticised for appearing to deny the reality of LGB experiences. It is argued that by undermining the notion of lesbian and gay identity groups as essential and real, this prevents the advancement of group history and solidarity and fails to accommodate individuals’ needs to locate, understand and legitimate their places in the world (Epstein, 1987). Individuals do not generally experience their sexual identities as socially constructed, and often experience their own sexuality as stable (e.g. Blumstein and Schwartz, 1977) and essential (Richardson, 1981b). The celebration of difference, otherness and outsidership and the disruption of (a potentially protective and reassuring) collective identity is, it might be argued, a political strategy more easily accessed by and attractive to those in relatively privileged and powerful positions – rather than by more vulnerable others seeking acceptance.

Whilst, then, critics have alleged that queer politics undermines LGB affirmative theory and politics, queer activists have argued that they aim “not to abandon identity as a category of knowledge and politics but to render it permanently open

and contestable as to its meaning and political role. In other words, decisions about identity categories become pragmatic, related to concerns of situational advantage, political gain, and conceptual utility” (Seidman, 1996b: 12). Weeks (1991: viii), for example, describes sexual identities as “necessary fictions”, whilst Jagose (1996:126) suggests, identity politics are unlikely to disappear under the influence of queer, although they are likely to become “more nuanced ... and more attuned to those multiple compromises and pragmatic effects that characterise *any* mobilisation of identity”. As Epstein (1996: 156) posits, queer does not necessarily signal the abolition of identity politics, rather it seeks to “maintain identity and difference in productive tension, and to rely on notions of identity and identity politics for their strategic utility while remaining vigilant against reification”.

1.5.5 Queer Practice

The postmodern retheorising of identity and difference and the rejection of absolute truths has reinforced the need for plurality in LGB theorising and approaches to therapy. This has led to a gradual recognition that no single therapeutic model can serve the needs of, or account for the experiences of, all LGBs.

Traditional (modernist) psychological therapies often entail finding out ‘the truth’ about a client or what is ‘really going on’ with them. Postmodern understandings of ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ suggest that our understanding of our own and others’ experiences are shaped and limited by the ways we have available to make sense of the world. So, from a postmodernist perspective, accounts generated within therapy are viewed not as ‘the truth’ but as constructed versions of clients’ experiences. Further, whereas psychological theories are often understood from a modernist perspective to represent reliable systems of knowledge or truths, postmodernist accounts treat all theories as ideas or narratives which may privilege certain ideas over others and which are more or less helpful for different people in different contexts (White 1991). From this perspective, then, therapists are no longer viewed as the guardians of exclusive expertise or truths.

Whilst some have taken postmodern notions of relativity to mean that all ‘truths’ are equally valid, others, such as White (1991), have stressed that not all stories are equal and that some stories are better than others in terms of the effects they may

have on individuals or on broader systems such as 'the family' or 'society'. The implication for therapy is that particular stories are understood to have different effects. What becomes important, then, is not the 'accuracy' of a particular description of circumstances, but the effect of that description. This leads to a consideration of how particular descriptions, thoughts and accounts might be more or less useful. From this perspective, therapy is less about 'curing' 'dysfunctional' individuals and more about exploring how clients' often negative and fixed accounts of themselves may act to constrain them. Therapy becomes a context for generating different accounts which may be more enabling and liberating for clients.

Michael White (1991) has suggested that therapy might involve deconstructing the negative and fixed descriptions of themselves or their practices that clients often enter therapy with, thereby opening up space for other descriptions and meanings to emerge. He describes deconstruction as being:

to do with procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called 'truths' that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production, those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of persons' lives (White, 1991: 27).

Further, White (1991) argues that therapeutic practice should go beyond the deconstruction of ideas, and should endeavour to develop alternative counter practices and preferred practices of self and relationship. Social constructionist therapists Gail Simon and Gwyn Whitfield (2000) have developed some of these ideas in their therapeutic work with LGBs. They argue that:

social constructionist therapy offers a coherent framework for therapeutic work with lesbians, gay men and bisexuals because it pays attention to practices of power and challenges assumptions about pathology, sexuality, gender and life choices. It strives to promote a reflexive, co-constructive working relationship in which therapist and client(s) can deconstruct the assumptions in the stories each brings and reflect on the effects of those ideas (Simon and Whitfield, 2000: 145).

For Simon and Whitfield (2000), social constructionist therapy resonates with queer theory because it seeks to disrupt power relations by acknowledging, deconstructing and challenging dominant, institutionalised and oppressive discourses and practices. Social constructionist therapy focuses on the construction of meanings between people in particular contexts and the ways these meanings emerge. This involves exploring the narratives through which individuals' ideas about themselves, their choices, and their 'realities' are constructed and considering alternative, more enabling constructions. A central premise of social constructionist therapy is that: "people are recruited into particular stories by more dominant discourses at the expense of other descriptions which might be differently useful" (Simon and Whitfield, 2000: 144; see also Warner, 2000b). Social constructionist therapy provides an opportunity to reflect on the process of identifying as LGB, to explore the meanings of descriptions which we tend to take for granted and to develop different accounts of 'what it means' to be LGB.

1.6 Summary and Outline of the Aims of the Current Study

In this literature review I have traced the ways modernist and postmodernist perspectives have produced varying discursive constructions of LGB sexualities. In particular, I have demonstrated the limitations of modernist approaches to theorising LGB sexualities. In this concluding part of the introduction I have explored the implications of, and rationale behind, adopting a postmodern approach in my research. Finally, I set out the framework and aims of the present study.

As discussed, one of the key tenets of postmodernism is the belief that there is no 'absolute truth' to be discovered - no single, definitive account of the world. Because reality is understood to be socially constructed rather than naturally existing the emphasis in postmodern accounts, and in this study, is on the co-existence of a multiplicity of meanings. The postmodern retheorising of LGB sexualities as provisional and contingent has highlighted the limitations of fixed, essential, modernist constructions of identity for understanding sexuality. It is argued here, then, that it is necessary to adopt a postmodern approach in order to allow the plurality and mutability of identity to emerge.

As the review of the postmodern literature on sexuality in the latter part of this chapter has demonstrated, whilst there has been a wealth of postmodern *theorising* of sexuality (social constructionist and queer theory), there has been relatively little exploration of the implications of postmodern theorising in *research* and *practice*. In researching the experiences of young LGBs from a social constructionist perspective, this study seeks both to add to the emergent body of postmodern research, and to consider how postmodern understandings might contribute to progressive clinical practice which takes account of multiple ways of understanding LGB sexualities. This study is underpinned by the belief that sexuality is socially constructed and that there is not a *single* story or truth to be told about sexual identity. Given this, I argue that it is both legitimate and necessary to explore the ways young people construct their own stories and narratives about their experiences and themselves as LGB. I argue that this will be important in terms of informing current theorising of LGB sexualities, but significantly, that it may also have important implications for clinical practice.

In this study I do not attempt to uncover and present ‘the facts’ about the participants and/ or young LGBs in general, in terms of what the interviewees ‘are really like’, what they do or think, now or in the past. Rather, the aim is to consider how participants construct their experiences and their sense of self. The particular focus is on the ways young LGBs negotiate the process of describing their sexual identity by drawing on the available social constructs and ways of understanding LGB sexualities. My focus, therefore, is on the accounts provided by the interviewees. These accounts are accepted and explored as interesting and illuminating in their own right rather than being compared to a preconceived notion of what I believe young LGBs are ‘really like’. The central aims of this study are, therefore, to:

1. Identify the narratives that young LGBs draw on in constructing a ‘LGB identity’, specifically in terms of coming out stories.
2. Analyse these narratives in terms of their social, cultural and individual functions.
3. Consider the implications for clinical practice, training and services and for broader cultural contexts and institutions which shape discourses of sexuality.

The study is framed by these general aims and objectives, rather than specific hypotheses. My aims are intentionally broad because I hope to avoid imposing limitations on the number and range of stories which may be generated within the interviews. The expectation is that by adopting such an approach a multiplicity of accounts will be generated.

Chapter 2 - Method

Initially in this section the rationale for adopting a qualitative and, in particular discourse analytic, approach to the research is outlined. The research process for the current study is then described in detail.

2.1. Research Design

2.1.1 Epistemological Framework

The social constructionist perspective from which this study is undertaken has framed decisions about the research design and methodology adopted. Below, the question of why a qualitative methodology and, specifically, a discourse analytic approach, was considered appropriate for this particular study are outlined. As Henwood and Pidgeon (1992: 100) argue “methods are not so much valid in and of themselves, but rather will be more or less useful for particular research purposes”. I argue not only that particular ways of ‘doing’ research (methods) determine the kinds of answers that will be obtained, but also that the choice of methodology should be informed by and be conceptually consistent with the underpinning epistemological framework. The particular characteristics of qualitative methods which, I argue, are conceptually consistent with a social constructionist approach are outlined below.

A number of factors were influential in electing to use a qualitative methodology within a social constructionist framework. A key feature of qualitative approaches is that the research process is not dictated, although it may be informed by, *a priori* theory (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992). Much of the psychological literature on LGB sexualities discussed in the introduction section arose out of attempts to ‘prove’ or ‘disprove’ theories that construct LGB sexualities as a mental illness (Kitzinger 1987). More recently, in the ‘gay affirmative literature’, the focus has shifted to developing and testing theories regarding what it is to be a ‘normal’, ‘healthy’ LGB and, in the context of research on homophobia, what are ‘normal’, ‘healthy’ attitudes for heterosexuals to hold about LGB sexualities (Kitzinger, 1987).

By adopting a qualitative methodology, I was not restricted by pre-existing theoretical assumptions regarding LGB sexualities and was able to pursue different, more exploratory avenues of enquiry. In particular, I argue that this approach was likely to facilitate the emergence of multiple accounts of understanding LGB experiences in the interviews. Additionally, this also allowed participants greater scope to talk about what is important to them, and thereby determine the focus/ foci of interest, rather than it being determined by my own pre-conceived notions. As a result, I suggest that qualitative approaches have considerable potential for generating new or different ways of conceptualising the phenomena under study. It has been suggested that qualitative methods are particularly useful in areas where theories about phenomena of interest are incomplete, non-existent or out-dated (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992).

A further feature of qualitative approaches that underlined their potential appropriateness for this study is that they enable researchers to work with rich and complex data, the sort of material that might, for example, be produced in a clinical interview (Harper and Warner, 1993). In the course of their contact with their clients, clinical psychologists (and other health and caring professionals) are almost invariably working with complex, qualitative issues. Qualitative research, therefore, has the potential to consider issues in a way that may be more relevant to clinical practice. The need for psychological research which is relevant and applicable to clinical practice is particularly significant given the current emphasis on clinical governance and evidence-based practice in the NHS (e.g., the White Paper, *The New NHS, Modern and Dependable* (HMSO, 1997)).

2.1.2 Methodology – Qualitative Approaches

The qualitative paradigm encompasses a variety of different approaches and methodologies. There are, however, a number of characteristics which might be considered to be central or defining tenets of qualitative research. Qualitative research is generally conducted in a naturalistic, rather than a controlled or laboratory, setting (Smith, Harré and van Langenhove, 1995). In naturalistic research the way in which research activity inevitably shapes and constitutes the object of inquiry and the interdependence of the researcher and the researched, as contributors to the research process, is acknowledged (Henwood and Pidgeon,

1992). Data tends to be non-numeric and may include any form of written or spoken material (e.g., interview transcripts, or recordings of ‘natural’ conversations) as well as other symbolic systems (e.g., art, film, or sign language) (Parker and The Bolton Discourse Network, 1999). Other characteristics of qualitative research include a view of research as an approach to theorising which privileges the emergence of concepts from the data, as opposed to theoretical concepts being imposed on the data through the testing of *a priori* theory (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992).

Debates on methodological approaches to research within psychology have often focused upon the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative methods. However, as Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) suggest: “qualitative and quantitative research procedures are but different forms of the analytic practice of re-representation in science, in that both seek to arrange and rearrange the complexities of ‘raw’ data” (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992: 99). The difference between the approaches lies in the way that they go about re-representing this complexity and in what is perceived to constitute “legitimate inquiry and warrantable knowledge” (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992: 98).

Traditional quantitative approaches, by definition, entail taking the phenomenon under study and devising a way of reducing or simplifying it so that it can be measured, manipulated and presented in numerical form. Quantitative approaches are generally located within the paradigms of realism, positivism, experimentalism, and hypothetico-deductivism. In contrast, qualitative approaches emanate from naturalistic, contextual, or interpretivist paradigms. Importance is placed on viewing the meaning of experience and behaviour in context and in its full complexity, and the focus is on exploring and offering interpretations of these complexities. Meanings are considered variable and negotiable in relation to their context of use (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992).

2.1.3 Methodology – A Discourse Analytic Approach

One reason for employing a discourse analytic approach in this study, as discussed, relates to the social constructionist epistemological framework. Given that the uses and effects of language are central to the social constructionist approach, discourse analysis, a form of social enquiry which takes language as its focus of interest, has

an obvious relevance (Burr, 1995). A number of other aspects of discourse analysis resonate with a social constructionist perspective. For example, discourse analysis aims to produce a useful and coherent account or constructed analysis of a text, rather than to ‘discover’ the ‘truth’ (Gill, 1996). Discourse analysis was deemed particularly appropriate, therefore, given the belief underpinning this study that there is no *single* story to be told about sexual identity, but that there are multiple stories to be told. This approach contrasts with, for example, grounded theory, which social constructionists have critiqued for its realist claims to ‘discover’ theory, and its associated implication that there is an external reality to be discovered (Pidgeon, 1996). As discussed in the introduction to this study, I do not seek to ‘uncover’ and present the ‘facts’ about LGBs, rather I attempt to generate multiple accounts of how young LGBs describe and construct their experiences and sense of self through their talk. The role that I as the researcher have in producing a particular reading of those accounts is acknowledged in discourse analysis. This is, again, in line with a social constructionist understanding of the role of values in research, and the associated critique of modernist notions of ‘scientific objectivity’. From a social constructionist perspective, it is impossible for the researcher to become completely detached from the social world in which she/ he exists. In other words as, Harper and Warner (1993: 73) argue, “accounts, world-views and discourses do not simply reflect the social world, rather they construct it. Thus any attempt to investigate the social world necessarily involves the researcher in its construction”. Again, this points to discourse analysis as being a more appropriate methodological approach to the research, than, for example, grounded theory which fails to theorise the role of the researcher in constructing an account of the data (e.g., Charmaz, 1990).

A further factor which pointed to the use of discourse analysis as an appropriate approach to this study, which became clearer to me as I became better acquainted with discourse analysis, was its potential relevance to clinical practice. Discourse analysis draws attention to the effects of talking about issues or events in a particular way. In my experience, as a clinical psychologist, I spend a considerable amount of time engaged in talking to people (clients, their families, other professionals, etc.) Indeed many psychological assessments and interventions rely, at least in part and sometimes exclusively, on talking and listening to people. In this

sense, an awareness of how different ways of speaking about something can create different effects and generate different meanings would seem to have an obvious relevance to clinical practice.

There are a variety of different approaches to 'doing' discourse analysis (Gill 1996). The approach adopted for this study, which is outlined below, is based on that elaborated by Potter and Wetherell (1987). Gill (1996) identifies four features central to discourse analysis. First, discourse analytic approaches take as their focus the content and organisation of language, discourses or texts in their own right. This is in contrast to the realist position traditionally adopted within psychology in which language is viewed as a neutral vehicle of communication or representation, through which it is possible to gain access to underlying psychological processes and states such as attitudes, cognitions, and emotions. Second, from a discourse analytic perspective, language is seen as constructing social and psychological 'worlds'. It is suggested that when we speak, we choose from a range of available, pre-existing discourses or linguistic resources to construct one of many possible versions of events. It is held that discourse does not take place in a social vacuum, and the choice of one description over others will be influenced by contextual factors and the orientation of the speaker/ writer (Potter, Wetherell, Gill, and Edwards, 1990). Thirdly, discourse is viewed as a social practice, and one of the aims of discourse analysis is to identify the functions of discourses and to examine how they are performed (Gill, 1996). Lastly, it is suggested that talk and texts are often acting to establish one version of the world over others, and discourse analysis considers the ways in which discourses are organised rhetorically (Billig, 1987).

2.1.4 Interviewing as a Research Tool

Interviews are a frequently used means of gathering information within social research (Breakwell, 1995). The ways in which interviews are conducted and the status accorded to the data produced varies according to the nature of the research and the researcher's epistemological position (Smith, 1995; Silverman, 1993). For example, within a positivist, realist approach, interviews may be seen as a means to access 'reality' or 'fact'. Interviews conducted within this framework might tend to follow a structured format with the aim of maximising the reliability and validity of the research findings, and enabling comparisons across different interviews. A

social constructionist approach emphasises the fact that interview data is gathered through an interactive process (between the researcher and the participant) where meanings are negotiated within a particular social context, that of a research interview. Within this framework less structured interviews may be preferred.

For the purposes of this study, data were gathered using a semi-structured interview. Compared with structured interviews, the use of a semi-structured interview provides the researcher with the flexibility to probe interesting areas that emerge during the interview and to follow the interviewee's interests or concerns (Smith, 1995), which again is conceptually consistent with the social constructionist perspective adopted for this study. Further, it has been suggested that when a research interview is used to collect data on potentially sensitive areas where painful memories and emotions may be elicited, the use of basic counselling skills (e.g., paraphrasing, reflecting, summarising, and clarifying questions) and the Rogerian counselling attributes of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1951) can enhance the possibility of open and honest discussion, whilst reducing the chances of major distress occurring (Coyle, Good and Wright, 1994). These issues seemed particularly pertinent given that some of the areas covered within the interviews were thought to be potentially (though not necessarily) sensitive, such as questions about the reactions of family to disclosure of sexual identity. The flexibility afforded by a semi-structured interview format enables the researcher to incorporate the aforementioned counselling techniques into the interview and to interact more freely and empathetically with the interviewee. With this in mind, my clinical experience of counselling young people proved to be valuable.

The flexibility of semi-structured interviews is achieved at the cost of ensuring comparability across interviews (Breakwell, 1995). However, the use of an interview schedule can assist the interviewer in ensuring that interviews with different participants cover roughly the same key areas. Given that the issue of comparability was not of relevance to the current study, and that I wanted to maximise the opportunity for interviewees to talk about areas and experiences that they felt were significant, a semi-structured interview was chosen.

2.2 The Present Study

2.2.1 About the Researcher

At the time the interviews were conducted (November 1998 - May 1999) I was in my final year of clinical psychology training. To date (June 2001) I have had seven years of clinical experience in a variety of settings within the National Health Service. During this time I have developed a specific interest in working with children, adolescents and their families. Since November 1999, I have been working in a Community Child and Adolescent Clinical Psychology Service. My clinical practice is informed by a number of theoretical perspectives including, in particular, systemic and community psychology approaches and attachment theory. In terms of research experience, I had completed a number of pieces of quantitative research as an undergraduate, (e.g., Engel, 1994) and during my doctoral training course. Prior to this study, however, I had limited experience of qualitative research and no experience of conducting a discourse analytic study.

In addition to the social constructionist position outlined in the ‘Introduction’ section, my assumptions were informed by a critical review of literature relevant to the area of study, as well as by personal and professional experiences. The factors outlined below informed my decision-making process regarding the focus of the research and how it was conducted.

A fundamental personal perspective informing the research arose out of my belief that LGB sexualities are ‘normal’, healthy variations on the continuum of human sexuality. Additionally, my initial ideas about the research were informed both by my own experiences as a gay woman living in a predominantly heterosexist society and, in particular, through the experience of having questioned and then gradually accepted my sexuality as a young person. Whilst, on reflection, this later process was by no means exclusively negative it was, at the time, generally experienced as being confusing, isolating, and difficult to talk about. Additionally, my conversations with other LGBs indicated that many had shared these kinds of experiences as they had questioned and/ or come to accept their sexuality. Further, I found these themes also emerged in my review of the literature considering young LGBs.

On a professional level, as a clinical psychologist in training it has been my experience that a consideration of LGBs' experiences have been almost entirely absent from the curriculum, as they are from a number of psychological theories /models (e.g., Erikson's Eight Stages of Man). In terms of my experience as a clinician, a general lack of awareness on the part of some colleagues about issues raised in connection with LGB sexualities has been evident. This has taken a number of forms, including colleagues making heterosexist assumptions about clients and their families, problematising a client's LGB status, making homophobic comments and demonstrating a lack of knowledge about LGB 'cultures', 'communities' and 'lifestyles'. Further, in my seven years of clinical experience, only three clients have identified themselves as LGB to me. This caused me to consider whether clinical psychology services are accessible to and meet the needs of LGBs.

2.2.2 Ethical Issues and Procedures

One of the key ethical considerations for this study was the issue of confidentiality. A number of measures were taken to protect the anonymity of participants. The audio tapes of interviews were kept in a locked filing cabinet and the all references to names, dates, places and any other material which might lead the participants to be identified were edited out of the transcripts. All participants were given pseudonyms. The need to record the interviews was explained to participants, and the procedures for protecting their anonymity were explained to them. Additionally, in order that participants were in a position to give their *informed* consent to participate in the research I tried to ensure that they were aware of relevant issues such as the purpose of the research, what would be involved and how it would be conducted, the number of participants, the time it was likely to take, what would happen to the material collected and, the nature of my involvement in the issue as the researcher. This involved meeting with potential participants to discuss the nature and purpose of the research and providing these details in writing. As part of this process I also provided potential participants with a copy of the interview schedule (without prompts) to give them a clear idea about the issues I intended to cover in the interviews (see Appendices 1 and 6). This process was guided and informed by the British Psychological Society's ethical principles documents (1997; 1993) and the Data Protection Act (1998).

Further ethical issues were raised because the participants were young, potentially vulnerable people and there was a potential for issues around child protection to arise. The Children Act (1989) provided the legal framework for responding to any child protection issues raised during the research. Additionally, for the one participant in the study who was under the age of sixteen as well as obtaining the participant's own informed consent, I obtained that of a legal guardian.

As Mason has argued, the rich and detailed nature of qualitative research often involves intimate engagement with the public and private lives of participants (Mason, 1996). Further, I was also aware that some of the areas being discussed in the research were potentially sensitive and might raise distressing issues for participants. These concerns led me to set time aside at the end of the interviews to allow participants to reflect on the experience. Participants were asked how they felt and whether the interview had raised any issues or problems which they felt they would like to talk through or needed support with. I also gave participants my contact details so they could contact me should issues arise after the interview. Additionally, I explained to participants that, should they feel the need for further support, I would recommend appropriate professional support (providing names, and contact numbers/ addresses) and, should they wish to, help them to access a local service which provided support to young people. Other precautions taken in relation to this issues included ensuring that participants were aware that they did not have to answer all the questions, that the interview/ recording of the interview would be stopped at any time, at their request, and that they had the right to withdraw at any time from the research.

The research proposal for the current study was submitted to and approved by the University of Leicester Department of Psychology Research Sub-Committee.

2.2.3 Procedure – Data Collection

2.2.3.1 *Recruitment and selection of participants*

Participants in this study were contacted through a social and support group for young (under twenty six years old) LGBs and people questioning their sexuality. The group takes place within a larger support service for people aged fourteen to twenty six in a central location in a medium sized city in England, UK (further

details of location are not provided due to the need to protect the confidentiality of participants). Initial contact was made with the group via one of the group co-ordinators. I explained the aims of the research and what participation in the study would involve. Additionally, I discussed issues relating to the precautions that would be made to ensure the confidentiality of participants, my personal and professional motivations for doing the study, and how, where, and to what ends the findings would be presented and disseminated. The group co-ordinator agreed to consult with group members as to whether they were interested in participating in the research. Written information regarding the research and myself was sent to the co-ordinators to distribute to group members (Appendix 1). A number of group members agreed in principle to participate in the study. I attended a group meeting to meet and talk with group members about the research and to answer any questions they had. Prospective participants were told that they could contact me individually if they had any further concerns or questions about any aspect of the research. Group members were then asked to consider whether they would be willing to be interviewed for the study. I attended group meetings over a 6 month period, in order to get enough participants for the study. The interviews were conducted between November 1998 and May 1999.

2.2.3.2 *Criteria for inclusion in the study*

Participants were recruited from within this group on the basis of their interest in, and willingness to participate in the study. A requirement for participation in the study was that participants either *self-identified* as LGB, or were questioning their sexuality. As the research explicitly focuses on the experiences of young people, I chose to exclude individuals over the age of twenty five from the study. Aside from obtaining an equal gender distribution, participants were not selected on the basis of demographic variables. All group members who expressed an interest in participating in the study were interviewed (a total of nine). One of the interviews was not included in the study as the quality of the tape recording was such that it was inaudible.

2.2.3.3 *The participants*

Nine young people, four male and five female, aged between fifteen to twenty five took part in this study. All the participants lived in a medium sized city in England,

UK. Participants had been attending the group for varying lengths of time ranging from three months to five years. Four of the five women described their sexuality as gay or lesbian (including the participant whose interview could not be included in the study) and one as bisexual. Of the male participants, three described their sexuality as gay and one as bisexual. Further demographic information is presented in Appendix 2.

2.2.3.4 *The interview*

Development of the interview questions

Data were gathered using a semi-structured interview. A draft interview schedule (Appendix 3) was designed with the aim of eliciting participants' accounts and was organised around the following broad areas:

- Self identity
- Family relationships
- Peer relationships
- Romantic/ sexual relationships
- Support and coping
- Experience of contact with LGB others (direct and indirect, e.g., media representations)
- Experience of discrimination, prejudice, abuse relating to sexual preference
- Participants' views about LGB sexualities
- Participants' feelings about doing the interview

Piloting the draft schedule

In an attempt to maximise the chances of the research focusing on the interests and experiences of young LGBs, as opposed to my own preconceived interests or assumptions, I contacted another support group for young LGBs in a different city (again via the group co-ordinator) and arranged to meet with interested group members to ask for their opinions on the draft. Group members were given written (Appendix 4) and verbal information about the research and myself. They were then provided with a copy of the draft interview schedule including prompts (Appendix 3) and asked to comment on it. Specifically, they were asked whether there were issues of importance or relevance to them that were not covered in the interview

schedule; whether there were questions that were unclear; and whether there were questions that they felt should be omitted. This process was conducted as a group discussion although some individuals chose to write comments on the schedule in addition to, or instead of, participating in the discussion. A brief summary of this group's feedback on the draft interview schedule is included as Appendix 5. A number of modifications were made to the interview schedule on the basis of the comments and suggestions made, particularly in terms of reducing the length of the interview. Specifically, questions relating to experiences of discrimination, prejudice or abuse relating to sexual preference, and participants' views about LGB sexualities were omitted. It was felt that these issues were likely to emerge in the context of other questions during the interview, such as those about reactions to disclosure of LGB identity, and about the way participants felt when they first realised they might be LGB. The revised interview schedule is presented in Appendix 6. Additionally, I arranged to pilot the interview schedule with one of the members of this group in order to see how the interview worked in practice. Unfortunately, this had to be postponed and actually took place after I had conducted the first interview included in this study. Nevertheless, this proved a useful in terms of gaining experience of interviewing. Further, because the process of data collection and analysis within discourse analysis should occur simultaneously and inform one another, it was anticipated that the semi-structured interview schedule would be modified throughout the research process.

Participants were also asked a set of basic demographic questions at the beginning of the interview which related to: gender; age; relationship status; disability status; employment status; social class; racial/ ethnic identity; religious identity; where they lived; who they lived with; other places they had lived; estimates of how much money they had to spend on leisure activities/ socialising. This information was collected in order to provide readers with information about who participated in the study, and was recorded on a form (Appendix 7). Subsequent to the interviews, participants were also asked how long they had been attending the group.

During the course of conducting the interviews a number of further changes were made to the interview schedule. In particular, I gained a sense of which questions participants found to be difficult to answer. In later interviews these questions were

asked towards the end of the interview. Additionally, during the early interviews a number of issues that were not specifically covered by the interview schedule were raised by participants. For example, some participants talked about not knowing what it meant to be LGB. In subsequent interviews I referred to this issue if it had not already come up in the context of other questions. These changes were informed by my experience of conducting the earlier interviews and from listening to the tapes, the process of transcription and the early stages of analysis. This is illustrative of the circular nature of discourse analytic research, in which the processes of data collection and analysis may occur simultaneously (e.g., Tindall, 1994).

Interview procedure

Interviews were conducted in a private room within the building where the group met, and at the same time as group meetings. The hope was that participants would feel more comfortable being interviewed in a setting they were familiar with. At the beginning of the interview participants were given written and verbal information about the researcher and the aims of the research, and about the interview (Appendices 1 and 8) Participants were invited to ask any questions or express any concerns they may have had regarding the research or interview process. I then sought confirmation of participants' agreement to tape record the interview, and two consent forms were signed, one for myself and one for the participant to keep (Appendix 9). In addition to information regarding the confidential treatment of information provided by participants, the consent form also included my contact address. In the case of one of the participants who was fifteen at the time the interview was conducted, parental consent was obtained in addition to the participant's consent. The parent was provided with written information about myself and the nature of the research (Appendix 10) and was requested to sign two consent forms (one to keep and one for myself) (Appendix 11).

I began the interview by asking for basic demographic information from participants and recording their answers on the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 7). It was intended that asking for straightforward information such as this would help put participants at ease. Following this, the tape recorder was started and I began to ask questions, using the interview schedule as a guide to refer

to if required. Interviews lasted between an hour and a quarter and an hour and three quarters. At the end of the interviews, time was set aside to give the participants time to reflect both on the process of being interviewed and their feelings at the end of it.

2.2.3.5 *Data management*

Eight individual interview transcripts provided the raw data for the study. All information that might have led to participants being identified was changed or omitted and each participant was given a pseudonym. The audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim using a reduced and modified version of the Jeffersonian system (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). This included speech errors, overlapping speech, interruptions (e.g., Mmm), and gross changes of emphasis and volume. Pauses were indicated in the transcript but were not timed. A glossary of transcription notations is provided in Appendix 12. The decision regarding what level of detail was appropriate was influenced in part by pragmatic considerations regarding the amount of time available for the study and my experience in the use of transcription systems, and also by the focus of the research. The fully annotated interview transcripts are presented as an addendum. However, with the aim of making the transcripts easier to read, speech errors, pauses, and interruptions were removed from the interview material presented within the main body of this study. As well as making the extracts from the interview texts easier to read, it was felt that, given that the emphasis of my analysis was on eliciting the discourses and narratives that participants draw on in constructing their accounts, rather than a more detailed analysis of speech patterns and conversational devices, it was felt that a reduced transcription scheme would be most appropriate (Kvalé, 1996).

2.2.4 Procedure - Analysis

The process of analysing the data involved the following stages: careful reading and interpretation of the texts leading to the initial coding and categorisation of the data; identifying discursive patterns and meta-narratives within the data and; analysing these narratives in terms of their social, cultural and individual functions and effects. These stages are described in detail below. This is followed by a reflexive account about how these different stages of analysis were achieved.

The eight interviews produced two hundred and ten pages of transcription. The coding process began with the close examination of the text. This involved me reading and re-reading the interview transcripts several times. I then organised sections of transcript into categories, some of which were based on the themes which the interview schedule was organised around, and some on additional themes which emerged through the interviewing process. This process was similar to the procedure of open coding in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), which involves naming and categorising phenomena through close examination of the data. This was done at the level of sentences and paragraphs rather than the line by line coding advocated by grounded theorists (e.g., Charmaz, 1990). One reason for this was the importance of reading a piece of text within its discursive context. That is to say that what precedes and follows a passage may provide crucial clues to its meaning and function (Coyle, 1995).

The initial stage of this process produced thirty five categories (see Figure 1).

-Access	-Bisexuality	-Coming out	-Not telling
-Coping	-Describing own	-Confused	-Family reactions
-Education	sexuality	-Disability	-Initial feelings
-Feelings now	-Homophobia	-Media	e.g., isolation
-Natural/ normal	-Socialisation	-Knowing other	-Law
-Peers	-Scene	LGBs	-Meeting other
-Support	-Different identities	-Stereotypes	LGBs
-Other significant	-Internalised	-Mental Health	-Sex
life experiences	homophobia	-Parenting	-Relationships
-Passing	-Impact on self	-Positives	-Interview
		-Miscellaneous	

Figure 1. Initial 35 Categories.

These categories were based largely on a 'taken for granted' reading of the content of what was being said, and represented the very early stages of my attempts to make sense of the data. Some of these categories related to specific institutions or contexts. So, for example, all incidents where participants referred to school/ college, the law or the media were grouped together. Others represented recurring references to feeling states (e.g., confusion, depression, isolation); experiences (e.g., rejection, homophobic abuse, supportive experiences); or behaviour (e.g., disclosure

of sexual orientation, monitoring behaviour/ 'passing'). Additionally some of these initial categories related more to participants' use of language, for example, the use of normalising discourses and refuting stereotypes.

Passages of text that appeared 'borderline', in terms of whether they 'belonged' in a particular category were included. Several authors writing about discourse analysis advocate being as inclusive as possible at this stage of the analysis, suggesting that this makes it possible to "discern less obvious but none the less fruitful lines of enquiry." (Coyle, 1995: 248; see also Gill, 1996; Potter and Wetherell, 1995) Additionally, some passages appeared in more than one category. For example, the following passage was coded under the categories of 'school' and 'law'.

I also think Section 28 has had a big part in it as well. Ever since that was enforced, schools can't help you they can only hinder you (Robert: 689-691).

The second phase of the coding process involved collapsing the initial thirty five categories into six broader categories (see Figure 2). This involved examining the initial categories and grouping categories that were conceptually related. Again this was carried out in an over-inclusive manner and some passages were placed in more than one category. This process was useful, in that it involved identifying recurrent themes and also entailed moving to a higher level of abstraction for the concepts involved.

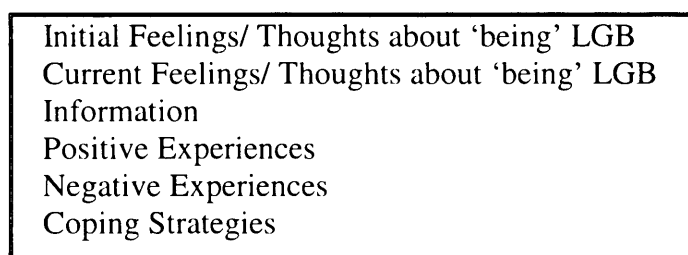


Figure 2. The 6 Broader Categories.

The process of coding and categorisation provided a way of sorting and sifting through the mass of data, rendering it more manageable and facilitating the next stage of the analysis. Additionally, as it entailed reading the transcripts repeatedly, it also resulted in me becoming intimately acquainted with the data. However,

having completed this second stage of the analysis, in reflecting on my analysis I found that the categories I had arrived at (Figures 1 and 2) were issue or content based, rather than being organised around the discourses and narratives that the participants were drawing on in their discussions of those issues. In retrospect, this was probably a reflection of my inexperience as a ‘discourse analyst’, and my tendency to ‘slip back’ into more traditional psychological modes of thinking about the texts by, for example, interpreting participants’ talk as an indicator of their underlying attitudes.

The next stage of the analysis, as described in the literature on discourse analysis, involved identifying recurrent discursive patterns within the data. This took the form of looking for features shared by accounts as well as differences in both the content and form of accounts, and ultimately identifying discourses or ‘metanarratives’. I use the term discourse to refer to a “systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors and so on that construct an object in a particular way” (Burr, 1995: 184). The term ‘metanarrative’ refers to broader groups of conceptually related discourses. In this sense, the term ‘metanarrative’ is similar to Potter and Wetherell’s concept of ‘interpretative repertoires’, which they describe as: “broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images. ... They are available resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions” (Potter and Wetherell, 1995: 89). Figure 3 provides an example of how, within the narrative which storied LGB sexualities as abnormal, various discourses were grouped around the concept of what ‘causes’ people to become LGB.

‘Abnormal’ Accounts of LGB Sexualities			
	Aetiological Accounts:		
	Biological	Psychological	Socio-Environmental
Discourses	Genetic Sexually unattractive to men	Man-haters Perverts Sinners Mad	Negative life experience Over-exposure to other LGBs Over-exposure to talk about LGBs

Figure 3. ‘Abnormal’ Accounts of LGB Sexualities.

A feature of discourse is its flexibility of use, in other words, any discourse can be used in different ways, in different contexts to perform different functions (Gill, 1996). The next stage of the analytic process, therefore, involved re-reading the text with a view to considering what functions were being performed both on an individual level and on a broader cultural or societal level by particular uses of discourses. Questions were asked such as: when, how, in what contexts and to what purpose did participants draw on discourses in constructing their accounts? How did particular constructions of events perform different rhetorical functions, make available different subject positions, and create different effects? Additionally, as Billig (1991) advocates, attention was paid to absences of particular kinds of accounts in the text, in other words, what was not said. The aim of this process was to produce a coherent account or reading of the interview texts. This is described in detail in the 'Analysis' section.

The need to make the research process and in particular the analytic process as transparent as possible has been highlighted by a number of commentators on qualitative research (e.g., Parker, 1994; Tindall, 1994). However, in my experience, the analytic process involved in discourse analysis is somewhat difficult to articulate. The lack of clear and detailed descriptions of 'how to do' discourse analysis in the literature (Coyle, 1995) perhaps reflects this contention. For example, Potter and Wetherell state "It is important to re-emphasise that there is no *method* to discourse analysis" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:175; emphasis in original). Billig suggests that discourse analysis requires scholarship rather than adherence to a methodological protocol (Billig, 1988), whilst Widdicombe (1993) argues that a discourse analyst needs to become sensitive to the way language is used, although she does not go on to articulate how this sensitivity is achieved. Reading these and other texts on discourse analysis as well as published discourse analytic studies left me none the wiser as to how to set about actually analysing the data. In practice, the shift from issue based categories to an analysis organised around discourses and metanarratives was achieved through the processes described below.

Firstly and perhaps most significantly, talking about my analysis of the data in supervision provided a different perspective on the data. The process of

communicating various analytic interpretations and demonstrating where they were evidenced in the text served a clarificatory role for me, and also sometimes raised questions regarding alternative readings of the text. Discussions with my supervisor also facilitated the process of identifying patterns of discourses in the accounts; in other words, moving from talking/ thinking about what participants said to how they said it. Supervision also played a critical role in helping me to develop and maintain a social constructionist and discourse analytic approach to the text. This was a crucial part of the research process and, in retrospect, with a view to making the research process more transparent, it would have been useful to have recorded these discussions with my supervisor and to have provided transcripts as an appendix. In addition to these discussions, the process of writing up helped me to refine my analysis in the sense that it highlighted sections of the text which did not coherently fit with my account of the data, and pointed to the need for revision. The cyclical processes of talking/ writing about, reflecting on and revising my analysis were repeated many times throughout the course of the research.

The research process was also supported and facilitated by talking about the data with others in a qualitative research support group, which met on a monthly basis, and comprised other colleagues involved in conducting qualitative research, along with a facilitator who was experienced in the use of qualitative methods.

During the research, I kept a reflexive diary (see Appendix 13), which included thoughts on the logistical aspects of the study, reflections on the role of my values and interests, and a log of methodological decisions and the rationale behind them. This diary served two main purposes. First, it provided a means of recording ideas and observations during the stages of data collection and analysis that might otherwise have been lost or forgotten. Second, I used the diary to note down issues relating to the impact of the research on me and the impact of my values on the research. The diary proved to be a useful resource when it came to writing up and the later stages of the analysis. As Henwood and Pidgeon suggest, the researcher plays an inevitable role in the research process, and this role “should be highlighted and revealed in the documentation of qualitative research studies.” (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992: 106). The research diary was intended to serve this purpose.

2.2.5 Criteria for Judging and Methods to Ensure Quality of Research

Traditionally the quality of a piece of research has been evaluated on the basis of its reliability and validity. However, the concepts of reliability and validity are embedded in the notion of scientific objectivity and as such are not consistent with a social constructionist approach. Potter and Wetherell suggest a number of alternative criteria against which the quality of discourse analytic research may be evaluated (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). These include the suggestion that “a set of analytic claims should give coherence to a body of discourse” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 170), and should demonstrate how the discourse fits together and how functions and effects result. They also argue that the research should be “fruitful” in the sense that it should make “sense of new discourses” and “generate novel explanations” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 171). These criteria informed the research process in general and, in particular, the process of analysis. They are considered further in the discussion section where I present an evaluation of this study.

A number of issues, outlined below, informed my efforts to enhance the quality of this research. In particular, I attended to issues of indexicality, reflexivity and inconcludability as described by Parker (1994). In addressing the issue of indexicality, I have tried to be specific and detail every aspect of the research process which might have influenced the outcome of the study, thereby making the process of research as transparent as possible. With regard to reflexivity, I have attempted to make my role in the research as clear as possible, in terms of how my personal life experiences, interests and values have influenced the research. Finally, in terms of inconcludability, it is acknowledged that the analysis presented in this report is *my* reading and analysis of participants’ accounts. As such, my account is presented as being socially constructed and thus provisional and contingent rather than a definitive or ‘objective’ account of the research. Because of the issues this raises in relation to evaluating discourse analytic research, as Coyle (1995) has suggested, I have included extracts from the interview transcripts within the analysis, so as demonstrate how my analytic conclusions were reached by reference to the text. Coyle argues that by including significant amounts of raw data in the account of the analysis, the reader can “judge for themselves whether the

interpretations are warranted and can offer alternative interpretations” (Coyle, 1995: 255).

In producing and presenting an account of the analysis I was guided by Kvalé ‘s assertion that in order to ensure that a report provides “methodologically well-substantiated, interesting findings” quoted material should be contextualised and interpreted (Kvalé, 1996: 257). The process of selecting quotes to illustrate the analysis inevitably involves reducing both the volume and complexity of the raw data. Kvalé suggests that within the account of the analysis there should be a balance between quotes and text, quotes should not exceed half a page, and only the best quote should be used to illustrate each point (Kvalé, 1996). My account of my analysis follows these guidelines, so for example, of the five quotes in the discursive category ‘negative life event’ only one (quote 2 in Figure 4), was used in the report as an example of this discourse (although quotes 3 and 4 were also used in the report to illustrate other points).

1. [P]eople say to me, ‘are you gay because ... your dad was violent?’ (Sarah: 440-441).
2. Yeah I hate, I hated men after [two violent relationships with men]. I detested men. I really, really detested men and I swore that I’d never, ever, ever have another relationship with a bloke. I was sexually abused by my granddad from the age of nine to the age of seventeen and that didn’t help matters at all (Sharon: 441 - 444).
3. [W]hen people say they were abused and things in their childhood and their parents have said, ‘oh, we think that’s why you’re gay, that’s why you’ve turned out the way you have’ (Kate: 84 - 86).
4. [P]eople could say, ‘oh, you’ve had loads of crap relationships with men, or it’s cos of your step-dad’ (Kate: 80 - 81).
5. [P]eople say, ‘oh, that’s why you’re gay’, you know, because of your home life, ‘because your mum and dad split up when you was a baby’ (Kate: 65 –67).

Figure 4. Quotes in the Discursive Category ‘Negative Life Event’.

Chapter 3 – Analysis I

The following two chapters provide an account of the analysis. Through the process of analysing the interview transcripts I was able to identify two metanarratives which participants appeared to be drawing on in constructing their accounts of their experiences as young LGBs. The first of these metanarratives constructed sexuality in terms of normality and abnormality, the second in terms of similarity and difference. It is argued that the normality/ abnormality metanarrative is a dominant narrative which serves to regulate sexualities. This regulation leads to the development of subjugated narratives of resistance, within which LGB sexualities are reconstructed. The similarity/difference metanarrative is one such narrative of resistance.

The analysis that follows is organised around these two metanarratives. Initially, in this chapter, these narratives are described in turn. In chapter 4, the functions and effects of the two metanarratives are discussed, along with the discourses of which they are constituted and the subject positions and social practices which result from these different constructions of LGB sexualities. These are explored at both a macro-level, in terms of societal and institutional functions, and at a micro-level, in terms of individual functions. Additionally, I discuss a range of strategies which may be employed by participants in order to position themselves positively as LGB within narratives of normality/abnormality and similarity/difference.

A feature of the text produced through the interviews was that participants frequently made reference to, and cited, the talk of others. In effect this produces what might be termed as meta-constructions. In other words, participants were constructing accounts about others' constructions. No claims are made as to the authenticity or accuracy of participants' accounts. Rather, what is provided is an analysis of the ways in which participants draw upon available discourses and broader cultural narratives in constructing their accounts, and the implications of this.

3.1 Sexualities Constructed in Terms of Normality/Abnormality

The first metanarrative, which might be described as a ‘pathologising’ narrative, comprised of accounts which construct sexuality around oppositional discourses of normality and abnormality. Within this metanarrative, LGB sexualities are, in the main, constructed as abnormal in contrast to heterosexualities, which are constructed as normal. One of the effects of discourses which construct LGB sexualities as abnormal is that they legitimise the question of ‘what causes people to be LGB?’ Three types of these aetiological accounts were identified in the texts. These were biological or ‘nature’ accounts, psychological accounts, and socio-environmental or ‘nurture’ accounts. These discourses are described and discussed below. Finally, in this section I consider various ways in which heterosexualities are constructed as normal in relation to LGB sexualities.

3.1.1 Biological Accounts of LGB Sexualities

One way of accounting for the question of ‘what makes people LGB’ was to construct LGB sexualities as being caused by biological factors. In other words in terms of ‘nature’. Two types of ‘nature’ discourses were identified in the interview texts, which are examined in turn below.

3.1.1.1 *Must have been born that way*

A number of different discourses were identified within the normal/ abnormal metanarrative which variously constructed LGB sexualities as abnormal through the use of biological accounts. One way of understanding why people ‘are’ LGB is to attribute it to some genetic pathology, in other words, to ‘abnormal genes’.

I think parents also feel that they’ve done something wrong, that there was something wrong with their genes or something
(Kate: 93 - 94).

Accounts such as this function to reinforce notions of LGB sexualities as abnormal using a genetic or biologically determinist discursive framework. On an individual level, the account may function to provide a way of understanding why some parents react negatively to learning that their child ‘is’ LGB, because a genetic account, by definition, means that there is something ‘wrong’ or abnormal about their own genes.

However, biological accounts in themselves do not necessarily produce negative constructions of LGB sexualities. For example:

[P]eople say, 'oh being influenced with it makes you gay', but ...
I don't believe that, I believe it's in the genes in the body from
birth (Robert: 328 - 329).

Unlike the previous extract in which LGB sexualities were constructed as something that is "wrong", this piece of text is neutral in terms of the normality/abnormality opposition. This account may be functioning on an individual level to protect the individual from 'blame' because, if a person's sexuality is determined genetically then, by implication, no choice or act of free will is involved. Within this type of account it follows that LGBs cannot be held personally 'responsible' or judged as 'morally culpable' for the outcome of a biological process. These two examples are illustrative of the fact that the meaning of a particular discourse is determined by its context of use. Thus the same discourse, e.g., genetic accounting for the aetiology of LGB sexualities, can be used to argue for both the normality and the abnormality of LGB sexualities.

3.1.1.2 *Born ugly*

Where an individual's sexuality *itself* is not constructed as genetically determined, other biological accounts may be used. For example, same-sex relationships between women may be accounted for through the storying of lesbian/bisexual women as *having* to 'choose' female partners because they are not 'pretty' enough to attract a male partner.

I think [my dad] was disgusted. He denies it, he was like, 'no, you're too pretty, you can have any man'... I was like, 'well, if I wanted a man, I would, but I don't' (Kate: 151 - 153).

This account therefore functions to position same-sex relationships between women, when 'ugly', as inferior to, or a poor substitute for heterosexual relationships. Lesbian/bisexual women are positioned as being the passive 'victims' of their own biology – their biological make-up having made them too 'ugly' to attract a man.

3.1.2 Psychological Accounts

A different way of accounting for the question of ‘what makes people LGB’ was to construct LGB sexualities as being caused by psychological factors. Several psychological accounts were identified in the interview texts, and are discussed below.

3.1.2.1 *Can’t even think straight*

When, as in the previous quote, women’s lesbianism/bisexuality cannot be accounted for in terms of their being ‘ugly’, women’s choices of same-sex relationships may be discredited through the construction of their choices as being the result of ‘faulty’ cognitions. In other words, if they are not victims of ‘ugliness’ then they must be victims of their own ‘faulty’ reasoning. In the quotation below, whilst it is disputed, reference is made to such a discourse which stories lesbians as ‘man-haters’:

I get on with blokes really well, you know, and that annoys me as well, cos they think I hate all men and I don’t (Sarah: 167 - 169).

The above account is illustrative of the fact that it is necessary to first refute and, in doing so, give voice to the dominant discursive construction of lesbians as man-haters in order to produce an alternative construction. Accounts which story lesbians as having a pathological hatred of men may also function to protect the heterosexual male ego because, implicit in these discourses is the suggestion that if lesbian/bisexual women *could* have a sexual relationship with men, they *would*.

3.1.2.2 *Must be perverts*

Whilst same sex attraction/sexual relationships for both sexes are constructed as abnormal, gender appeared to influence the ways in which abnormality was storied. Whilst, as described earlier, gay/bisexual women may be positioned as passive victims of their own ‘ugliness’ or ‘faulty’ thinking, gay/bisexual men are more likely to be positioned in an active role, as ‘doers’ or abusers or, as in the extract below, as “perverts” and “paedophiles”:

[My mum] went to social services and told them that I was gay and I was a pervert, I’d grow up to be a paedophile and every

other thing that's commonly said about gay people she said, and accused me of having sex with all and sundry (Robert: 153 - 156).

The storying of gay/bisexual men as sexual deviants, as “perverts” and “paedophiles”, and therefore as ‘dangerous’, functions to sanction their regulation, for example, through legislative measures such as the age of consent for gay/bisexual men. These ideas are explored in more depth in chapter 4.

3.1.2.3 *Sinners*

If LGBs are not constructed as sexually deviant, their ‘abnormality’ may be located within a religious discourse, in which they may be constructed as morally flawed, as sinners:

And I told another family member, and he was okay with it, he's, like, really into his god, you know, ... and when I told him, it was a shock to him and he took me to church, trying [to] get me blessed and trying to wash it away from me. He thought he could wash it off me but he couldn't. ... And he says to me, ... ‘well how about when you're on your deathbed, sort of thing, what you gonna do then?’
... And he says, ‘... [God] won't take you because you're gay’
(Luke: 570 - 622).

As with discourses that position LGBs as sexually deviant and therefore in need of either treatment, punishment or incarceration, the storying of LGBs as ‘sinners’ also legitimises the regulation of LGBs, but in these accounts, as individuals in need of moral cleansing, and/or condemnation. In both of these discourses - as ‘perverts’ or as ‘sinners’ - being LGB is constructed as a fundamental and flawed aspect of a person's identity. Additionally, as ‘sinners’ or ‘perverts’, LGBs are positioned as having actively chosen to be LGB, and therefore can be held to be ‘morally responsible’ for their sexuality.

3.1.2.4 *Must be mad*

An alternative explanation for LGBs’ ‘abnormality’ is provided within discourses which construct LGBs as ‘mad’. As discussed in the introduction section, discourses which construct LGB sexualities *per se* as mental illnesses are widespread within the psychiatric and psychological literature as well as in more mainstream popular culture. Participants in this study did not *themselves* construct

LGB sexualities as indicative of madness, however the extract below provides another example of the ways in which dominant discourses are often referred to in the production of alternative opposing constructions:

Well, I did suffer from clinical depression and I do have psychological problems now, but none of them have been directly to do with me being gay (Mike: 169 - 170).

The participant cited above goes on to reconstruct his mental health problems as resulting from various negative environmental or social events rather than being as intrinsic aspect of being gay:

[T]he only way gay comes in to [my psychological problems/clinical depression] is the way society reacts towards me cos I'm gay, you know, the reactions that I've had because I'm gay.

... I'm talking about open homophobic abuse in the street, violence... and I'm talking about disassociation from my family because of it (Mike: 171 - 184).

This account may function to locate the causes of mental health problems outside the individual and construct them in terms of other people's intolerance. However, as the previous extract demonstrates, in order to achieve this reconstruction, it is necessary to first refute and, in doing so, refer to the dominant discursive construction of LGB sexualities being *themselves* indicative of mental ill-health. Paradoxically then, this reconstruction both undermines and gives voice to the 'authenticity' of the dominant discourse, a discourse that functions to legitimise the social practices of 'treating' and 'curing' LGBs. Further, discourses that construct people who identify as LGB as mentally ill also produce the subject position 'victim', as mental illness may occur as a result of biological or environmental factors beyond the individual's control.

3.1.2.5 *It's just a phase*

One way in which same-sex sexual attraction and/or sexual activity may be constructed as 'normal' is as a temporary stage in an individual's psychosexual development towards a stable heterosexual identity:

I was always told by him, 'it's just a phase, all teenagers go through it' (Robert: 112).

However, whilst going through a 'phase' of same-sex attraction during adolescence is constructed as normal, this developmental account - again, as discussed, an account which is prevalent within psychiatric and psychological theorising on sexual development - implicitly pathologises those who do not 'progress' through this phase and who go on to develop a stable heterosexual identity.

3.1.3 Socio-Environmental Accounts of LGB Sexualities

A third way of accounting for the question of 'what makes people LGB' was to construct LGB sexualities as being caused by some social or environmental variable. In other words in terms of 'nurture'. Two types of 'nurture' discourse were identified in the interview texts, which are discussed below.

3.1.3.1 *Something bad must have happened*

One group of 'nurture' discourses appeared to construct LGB sexualities as being caused by certain life events:

Yeah I hate, I hated men after [two violent relationships with men]. I detested men. I really, really detested men and I swore that I'd never, ever, ever have another relationship with a bloke. I was sexually abused by my granddad from the age of nine to the age of seventeen and that didn't help matters at all
(Sharon: 441 - 444).

As with the biological discourses discussed above, 'nurture' accounts are not necessarily synonymous with a negative evaluation of LGB sexualities. However, in all instances where a 'life event' account was provided within the interview texts, being LGB was associated with a negative experience. Thus, even where no direct evaluation of LGB sexualities was in evidence, LGB sexualities were being constructed as 'abnormal' through references to other discourses - for example, discourses that refer to childhood abuse or domestic violence. This point is referred to directly in the following extract, in which it is suggested that accounts which construct LGB sexualities as being caused by a negative experience, (in this case, child abuse), have the effect of implying that there is something 'wrong' with being LGB:

But I've found out, when people say they were abused and things in their childhood and their parents have said, 'oh, we think that's

why you're gay, that's why you've turned out the way you have'. I think that's quite sad to think. I don't know, it's like, 'well, what's wrong with it? What's wrong with being like this?' (Kate: 84 - 88).

Whilst the previous extract (Sharon: 441 - 444; p77) refers to other people's constructions of lesbianism as resulting from experiences of negative relationships with men, in some instances in the texts participants referred to certain 'life event' accounts in order to produce alternative constructions. The following extract provides an example of this.

I went through a stage of hating men, because of [my step-dad], but it didn't stop me from going out with men, cos then I did, and people could say, 'oh, you've had loads of crap relationships with men, or it's cos of your step-dad' and that, but I know deep down that it was there long before he came on the scene. That's my personal opinion, that's why I think it's a load of crap! Well, it is in my case anyway (Kate: 78 - 84).

This extract further illustrates the contention that because of the pervasive and 'taken for granted' nature of 'abnormal' accounts of LGB sexualities, it is difficult to produce alternative constructions of LGB sexualities without first refuting and thereby making reference to and reinforcing dominant 'abnormal' accounts.

3.1.3.2 *Must have been co-opted or corrupted*

Where an individual's LGB sexuality cannot be accounted for in terms of them having had some sort of bad experience, then it may be accounted for through the construction of LGB sexualities as being 'caused' either by exposure to other LGBs:

[T]he reason why [mum's friend/father figure] was keeping [his gay identity] from me, or the reason I believe he was, is because, my family would have says, 'it's him that's made me gay' (Robert: 387 - 390).

Or, if they have not come into contact with other LGBs, simply by exposure to talk about LGB sexualities:

[My grandmother] says, 'and that's why [homosexuality] was never spoken about, because we didn't want to inflict it on you in

case you weren't'. They still think it's not in the genes and you're pressurised into it (Robert: 1087 - 1089).

Again, these discourses are not necessarily synonymous with a negative evaluation of LGB sexualities. However, other features of these extracts, for example, the words "inflict" and "pressurised", indicate that in these examples LGB sexualities are being constructed negatively.

3.1.4 Normative Accounts of Heterosexualities

In contrast to the discourses discussed above which constructed LGB sexualities as abnormal, a number of discourses were identified in the text which constructed heterosexualities as normal. A feature of these discourses was that heterosexuality was constructed as not simply a norm, but *the* norm, and was therefore often assumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary:

I was too scared to tell people especially my parents, cos they're like, when I didn't have a girlfriend, 'are you getting a girlfriend? When are you getting married?' I was, like, 'leave me alone, I don't want that, I don't know what I want' (Luke: 44 - 47).

Additionally, discourses that constructed heterosexualities as normal often contained references to traditionally heterosexual institutions, for example, marriage and the nuclear family:

[W]hen you're younger, it's never mentioned about women and women and men and men, it's always women and men that make babies and, women and men that get married, and because it's always women and men, and you have a feeling about women and women you think, 'but it's supposed to be women and men, that's what I was told at school' (Jo: 702 - 706).

These discourses function not simply to construct heterosexualities as normal but to construct a *particular version* of heterosexuality as normal.

I have suggested above that the question of 'what makes people LGB?' arises out of constructions of LGB sexualities as 'abnormal'. In other words, it is because LGB sexualities are storied as 'abnormal' that there is a need to account for them. Similarly, the storying of heterosexualities as normal means that the question of

‘what makes people heterosexual?’ is rendered redundant. Heterosexualities do not ‘need’ to be accounted for precisely because they are *so* normal. This conjecture is supported by the absence of any talk within the interview texts about the aetiology of heterosexualities.

Within the oppositional discursive framework of normality/ abnormality, the construction of heterosexualities as normal implicitly functions to construct sexualities other than heterosexual as ‘abnormal’ and, therefore, as taboo. This argument is corroborated by the fact that, whilst LGB sexualities were talked about within the context of the interviews for this study, participants also spoke about a general absence of talk about LGB sexualities in certain other contexts within wider society. The following two extracts provide typical examples of this, first in the home:

A What about at home, was homosexuality ever discussed at home?

B No.

A Or mentioned or...?

B No (Dave: 685 - 689).

And second, at school:

Well, you know, [in sex education] when it comes to reproduction and everything, there’s no mention of what two women would do, or two men would do. ... I can imagine it’d be hard at school, you know, when it comes to lessons like that and [pupils identifying as LGB are] thinking, ‘well, aren’t I normal?’ You know, ‘aren’t I alright, can’t I still have children?’ (Kate: 1150 - 1160).

The absence of talk about LGB sexualities in certain contexts or institutions reinforces the construction of them as abnormal and thereby functions to protect and reinforce the heterosexual imperative.

3.1.5 Summary

In summary, within a metanarrative of normality/abnormality, LGB sexualities may be accounted for within biological, psychological, or sociological discursive

frameworks. Within these different discourses, LGBs may be variously positioned – for example, as victims of biological fate or of a range of negative experiences, or as having some cognitive, moral, or psychosexual deficiency. These different subject positions legitimise the pathologisation of LGBs, and thereby a range of different ways that LGBs ‘should’ be treated. As victims, LGBs are constructed as being in need of help, treatment, cure, or pity, whilst LGBs as ‘sinners’ or ‘perverts’ are seen to need cleansing, saving, condemning, punishing, or incarcerating in order to ‘protect’ others. Across all of these discourses LGB sexualities are consistently storied as other than heterosexual and, therefore, as other than ‘normal’.

3.2 LGB Sexualities Constructed in Terms of Similarity/Difference

The second metanarrative identified within the interview texts constructed sexuality within a comparative discursive framework in terms of similarity and difference. This subjugated metanarrative operates in resistance to the dominant normal/abnormal metanarrative. A number of different locations emerged in which this metanarrative was played out. These centred around comparisons between past and present identity (biographical narratives) and self-other comparisons. These discourses are described and discussed below.

3.2.1 Comparisons Within Biographical Narratives

One discursive location within which discourses of similarity and difference were identified was in participants’ biographical narratives. Within these narratives, comparisons were made between LGBs’ past, present and imagined future selves.

3.2.1.1 *Difference – Good and Bad*

In the following two examples, being LGB is constructed first as being different from a significant *other’s* expectations of the participant’s future identity or lifestyle:

It’s in the back of [my mum’s] mind that she ... imagined me walking down the aisle with a bloke and having a family, but that’s not gonna happen, not with a bloke anyway
(Sharon: 127 - 131).

And second as differing from how the participant wanted or imagined *himself* to be in the future:

The fact that I really didn't want to be gay. Because as I said it was plastered into me I'm gonna grow up, I'm gonna have a wife and ... a dog and a cat, and two children, one boy and girl, and live in a big house in the country with a city near by. The typical nuclear family and I wanted that to happen, and, I know it can't (Robert: 71 - 75).

Whilst dissonance between present identity and previously held expectations about future identity is not necessarily problematic, it may be experienced as such, as indicated in the first and last lines of the above extract. Similarly, being different in relation to others' previously held expectations about the self in the future was also constructed as being problematic:

[H]e's always expecting me to go out with somebody who'll be like a lawyer or doctor or something, and to live in a little house and have about ten kids, dog, cat, white picket fence, you know. And so for me to come along and say, 'Dad, actually I'm gay!' It was, like, it'll be a smack in the face, I suppose (Kate: 128 - 132).

The above extracts, which draw on the discourse of the "typical nuclear family", are further illustrative of the fact that a particular version of heterosexuality, as the norm, is assumed. Because of this, identifying as LGB entails accepting that one is different from this norm and its associated lifestyle.

3.2.1.2 *Similarity – Still the same*

A feature of the similarity/difference metanarrative is that the relational constructs of similarity and difference are not mutually exclusive, thus it is possible for individuals to be both the same and different. So, although participants talked about being LGB as different from their own and others' expectations about their future selves, they also talked about their present selves, as LGB, as being in some ways the same as they were before they identified as LGB. The following two extracts provide examples of this. First, in relation to participants' own constructions of themselves:

'This is me. Just because I'm gay, doesn't mean I've changed' (Sharon: 36 - 37).

And second, in relation to others' constructions of LGBs:

I've told a few friends and they've said, 'yeah, but it's you. It's not like you're a gay person, it's like here's Kate, she goes out with a woman, so what?' (Kate: 576 - 578).

3.2.2 Comparisons Between LGB and Heterosexual Identity Groups

Within a number of different discourses identified within the interview texts participants constructed themselves as LGBs relative to heterosexual others and, in particular, their peers.

3.2.2.1 *Difference – Good and bad*

When retrospectively describing when they first realised that they might be LGB, participants frequently talked about having had a sense that they were different from their (presumed) heterosexual peers:

What when I first realised that I might be different? (Sharon: 18).

This difference often related to sexual desire or object choice:

I didn't even really know what the term gay meant but I knew that I fancied men which was different from other people (Robert: 54 - 55).

Participants constructed difference as being in some ways, at certain times and in certain contexts, problematic, in that it positioned LGBs as "strange":

I first found out something was, I have to say STRANGE with me when I was at school (Luke: 8 - 9).

As "alien":

I got quite annoyed when I knew that there was labels and things, and names for it, and it made you feel a bit like an alien next to everybody else (Kate: 4 - 6).

Or as an 'outsider' in comparison with others:

[T]he feelings got stronger, yet I'd still go out with boys, I went out with a lot of lads and thought, 'one day it's gonna be right and

I'm gonna fit in with everybody else' but, it didn't quite turn out that way (Kate: 20 - 22).

As suggested earlier, compared with the normal/ abnormal metanarrative the similarity/difference metanarrative appeared to be more flexible in that it is possible to be both similar and different. A further distinctive characteristic of the similarity/difference metanarrative is that, unlike *abnormality* which carries almost exclusively negative connotations, *difference* can be constructed both negatively and positively. So, whilst some participants talked about there being some negative aspects to 'being different', difference was also constructed, in part at least, as something positive:

There's lots of ups and downs and positives and negatives on both sides really. I mean, a part of me would like to say, 'yeah, being gay's the best thing since sliced bread', and it's good to be, feel different and individual. Cos I'm that sort of person anyway, I don't like being the same as everybody else. ... I think probably being straight would be just easier, but it would be most boring (Kate: 561 - 572).

The subject position of someone who is 'special' or 'individual' is produced and contrasted with heterosexualities which are constructed as common and therefore 'boring'. Again, in following extract 'being in a minority' and therefore different to the majority is constructed positively, as something to 'enjoy' and be 'proud' of:

I enjoy being a minority, I do enjoy being a minority. Cos I can be that, you know, I'm proud of being in a minority. You know, I just enjoy it (Mike: 162 - 164).

3.2.2.2 *Similarity – We're all the same*

Whilst participants talked about having a sense of being different compared with heterosexuals, discourses of similarity were also identified within the interview texts:

They should talk more about it in schools and colleges.
... It's like just making them aware that we do exist, and we're not aliens, we're, just like I say, same as everybody else
(Sharon: 605 - 615).

This further illustrates the point made earlier in relation to biographical comparisons, that because similarity and difference are relational constructs, individuals can be both similar *and* different.

3.2.3 Comparisons Between LGBs

A further discursive location in which the similarity/difference metanarrative was evident was within participants' talk about other LGBs.

3.2.3.1 *Similarity*

Participants spoke about there being some ways in which *all* LGBs were similar. This similarity appeared to be constructed around the notion of shared knowledge, which may be a function of common experience:

B I think the gay community are a lot, they're close, it's I dunno, they understand more than, do you know what I mean?

A I think I do?

... tell me if I'm wrong, I'm wondering whether you're talking about a kind of closeness or a kind of common experience?

B Yeah, both, yeah (Sarah: 252 - 261).

Thus shared experiences were constructed as resulting in greater knowledge or understanding (by LGBs of LGBs):

[I]n my eyes, straight people don't know what gay, or bisexual, or lesbian people are going through and ... well, I know, my counsellor's gay, so he knows what I'm going through (Luke: 855 - 858).

Whilst the above extracts are illustrative of one way in which LGBs may be storied as being similar, there was a noticeable lack of theorising of or accounting for similarity between LGBs within the interview texts. It might be argued that, in the same way that heterosexualities do not need to be accounted for precisely because their normality is assumed, similarity between LGBs is not theorised because it is assumed or taken-for-granted that all LGBs are alike or at least similar in some respect. However, as discussed below, the assumption of similarity between LGBs may be challenged and rendered problematic because of differences between LGBs.

3.2.3.2 *Bisexualities compared with LG sexualities: Problematising similarity - Differences within.*

Whilst, then, participants described various ways in which LGBs are similar, they also spoke about differences within the LGB community. One area where there may be differences between LGBs related to bisexualities. It is argued that because sexuality tends to be constructed within a binary framework in which people are positioned *either* as gay or straight, 'bisexuality' as an identity is problematic. Because, by definition, 'bisexuality' does not fit into the oppositional categories of homosexual/heterosexual, it poses a challenge to this binary construction and may, therefore, be accounted for somewhat differently to LG sexualities (and heterosexualities). Below I discuss a number of different accounts that specifically relate to bisexualities, and which may be seen to function to position 'bisexuals' as different from LGs.

One way of defusing the challenge posed by bisexualities to dominant binary constructions of sexuality may be through accounts which variously dismiss the existence of 'bisexuality' as a sexual identity category. This may, for example, be achieved by storying 'bisexuality' as not being a 'real' sexual identity:

I don't really believe in bisexuality, not very much anyway. I suppose it is possible, but you can't really have both
(Robert: 792 - 794).

Or, 'bisexuality' may be storied as universal and therefore not a *distinct* sexual identity:

I think everybody's bisexual, but more to one to than to the other
(Mike: 19).

Alternatively, 'bisexuality' may be storied as being an unstable identity - as a developmental stage individuals may pass through on the way to 'discovering' their 'true' sexual identity as either LG or heterosexual:

[W]hen I first met her she was nearly seventeen and ... I think she'd only just come out when she met me herself, so I think [her bisexuality] was because of that really.
... [C]os she didn't know if she was gay or not (Sarah: 547 - 553).

Within some constructions, such as those outlined above, bisexualities are dismissed as not being 'real', stable or distinct sexual identities. Alternatively, 'bisexuality' may be constructed in a way that recognises it as a sexual identity category but, in so doing, pathologises it. For example, bisexualities may be pathologised through accounts which story 'bisexuals' as being fickle:

I wouldn't really choose to go out with somebody who's bisexual now, really. Cos it's hard really sometimes.
... Cos one minute she'd be looking at women and one minute she'd be looking at blokes (Sarah: 542 - 546).

Or as greedy:

[LGs] call me greedy, and I'm like, 'what do you mean greedy?'
'Oh you like both holes', and I was, like, 'best of both worlds, you know, every hole's a goal!' (Luke: 178 - 180).

Or as promiscuous and non-monogamous:

You know, people assume being a bisexual person you're hardfaced, just shag anyone willy dilly nilly or you go out with one person and you go behind their back (Luke: 105 - 107).

These pathologising accounts story 'bisexuality' as a separate identity category which is distinct and different from the categories of LG and straight. As a result, constructions of LGBs as similar are rendered problematic.

3.2.4 Summary

In summary, within a metanarrative of similarity/difference, LGBs may be variously storied or positioned as similar and/or different in relation to their previous (assumed heterosexual) identities, heterosexual others or other LGBs. It is argued that, in terms of the subject positions made available to LGBs, the similarity/difference metanarrative is a more flexible discursive framework when compared with that of normality/ abnormality in two significant ways. First, unlike abnormality and normality which are oppositional, similarity and difference are relational constructs and it is therefore possible to be both 'similar' and 'different'. Second, the subject position of 'different', unlike that of 'abnormal' may be used construct to LGBs positively as well as negatively. However, whilst the

similarity/difference metanarrative may afford LGBs more flexible and positive subject positions, negative constructions of LGBs as different from the 'heterosexual norm' may function to give tacit permission for discrimination (on the basis of difference) in the same way that constructions of LGBs as abnormal do (on the basis of abnormality). Additionally the construct of similarity or sameness is not without its problems. In particular, I have argued that constructions of *all* LGBs as similar can be problematic because of individual differences within the LGB identity group, such as those discussed above in relation to bisexualities.

Chapter 4 – Analysis II

In this chapter I consider the effects of the discourses described in the previous chapter which variously construct LGB sexualities as abnormal, normal, similar and different. In particular, I discuss the ways these discourses are embodied or played out as social practices. It is argued that narratives and discourses are more than just the way we speak about things. For, different ways of talking/ thinking about LGB sexualities sustain some patterns of social action whilst excluding others. Further, discourses about LGB sexualities are reproduced and reinforced as social practices, and through these social practices certain discourses or ways of thinking about LGB sexualities may be reified and become understood as ‘common sense’ or taken-for-granted ‘truths’. For example:

[Y]ou see things on television and you hear things, you might not know you see things or hear things but they just, kind of, sink in. You might not remember about what you saw, or what it was that made you think it, but they just, kind of, sink in, and you think ‘that’s not right, but that’s how I feel’. ... [S]o there’s all those ... factors that account to say, ‘socially [being LGB is] wrong’ (Jo: 697 - 708).

LGBs therefore learn about sexuality, interpret their experiences and form their sense of identity within social contexts which promote particular versions of LGB sexualities (and heterosexualities). Within this chapter I consider a number of social practices which, it is argued, arise out of and promote particular constructions of LGB sexualities. I then discuss various strategies employed by LGBs to enable them to cope with some of the difficulties inherent in developing a positive LGB identity within narratives of normality/ abnormality and similarity/ difference.

4.1 Effects of Discourses Which Construct LGB Sexualities as Abnormal

In this section I explore the ways in which discourses which construct LGB sexualities as abnormal lead to and are played out in various social practices. In particular I discuss the legislation relating to LGB sexualities which provides a good example of one way in which these pathologising discourses are enacted. Legal constraints around sexuality seek to proscribe what are considered to be ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ sexual practices and, in so doing, reinforce and

promulgate ideas about sexuality and what 'should' be considered to be normal and abnormal. Such legislation not only embodies pathologising discourses of LGB sexualities, it also sanctions negative constructions of LGB sexualities, which may in turn be enacted in the form of homophobic acts or behaviour.

4.1.1 Legal Constraints

Legislation provides one context within which constructions of LGB sexualities have become embodied in social practices. Participants referred to two pieces of UK legislation - the age of consent and section 28 – which arise out of and reinforce constructions of LGB sexualities as abnormal. These are discussed below, both in terms of the implicit assumptions underpinning them and in terms of their practical implications for young LGBs.

4.1.1.1 *Age of consent*

The legal age of consent identifies an age below which young people are deemed to be unable to give informed consent to sexual intercourse. Currently in England, the age of consent for heterosexual intercourse is sixteen years old. The age of consent for gay men was reduced from twenty-one to eighteen in 1994, and from eighteen to sixteen in November 2000. There is no legal age of consent specifically for sex between women. At the time of interviewing, the age of consent for gay men was eighteen and the following discussion reflects this.

The laws regarding the age of consent embody a number of implicit assumptions about sexuality and gender. As suggested, the legal age of consent for sexual intercourse sets limits around what are considered to be acceptable and unacceptable sexual practices, and aims to protect children from abusive sexual experiences. One implicit assumption of the legal age of consent for gay men being higher than that for heterosexuals is that gay (male) sex is less normal or acceptable and/ or more dangerous or abusive than heterosexual sex. Further, the absence of a legal age of consent for female same-sex relationships implies that either women do not have sex with each other or, if they do, that the sex they have cannot be abusive (Warner, 2000b). These laws are therefore consistent with and reflect dominant accounts of gender which story men as more active, dangerous and sexually predatory than women.

As well as conveying powerful messages about sexuality and gender, these laws also have a number of practical implications for young people. Within the interview texts participants talked about the ways in which the age of consent laws directly affected the lives of young gay/ bisexual men. Not surprisingly, the fear of criminalisation was a central issue:

[Y]oung people do go cruising as well, you know, cruising the toilets. You know, they assume that's the only thing.
.... [A]nd they get off in toilets, they probably get nicked, then they'll get brought out. You know, they haven't done it themselves, they've been brought out the closet by someone else, or by the law. Which is a bad thing, especially if you're living with parents, and you got caught for cruising in a public toilet. No way!
(Luke: 1092 - 1117).

In addition to the fear of being arrested and possibly prosecuted, the above example also highlights other potential negative consequences of actually being arrested; namely the possibility of being 'outed' to others, specifically parents, and the embarrassment of having one's sexual activities made public.

Further, the age of consent was constructed by some participants as being an influential factor in relation to their reluctance to talk openly about their sexual relationships:

Yeah, it was like the decision [me and my boyfriend] both made not to tell anybody in case [the age of consent] came up as well. Whether it involved teachers at school or parents or whether it even involved the police.
... And it was serious as well, what with the age of consent being twenty one and we were just fifteen. We weren't going to wait six years. (Dave: 416 - 423).

Whilst the age of consent legislation may be designed to prevent or protect young people from having underage sex, a number of participants talked about having had sexual relationships before the age of eighteen. In practice, therefore, rather than preventing (some) young gay men from *having* sex with men, the age of consent appears to function to prevent or deter (some of) them from *talking* about it. This has the effect of making LGB sexualities taboo, and thereby, by implication reinforcing the institution of heterosexuality. A potential consequence of young gay

men feeling unable to talk about their sexual relationships with, for example, their parents or teachers or official agencies is that this is likely to restrict their access to support and information about sex.

4.1.1.2 *Section 28*

Section 28 of the local government act 1988 in the UK prohibited the promotion of homosexuality in schools. The legislation states that:

A local authority shall not:

- a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;
 - b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship
- (Local Government Act 1990).

As with the age of consent laws, this piece of legislation embodies a number of implicit (and some relatively explicit) assumptions about sexuality, as well as having clear practical implications for people working within and receiving services from local government institutions. Whilst Section 28 applies to all local government services, it makes special reference to schools and the education of children. This piece of legislation seeks to promote the institutions of heterosexuality and the traditional nuclear family by stipulating what should and should not be taught to children in (Local Authority) schools. One implicit assumption underpinning Section 28 is that it is possible to ‘make’ people LGB by talking to them about LGB sexualities. The suggestion is that ‘innocent’ and implicitly heterosexual children may be ‘corrupted’ by being taught that being LGB is ‘acceptable’. The wording of the legislation clearly implies that “homosexuality” is *not* considered acceptable and that LGB relationships do *not* constitute ‘real’ or normal family relationships.

There has been some confusion about the operational definition of “promoting homosexuality”. Although to date there have been no prosecutions under Section 28, teachers may, for example, fear talking to pupils about LGB sexualities; fear being open about their own sexuality if they are LGB; be reluctant to provide pupils with positive images of LGBs; and/ or feel unable to intervene and protect pupils who are subjected to homophobic bullying. These practical implications of Section

28 were articulated by a number of participants who talked about the ways in which Section 28 affected their lives. First, Section 28 was constructed as having a silencing effect on young LGBs in school:

Things like Section 28 can really set you back a peg or two and they can make you clam up (Robert: 693 – 695).

Second, Section 28 was constructed as affecting young LGBs by preventing teachers from being supportive of LGB pupils and from providing opportunities for pupils to talk and think about their sexuality with teachers:

Teachers couldn't tell me anything about [LGB sexualities]. They could only say the facts, they couldn't promote it and say, 'well, you're gay, good for you', because they'd end up getting fired. All they could say I suppose was, 'you're gay, do you know safe sex, do you know what safe sex is?' And stuff like that. I think that's all they could say. I mean, you can't put posters up in school saying, 'come to our workshop if you think you're gay or have queries about your sexuality', because it's just illegal. So there's no way of getting help really (Robert: 704 - 711).

Section 28 therefore appears to function 'successfully' in preventing open discussion about LGB sexualities within at least some (local government) educational settings. However, rather than preventing young people from identifying as LGB the legislation may in practice function to prevent those who do identify as LGB from feeling able to discuss their sexuality with teachers. Again, this has the effect of making LGB sexualities taboo, consequently reinforcing the institution of heterosexuality, and is likely to restrict young LGBs' access to support and information about sex.

As well as having practical implications in terms of young LGBs feeling reluctant to talk openly about their sexuality with people in positions of authority, both Section 28 and the age of consent legislation implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) convey negative accounts of LGB sexualities. These accounts or ways of thinking about LGB sexualities are likely to influence the ways people interpret their own and others' experiences and make sense of themselves and others in relation to their sexuality. Further, the abnormal constructions of LGB sexualities embodied in both the age of consent laws and Section 28 give tacit permission for, and legitimise,

homophobia which may, in turn, become embodied in homophobic practices or acts.

4.1.2 Homophobic 'Acts'

Particular accounts of LGB sexualities as abnormal may become embodied as homophobic actions and social practices. Within the interview texts participants talked about their experiences of homophobic practices which were played out in a range of different social contexts, including school, work, home, public places, and prison. These social practices and interactions both result from and reinforce particular (negative) versions of LGB sexualities and form part of the wider social context through which young LGBs come to understand themselves and their experiences. Some participants described personal experiences of homophobic abuse, both of a physical nature:

He started calling me a lesbian and like I'm saying like, 'so'. ... He punched me then he grabbed hold of me head and put it against the floor (Sharon: 484 - 486).

And of a verbal nature:

[People in college have called me] 'you poof, you shirt lifter, fruit cake, backside bandit'. Typical stuff (Robert: 533 - 534).

All participants who spoke about direct experiences of homophobic abuse constructed them as being problematic:

I can't explain how horrible it is when people start on you. ... Called me a 'spastic poof' one girl did and stuck her fingers up at me, ... and I just got that angry about it (Sarah: 686 - 691).

However, some participants appeared to reconstruct these negative experiences as also having some positive consequences. In particular, participants spoke about the experience of hardship in the form of homophobic abuse as leading to personal growth:

[Homophobic verbal abuse] just tends to make me stronger, I think. I'm not going to let it get me down cos somebody's called me whatever (Dave: 139 - 140).

In addition to direct personal experiences of homophobic abuse described above, participants also made reference to vicarious experiences of homophobia:

[T]here've been people at school who people thought were obviously gay, like an effeminate lad, or a girl who never wore skirts or never wore make up, and they've called them, and, I've secretly hated that because I used to think deep down that, 'that could be me, they're calling' (Kate: 50 - 54).

Whilst in the above extract the homophobic abuse described is targeted at others, it is also constructed as having some personal relevance. Overt homophobic practices, whether targeted at the individual or at others, therefore, explicitly and unequivocally convey messages about LGBs as unacceptable, bad, and/ or abnormal. Similarly, when significant or relatively powerful others fail to act to challenge instances of homophobic abuse, these messages are further reinforced and may in themselves be experienced as homophobic:

I just stood there and kept looking up at the teacher, and she's just carrying on with work and not listening or not acknowledging and not sorting out [the verbal homophobic abuse which was] going on [in the classroom].
... [N]ot having the teacher intervene, that was so nasty. And I felt like I had no support (Jo: 641 - 651).

Whilst the lack of intervention referred to in the above extract might not be considered to be overtly homophobic, less explicit or covert forms of homophobia nevertheless function to reinforce similarly negative constructions of LGBs and LGB sexualities. A further example of this is provided in the following extract:

I told my boss [that I am bisexual] and [she] says 'I stand behind you one hundred percent, don't worry about it.' As long as the residents didn't hear about it or get worried or upset about it, she didn't mind. Because she knew I'd handled it in a subtle way ... she wasn't bothered and she knew it wasn't me flaunting it (Jo: 88 - 96).

Although in the above extract the response to the participant's coming out as bisexual might be constructed as broadly accepting, this acceptance is storied as being conditional upon the fact that LGBs should not 'flaunt' their sexuality. 'Bisexuality' is therefore constructed as something that should not be 'broadcast',

and implicitly therefore as something that is 'wrong' or 'bad'. The effects of both overt and covert homophobia not only reinforce and reflect negative constructions of LGB sexualities, but they may also have the practical effect of engendering fear in LGBs, which in turn may influence their decisions about how open to be about their sexuality:

I wouldn't have dreamt of saying [that I fancied a woman to my friends], you know, probably got me head kicked in
(Kate: 42 - 43).

One consequence, therefore, of homophobic social practices may be to silence LGBs' talk about their sexuality. Again, this silencing serves to reinforce constructions of LGB sexualities as abnormal and, in so doing, protects the institution of heterosexuality. Moreover, as part of the process of developing a (public) LGB identity, LGBs are required to break this silence i.e., by coming out.

4.2 Coming Out and its Consequences

In the next section I consider various constructions of the social practice of coming out, a practice which I argue is made necessary by constructions of LGB sexualities as being other than the heterosexual norm. I also discuss various strategies which may be employed by LGBs to negotiate the coming out process. I then argue that the practice of coming out to others invites a response from those others and, finally, I discuss participants' stories of reactions to their coming out, along with various strategies they used to account for these reactions.

4.2.1 Coming Out

As discussed earlier one of the effects of constructions of heterosexualities as the norm is that heterosexuality tends to be assumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary. It is argued that coming out as a social practice is produced and made necessary by constructions of LGB sexualities as other than heterosexual, i.e., either as abnormal or as different. The process of coming out involves both recognising one's own sexuality as LGB (and other than heterosexual) and/ or the social practice of disclosing one's sexuality to others. The culturally available narratives or ways of understanding sexuality shape the ways in which individuals can make sense of their own sexuality, both in terms of the sexual identity categories (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual) that are available and in terms of what we

understand these categories to mean. Further, coming out takes place in relation to and within the context of other institutions and social practices such as the law and homophobia (as discussed previously), and the media and the LGB community/scene (discussed below), which reinforce and reproduce particular accounts of LGB sexualities.

The coming out process therefore involves identifying oneself as being different from the norm; a process which takes place within a social context where dominant accounts story LGB sexualities as abnormal. It is perhaps not surprising then that participants constructed the coming out process as being difficult. This difficulty was constructed both in terms of accepting one's own LGB sexuality:

'[J]ust like accept it yourself first, and then like once you get over that barrier, well it will not be fine, but it'll be a next step, ahead of what you were. Another hurdle over' (Sharon: 177 - 179).

And in terms of the on-going process of disclosing one's LGB sexuality to others:

[Y]ou're forever coming out for the rest of your life, and that's the hardest thing as well. Cos you're finding you have to do it all the time or not bother to say anything (Sarah: 130 - 132).

Coming out is, of course, itself socially constructed. For example, much academic theorising of LG(B) identity development constructs coming out to others positively as an 'essential stage' in the developmental process of achieving a stable, healthy LG(B) identity (see chapter 1). Alternatively, gay rights activists using slogans such as 'out and proud' construct coming out to others as self-affirming and as posing a political challenge to pathologising accounts of LGB sexualities. 'Being honest' about one's LGB sexuality, both with oneself and with others, is a central feature in both these accounts and, implicitly, these accounts construct not being out negatively; as being 'dishonest'.

One example of such an account from the interview texts in which coming out is constructed positively through the storying of it as 'being honest' is provided in the following extract:

I feel part of me is really proud to be honest with myself and not to have to hide behind sort of saying that I'm not, and do things to prove to other people that I'm something else and just to be myself (Kate: 115 - 118).

Similarly, in the extract below, *not* being 'out' to people is constructed negatively and as being problematic through the storying of it as involving dishonesty or being 'secretive':

[I]t felt like you're keeping summat secret, and it feels like you've got a tonne of bricks on your shoulders. Then when you tell someone that thing you've been keeping a secret from them for some time, it feels like 'phrrummm', it's just been knocked off your shoulders (Luke: 238 - 242).

Within accounts which story not coming out as being dishonest, 'choice' is implicitly personalised. Thus, whether a LGB individual 'chooses' to come out or not is constructed in terms of personal characteristics – how honest or otherwise that individual is being about their sexuality - rather than in terms of social constraints which may limit those 'choices'. In other words, these accounts fail to consider that LGBs make 'choices' about whether to come out or not within social contexts where LGB sexualities are storied as abnormal. As I have argued, dominant constructions of LGB sexualities as abnormal are played out in a range of social practices (e.g., the legislation on sexuality and homophobic acts), and in turn, these social practices variously function to silence talk about LGB sexualities. Not coming out may be understood, therefore, as a function of pathologising discourses about LGB sexualities, rather than as a personal 'choice'. Further, within these social contexts and in relation to, for example, the social practices of legislation on sexuality and homophobic acts, not coming out may be the *only* available choice. This 'choice' may be made, for example, in order to avoid being prosecuted, subjected to homophobic abuse, and as discussed below, in order to avoid rejection by others. The absence of consideration in these accounts of the social contexts in which LGBs make 'choices' about coming out may therefore function to personalise and pathologise 'decisions' not to come out.

Narratives about coming out are also produced within social contexts such as the media, where the disclosure of one's LGB sexuality is often storied as a

‘newsworthy’ event which invites some sort of response (often negative). Participants’ expectations about the reactions of others to the news of their LGB sexuality are shaped, therefore, by the culturally available narratives about LGB sexualities and, in particular, by narratives about coming out (as well as by other factors such as their relationship with the person to whom they are coming out). The following extract provides a good example of how media representations of coming out may inform individuals’ understandings of the coming out process:

[My mum is] the closest person to me, and yet, she was the one person I was dreading telling, ... because she’d got such high expectations, and I wanted to make her proud and everything, and ... I suppose I thought, ‘if I say I’m gay, then she won’t be proud of me’. I’d got this fear she might wanna kick me out or something. I knew really she wouldn’t, but, cos of things you hear about other people, and on telly, on films and things
(Kate: 235 - 242).

Also evident in the above extract, and indeed a theme in many participants’ accounts storying coming out to others as difficult, is the *expectation* that others’ reactions will be negative and/ or that the disclosure of their LGB sexuality will lead to rejection. Some participants constructed these fears as resulting in a reluctance to come out:

I wanted to say, ‘dad look, shut your trap, I’m bisexual’, but I know they’d have kicked me out, [so I] kept it quiet
(Luke: 74 - 76).

The construction of coming out as problematic and the expectation that others may react negatively may lead LGBs to adopt various strategies to cope with the potential difficulties associated with coming out, and these are discussed below.

4.2.2 Strategies Around Coming Out

The strategies discussed in this section centred around two key issues: deciding who to tell and who not to tell, and deciding when to tell people. It is worth noting that these strategies were not necessarily constructed by participants *themselves* as strategies which they had consciously adopted, but were described as being influential in the coming out process.

4.2.2.1 *Deciding who to tell and who not to tell*

The construction of coming out as potentially problematic and an often ‘newsworthy’ event or process inviting some sort of response, may lead LGB individuals to consider *likely* reactions to ‘the news’ of their coming out:

I knew my mum would be fine about me being gay
(Kate: 141 - 142).

This strategy of anticipating others’ reactions appeared to inform participants’ decision-making in relation to whether to come out to certain people:

B If I had had a choice, I should think I wouldn’t be out to my family at all.

...

A So you had some awareness that your parents might have a negative reaction to finding out [that you are gay]?

B Oh I knew they would. I knew they would, cos they’re homophobic and racist (Mike: 246 - 255).

The strategy of anticipating when others’ reactions might be negative therefore appeared to inform some participants’ decisions about who *not* to come out to, thus functioning to protect LGBs from potentially negative reactions from others. In the above extract, the participant constructs his reasoning for choosing not to be ‘out’ to his family as being to do with ‘knowing’ that they would react negatively. However, participants also gave other reasons for not disclosing their sexuality to others. For example, some anticipated that they would be upset, and did not want to upset them:

I wanted to tell me granddad but he’s ... a bit ill and that, he keeps forgetting stuff, so I think, well it’s not worth it, and I don’t want to upset him cos he’s seventy four, you know what I mean
(Sarah: 405 - 409).

Others anticipated that they would have difficulty understanding the news:

[T]o say, ‘well, actually, grandma, I’m gay’, she’d have to try and get her head round it, you know. Cos I can remember sitting down and telling her what homosexual and transsexual, and bisexuality meant, and she was like, ‘ooh, I don’t know’, I says, ‘well grandma, you’re heterosexual’, and she went, ‘I’m not!’ And I just

laughed, and I says, 'yeah, you are', I says, 'that means you and grandad, you're together'. It was so funny! (Kate: 210 - 217).

And some wanted to protect them from the possibility of being exposed to homophobia:

I've wanted to tell [my little sister] from the start ... but I am worried, though, for her safety and that if it got out, and she got picked on (Kate: 594 - 600).

As suggested earlier, *not* being out may be implicitly constructed as 'not being honest', and therefore as problematic. Participants' constructions of their reasons for *not* telling people that they are LGB, as described above - through accounts which story the '*needs of others*' as the motivation for not coming out - may function as a strategy which helps them rationalise or justify why they have not come out to someone, thereby alleviating a (potential) sense of having been 'dishonest'.

4.2.2.2 *Deciding when to tell people*

Along with these strategies for deciding 'who to tell' or 'who not to tell', participants appeared to utilise a range of strategies for deciding '*when* to tell' people. These are outlined below.

Self-acceptance

Some participants constructed having arrived at an acceptance of themselves as LGB as being an important, and perhaps a necessary, precursor to coming out to others:

I'd accepted it myself and it was time to tell me mum and dad [that I was LGB]
... Cos I wasn't going to tell them, cos I'd not accepted it myself
(Sharon: 156 - 159).

The term 'self-acceptance' may be used to refer to at least two slightly different concepts; the concept of accepting the identity label LGB as having a relevance to oneself - 'I *am* LGB'; or the concept of accepting or 'coming to terms' with oneself as LGB - 'I *am happy* being LGB'. Two factors related to these different meanings

of self-acceptance were separately referred to by participants as being influential in the coming out process, in terms of the decisions they made about 'who to tell'. These factors were, certainty about 'being' LGB ('I am LGB') and, happiness with 'being' LGB ('I am happy being LGB').

I'm not sure that I'm LGB

Some participants constructed a *lack* of certainty about 'being' LGB as a reason for *not* telling people:

[I decided not to come out] cos I was quite young at the time so I thought it was best not discussed with anybody
... in case it was the wrong decision (Dave: 82 - 85).

However, for some participants uncertainty about 'being' LGB was constructed as a reason *to* come out:

[It felt okay to come out to my mum, even though I wasn't] quite sure [about my sexuality] because that way, I mean, if I was having problems, I could talk to her about it (Jo: 820 - 821).

For some, therefore, the strategy of 'coming out' before being 'certain' that they 'are' LGB may function to enable young LGBs to talk to others about their sexuality and thereby access support and advice. However, for others, lack of certainty about their LGB sexuality may be constructed as a reason for not coming out.

Glad to be LGB

Some participants constructed 'being happy' as an important factor which influenced their decisions about disclosing their sexuality to others:

I suppose it does [get easier coming out], but only because of the way I feel about myself. If I wasn't happy with it myself, I wouldn't probably be able to tell people the way I am
(Kate: 525 - 526).

One strategy implicit in the above account may be therefore to wait until you are happy with yourself as LGB before coming out.

Being in a relationship

Being in same-sex relationship was constructed by some participants as a significant factor in their decisions to come out. For some, this related to having something (i.e., a relationship) that they felt they could not/ *did not want to keep* from others:

[I decided to tell them then] because I had a girlfriend and I really couldn't keep that from them (Sharon: 154 - 155).

Alternatively for others, this related to having something (i.e., a relationship) that they *wanted to tell* others about:

But when I got into a relationship with Sharon, I decided I wanted to tell the world and I didn't care (Jo: 86 - 87).

The strategy of coming out to others when in a (monogamous) relationship may function to emphasise one's 'normality' because, within dominant accounts of sexual relationships, monogamous sex is constructed as 'normal sex'.

Independence

A final factor influencing decisions about when to come out (to parents) identified within the interview texts related to independence:

[Before you come out to your parents] I'd say be fucking sure and make sure you're financially independent and you don't live with them. Make sure you're completely and utterly independent of them. You know, because it's the worst thing of all to just have nothing (Mike: 286 - 289).

One strategy which may be particularly relevant to young LGBs may be for individuals to delay disclosing their LGB sexuality to their parents until they are no longer dependent upon them (e.g., for money or housing, etc.) and therefore better able to cope with the practical consequences of possible rejection.

4.2.3 Reactions to Coming Out

As evident in the above extract, the process of coming out to others is often constructed as inviting some sort of response from them. Not surprisingly,

participants described encountering a variety of reactions to the disclosure of their LGB sexuality. These ranged from positive reactions:

But I've felt great because they said that they'd support me no matter what I did. 'Long as you're happy, that's all we care about' (Sharon: 167 - 168).

To extremely negative reactions:

[S]he refuses to speak to me, as far as she is concerned I died two years ago (Mike: 205 - 206).

Between these extremes of positive and negative reactions were, firstly, examples of reactions which participants constructed as 'partial' acceptance:

[M]e mum, she accepts it but she doesn't, like she keeps saying when I go down there, 'oh, you'll find a nice bloke one day' (Sharon: 34 - 36).

And secondly, examples in which participants described people's reactions to the news changing over time. For example, an initially negative reaction followed by gradual, increasing acceptance:

[M]y mum asked me and I said, 'yeah I am, why? I am gay.' And she went quiet, she didn't speak much for the week, I mean she spoke to me but she [wasn't] how she normally was with me. So, it was difficult, but she's the most supportive person in the world now (Sarah: 87 - 91).

In particular, several participants described that their parents' initial reaction had been to suggest that their son/ daughter was going through a 'phase':

I think she thought it was a phase, she says, 'oh Sarah it's a phase' and I goes 'oh', and then she realised when I got to eighteen ... I said, 'it's a long phase then isn't it?' (Sarah: 339 - 342).

In the same way that young LGBs' constructions of the coming out process are informed both by the available narratives about LGB sexualities and coming out (as well as by their own experiences of LGBs and coming out), so too are others' reactions to learning that someone is LGB. For example, the narrative of normality/

abnormality as a framework for understanding LGB sexualities is explicitly drawn upon in the extract below:

I think [my dad] was disgusted, ... he's like, 'no, that's not natural, and it's not normal' (Kate: 151 - 155).

And, in the following extract, the discursive framework of similarity/ difference is evident in the participant's construction of his family's difficulty in accepting his sexuality (in terms of this being different from their expectations of him):

I told my mum and the rest of my family, who I've only just told a week ago, and they're in their denial stage at the moment, 'you can't be, you can't be, you're gonna have a wife and children' (Robert: 100 - 102).

The quotations above of course represent participants' constructions of others' reactions to the disclosure of their LGB sexuality. These constructions are discussed in more detail in the section below on strategies for coping with the reactions of others to participants disclosure of their LGB sexuality.

4.2.4 Coping With Others' Reactions to Coming Out

As discussed above, coming out was often constructed by participants as problematic, both in relation to anticipatory fears about others' reactions, and in terms of their actual experiences of others' reactions to 'the news':

[O]ver my time I've had numerous suicide attempts and ... I was very depressed for a long time, and I still have remnants of that now. ... At one time cos, I felt like I had no control over what was happening, ... I suffered an eating disorder. ... I suppose I really have suffered quite a few mental problems because of rejection from people (Mike: 533 - 541).

In the following section participants' strategies for coping with these reactions are discussed in terms of how they account for their parents' and their friends' responses to the disclosure of their sexuality.

4.2.4.1 *Accounting for positive reactions*

As suggested, a theme which emerged through participants' accounts of coming out was that a negative reaction to the disclosure of their sexuality was often expected.

Because of this, participants were often surprised when their coming out *was* met with a positive response:

I went, 'I'm gay!' I just shouted it out in her ear. And she went 'aaah!', And she went, 'I'm dead pleased for you', and she gave me a massive hug and everything. She went, 'I'm dead proud of you'. I says, 'what do you mean you're dead proud of me?' She says, 'I don't know, but you just seem really different and happy' and I was like, 'I can't believe your reaction' (Kate: 328 - 333).

Further, because participants often anticipated that people would react negatively, positive reactions were often accounted for or explained. One example of this is provided in the following extract in which a positive response to disclosure of LGB sexuality is accounted for in terms of the fact that 'the news' could have been worse':

[My mum] says, 'I don't care if you grow two heads', you know, and it's just, she was worried that I was on drugs or something, cos I was depressed before I came out to her. She was like 'aah, is that all it is?' You know, 'thank goodness for that' (Kate: 142 - 145).

4.2.4.2 *Accounting for negative parental reactions – Accommodating people you are 'stuck with'*

A striking feature of participants' accounts of parental responses to the disclosure of their LGB sexuality was that negative reactions were often met with understanding. Participants often appeared to account for (potentially hurtful) negative parental reactions in ways which sought to understand or explain why their parents had responded in the (negative) way that they had. These accounts may function in various ways to enable participants to maintain a positive opinion of their parents and therefore to facilitate on-going relationships with them. Examples of participants' empathic constructions of their parents' negative reactions are discussed below.

It's not their fault, it's their upbringing

One construction of negative reactions related to parents being of a different, older generation:

[W]ell personally I think it would need a rocket up to the flipping moon to make them any different. I think basically it's just the way society and their generation, you know, because I have older parents as it is, ... and well basically it's like what their generation thinks (Mike: 643 - 647).

Evident in these accounts is the suggestion that being 'of an older generation' equates to holding 'old fashioned' and, therefore, implicitly pathologising views about LGB sexualities. Because parents' negative reactions are storied as being a result of the attitudes their upbringing has instilled in them (over which they had no control), parents are constructed as not really being responsible for those attitudes. This socio-environmental account, which is in itself implicitly pathologising of 'the older generation', resembles the kind of account sometimes used to explain why people become LGB. Within these accounts, it is the negative reaction or pathologising construction of LGB sexualities, rather than the parent, which is constructed negatively.

They want the best for me

When generation wasn't used as a way of accounting for negative parental reactions, negative responses may be explained in terms of parents wanting the best for their children:

[S]he just wanted, you know, she thought I'd be happy being straight, but I said 'Mum, like what you said, are you happy straight or gay?' and I said 'Mum, I'm happy being the way I am' (Sarah: 344 - 346).

Implicit in the parent's reaction described above is the notion that being LGB and being happy are mutually exclusive. The suggestion that you are more likely to be happy if you are straight may be indicative of a pathologising construction of LGB sexualities. However, it may also be a realistic fear about one's child being subject to homophobia and discrimination, as is more explicitly voiced in the following extract:

[S]he was scared about what people were going to say about her daughter and she didn't want me to get upset and stuff (Sarah: 104 - 106).

In both of the above extracts the use of dominant narratives about parents as ‘naturally’ wanting the best for their children functions to account for *why* parents responded in the way they did. In other words, because parents were ‘only reacting naturally’, their reactions were constructed as understandable and perhaps, therefore, ‘acceptable’.

They hadn't seen it coming

Alternative ways of accounting for negative parental reactions are evident in constructions which story participants’ LGB sexuality as being different from what parents had expected or wanted for their children. Negative reactions were accounted for in terms of parents being shocked:

I think she didn't expect her own daughter to be gay and she says now that she's not against people who are gay, it was just the shock of her own daughter (Sarah: 98 - 100).

Or being hurt:

[S]he accepts it, she knows that I'm happy and that's all she wants. ... She imagined me walking down the aisle with a bloke and having a family, but that's not gonna happen. Not with a bloke anyway. I think it hurt her (Sharon: 126 - 131).

Here, participants construct the negative responses of their parents as resulting from the fact that they hadn't anticipated that their children might be LGB. Such a construction functions to allow for the possibility of change, in the sense that parents might ‘get used to the idea’ and become more accepting. This storying of parents’ negative reactions avoids constructing parents as being ‘bad’ people who think that LGBs are ‘bad’ or abnormal.

Their reaction could have been worse

A last empathic account of parental responses identified within the interview texts was the storying of those responses as being better than anticipated:

I mean [my mum] could've took it the other way and chucked me out (Sarah: 353 - 354).

Here, parents are presented in a positive light because their reactions are constructed relative to how they *might* have reacted. In other words, these reactions are compared with readily available accounts of how parents ‘do’ or ‘should’ react to their children coming out - by ‘chucking them out’.

The last resort - I don't care what they think

In the above examples, empathic constructions functioned as a strategy for accommodating the negative reactions of parents. However, when negative parental reactions were constructed as more fixed and therefore less liable to change, an alternative strategy was to dismiss or discredit those reactions, for example, by dismissing parents as prejudiced:

Oh I knew they would [have a negative reaction to finding out that I am gay]. I knew they would, cos they're homophobic and racist (Mike: 254 - 255).

Or as stupid:

He said, ‘do you think I want a lesbian for a daughter?’ And I just, I thought ... ‘is there anything between his ears?’ And I couldn’t believe he said that. So. I mean, I had little respect for him then anyway, I’ve got even less now (Kate: 188 - 192).

In these accounts parents are positioned as being responsible for the way that they have reacted. Further, the reasons that parents have reacted in the negative way that they have (because they are “homophobic”, “racist”, ‘stupid’) are storied as relatively fixed and therefore unlikely to change. Where parents are storied as unlikely to become more accepting of LGB sexualities, the strategy of rejecting or dismissing parents and, therefore, parents’ negative responses may function as a ‘last resort’ to enable LGBs to cope with parental rejection. Similarly, as discussed below, the strategy of rejecting or dismissing those who reject you may also be employed as a way of coping with friends’ and others’ negative reactions.

4.2.4.3 *Accounting for friends’ negative reactions – Dismissing people you are not ‘stuck with’*

A feature of participants’ constructions of friends’ negative reactions to disclosure of their LGB sexuality was the absence of the types of empathic accounts described

previously in relation to parental reactions. So, whilst participants did account for the negative reaction of friends, these accounts did not incorporate attempts to try to understand why friends had reacted in the way that they did.

Don't care what they think

Friends who reacted negatively to the disclosure of participants' sexuality tended to be discredited or dismissed. For example, either because they weren't close friends:

But as for [homophobic reactions from people at] work, I just said, 'sod them', I coped because I knew I was happy. And I knew I was doing the right thing, and I couldn't give a flying leap what anybody else thought basically, especially them at work because they're not, like, the closest people in the world to me (Jo: 493 - 497).

Or because they were "stupid" or "immature":

[T]here's not very much outright homophobia, it's just like stupid smutty comments and things like that. You know, from the immature people who do it to anybody anyway (Mike: 352 - 355).

Not true friends

Alternatively, negative reactions from friends were also accounted for through the storying of friends as not being 'true' friends:

I've had one or two like so-called friends who've been friends but when I like told them [I was gay] they just didn't bother and then I rang them up and said 'What's up with you, cos you're being dead funny?' [They] said, 'oh, I don't want to be friends with you anymore' ... but, well, ... they weren't friends in the first place were they? (Sarah: 418 - 423).

In a similar way to those accounts which discredit negative parental reactions, in the examples above friends are constructed as being responsible for their negative responses and are storied as being 'bad' friends. The negative construction of friends in these accounts functions to enable participants to cope with rejection by rejecting their friends and, therefore, dismissing their friends' responses. Given the absence of empathic accounting for negative reactions from friends, it might be argued that the strategy of 'rejecting those who reject you' may be more easily utilised in relation to friends (who you can choose) as opposed to relatives (who you

are 'stuck with'), although, as suggested, where relatives' negative reactions are constructed as unlikely to change, then this strategy may be employed as a last resort. A similar strategy may also be used in response to homophobic abuse from 'strangers'.

Having discussed some of the strategies employed by participants in negotiating the coming out process and coping with others' reactions to disclosure, in the next section I consider some of the strategies which LGBs may use in order to negotiate the process of developing a positive LGB identity within discursive frameworks of normality/ abnormality and similarity/ difference.

4.3 Strategies for Coping With Developing a LGB Identity Within Discursive Frameworks of Normality/ Abnormality and Similarity/ Difference

In this last section, I start by briefly outlining some of the potential negative effects of constructions of LGB sexualities as abnormal on LGBs' identities. I then discuss the consequent need for young LGBs to develop various strategies in order to negotiate these negative effects and some of the difficulties associated with developing a LGB identity within discursive frameworks and the kind of social contexts discussed above, wherein LGB sexualities are storied in terms of normality/ abnormality and similarity/ difference. I discuss a number of discursive strategies through which participants appeared to position themselves positively within the discursive frameworks of normality/ abnormality, and similarity/ difference. This is followed by a discussion of social practices which may be used by LGBs as strategies to avoid being positioned as either abnormal or different. Finally, I discuss accessing the LGB community/ scene as a strategy which may function to minimise some LGBs' senses of themselves as abnormal or different. In relation to this, I also examine some of the problems associated with the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' which participants identified. It is worth noting that the coping strategies discussed below are identified as strategies by myself, and were not necessarily constructed by participants as strategies which they had consciously adopted (although they may have done).

4.3.1 Strategies Located Within Discourses of Normality and Abnormality

As outlined in chapter 3, the self position of a healthy, well-adjusted, 'normal' person is rendered unavailable to LGBs within discourses which construct LGB sexualities as abnormal. Accepting any of the subject positions produced by discourses constructing LGB sexualities as abnormal is likely to inhibit or prohibit a 'healthy' self identity and may lead LGBs to feel a range of negative emotions, such as depression or, as in this example, self-hatred accompanied by self-harming behaviour:

I felt disgusted with myself, I hated myself. I used to punish myself by starving myself, I used to slash my wrists, overdose and take tablets (Robert: 46 - 47).

Whilst LGBs may not position *themselves* as abnormal, the pervasive nature of discourses of abnormality surrounding LGB sexualities may lead LGBs to harbour expectations that *others* will adopt an abnormal construction of their sexualities. The effect of, either, being positioned as abnormal by others, or fearing that others will position them as abnormal is also likely to have a negative impact on LGBs' self concepts. For example:

[My mother's reaction when I told her I was gay] knocked me back a peg or two. I felt scared again. I clammed up. I started doing things that I was doing before, punishing myself and started slashing my wrists, I started overdosing again and I felt on the verge of suicide (Robert: 163 - 166).

Given the negative effects of positioning oneself or being positioned by others as abnormal, LGBs may use a range of strategies located within a discursive framework of normality/ abnormality in order to position themselves more positively.

4.3.1.1 *I'm not abnormal, they are*

One discursive strategy which may be used by LGBs to position themselves as normal is to redefine or reconstruct the category 'normal' to include themselves. One way of doing this identified within the interview texts was to position others as abnormal, thereby emphasising their own normality. For example, other LGBs (e.g., 'camp' gay men) may be storied as abnormal:

With the men it's, they've all got to be certain characters, certain way, and they mince.
... they're their own worst enemy, you see, if they stopped and took a step back and acted like men in a normal society, there wouldn't be so much problem with the outside world
(Jo: 936 - 950).

The above account which is clearly located within a discursive framework of normality/ abnormality, demonstrates that, because of the oppositional nature of the normal/ abnormal metanarrative, adopting the subject position of 'normal' implicitly (or, as in this example, explicitly) positions certain others as abnormal.

4.3.1.2 *I am normal*

A further strategy identified within the interview texts was to assert the *normality* of LGB sexualities. As in the above extract, this construction of LGB sexualities is located within, and does not challenge, the discursive framework of normality/ abnormality. Rather, LGB sexualities are simply repositioned within the same normal/ abnormal oppositional framework. The following two quotations provide examples of this sort of construction:

[A]s far as I can see it, I'm in a normal relationship, loving relationship (Kate: 1007 - 1008).

Because that's when I started to find out more about it and I realised what I'd felt earlier on when I was only eleven years old was what was natural in a sense (Jo: 24 - 26).

4.3.1.3 *I am what I am*

Alternatively the notion of normality may be individualised, thereby enabling statements such as 'this is normal for me':

It feels like it's me. I mean, just last night I sat and thought to myself, 'what would it be like if I was straight?' Would I be butcho? Would I look different? And I just thought 'no', cos it is impossible. I can't be what I'm not, I am what I am and there's no changing it, and it feels good (Robert: 28 - 31).

Whilst, as the examples above illustrate, it is possible to position oneself positively within the discursive framework of normality/ abnormality, some participants

appeared to reject the normal/ abnormal metanarrative and instead constructed their sexuality using discourses of similarity and difference.

4.3.2 Strategies Located Within Discourses of Similarity and Difference

As discussed in chapter 3, although the similarity/ difference metanarrative appears to offer a more flexible and less pathologising range of subject positions for LGBs, these positions may also be problematic. A number of strategies were identified which appeared to function to position LGBs positively within a similarity/ difference discursive framework and, specifically, as similar to various others, as well as in relation to their previous sense of self.

4.3.2.1 *I am the same person I always was*

As noted, being different in relation to one's own or others' previously held expectations about the self in the future was constructed as problematic by some LGBs. One strategy employed by participants to minimise the sense of disjunction between 'past and present self' was to construct their present self as being the same as their past self with the exception of their sexual orientation. For example:

I'm just the same person, like I say before. I just like women, not men (Sharon: 190 - 191).

Another strategy which appeared to function to emphasise the similarity between LGBs' past and present selves was to reconstruct their memories of themselves in the past in such a way as to make them compatible with their current sense of themselves. For example, the participant's response in the following extract indicates that there was a time before she was 'nine, ten' years old when she did not 'know' she was LGB:

A And how old were you when you first thought that you might be gay?

B About nine, ten (Sharon: 9 – 10).

However, she later says:

But I've known, always known (Sharon: 152).

Both of these strategies may function to enable LGBs to maintain a coherent sense of identity by emphasising the similarity between their past and present selves.

4.3.2.2 *We are all the same*

Another strategy LGBs may use to avoid being positioned as different was to emphasise the similarity of LGBs with heterosexual others:

It's like just making [young people] aware that we do exist, and we're not aliens, we're just like I say, same as everybody else (Sharon: 614 - 615).

Alternatively LGBs may emphasise their similarity with others by reference to shared or common experiences. One example of this is provided in the following extract in which same-sex attraction to women is likened to opposite-sex attraction to women. In this way, the very thing that defines lesbian 'difference' i.e., attraction to women, is reconstructed in such a way as to highlight the commonality of loving women:

I say, 'I love, I love women like you [her father] love women' (Kate: 154).

A different example of this strategy is provided by the following extract in which similarity with others who are perceived to be different (and therefore may also be subject to discrimination) is emphasised:

I think it can happen with everybody. Like, somebody in a wheelchair or somebody who's blind. They've got to be careful what they do. A black person in a white neighbourhood or a white person in a black neighbourhood, I think everything you've got to be careful with. Walking down the streets at night for anybody's dangerous (Robert: 233 - 237).

4.3.2.3 *We are all the same because we are all different*

A seemingly contradictory approach to deproblematising difference was to draw on a discourse of individual difference. The following extract provides an example of this:

[Y]ou're like a unique person and everybody's entitled to live how you want (Sarah: 491 - 492).

By storying all individuals as unique, differentness is rendered unproblematic; for, everyone is different and therefore similar, in the sense that they have uniqueness in common.

4.3.2.4 *I am different and that's okay*

In contrast to the discursive strategies described above which variously emphasise similarity, two other strategies that produced positive subject positions for LGBs were identified within the interview texts in which difference was emphasised. In the first extract LGBs are constructed as being different *and better* than heterosexuals:

I suppose it does feel different and I suppose it feels empowering as well. A lot of people say you feel really weak and no power because the majority are stood over you pushing you down but I feel quite powerful because I can communicate better with women and that's the envy of most other men in college (Robert: 15 - 19).

And in the following extract, difference is constructed as something to be celebrated:

I just love being gay, I love being in your face about it. I don't, I think it's summat, you know, if you love somebody and they're the same sex then I think it's something to be just as proud about as if you love somebody who's the opposite sex (Mike: 151 - 154).

There are then, as these examples illustrate, a range of discursive strategies through which LGBs may position themselves positively within the similarity/ difference metanarrative.

4.3.3 Social Practices as Strategies: Avoiding Being Positioned as Abnormal or Different

In addition to the discursive strategies discussed above, a number of social practices were identified within the interview texts which may be used by LGBs as strategies to avoid being positioned by themselves or by others as either abnormal and/ or different.

4.3.3.1 *Denying that one is LGB - I'm not abnormal or different, I'm not LGB*

One strategy employed by LGBs accepting negative constructions of LGB sexualities as *either* abnormal or different was to reject the identity LGB as relevant to themselves. One way of doing this was to construct alternative accounts about the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that have led them to think that they may 'be' LGB as meaning something other than that they 'are' LGB. For example, same-sex attraction may be constructed as something temporary/ a phase:

'Oh my god I'm weird!' I thought it was just a phase, I'll pass it, but it didn't (Sharon: 15 - 16).

Some LGBs may simply reject or deny the possibility that they may be LGB either to themselves:

I can recall when I was about nine, ten and I used to walk down the street and fancy these blokes and I used to force myself in to saying things like, 'you don't fancy the next bloke cos you're good looking, you're not gay, you're not gay, you can't be, you can't be' (Robert: 35 - 39).

Or to others:

My mum turned round and, like at first she asked me and I denied it (Sarah: 336 - 337).

4.3.3.2 *I'm LGB but I don't want anyone to know - Not coming out*

Alternatively, LGBs may accept that they are LGB but, in order to avoid being positioned negatively as abnormal or different by others, choose not to *disclose* their sexual identity to them:

[The] first relationship when I was fifteen lasted two and a half years and then I didn't come out to anybody or any of my friends or anything until I was nineteen (Dave: 43 - 44).

4.3.3.3 *I'm LGB but I don't want anyone to know - Passing as straight*

For similar reasons LGBs may actively 'disguise' their LGB sexuality from others, for example by dating opposite-sex partners:

I just get in, bringing this so-called girlfriend back, which I was going out with in my eyes, but she was a lesbian, and it was just

one strange thing going off, cos she was keeping her parents off her back. She's going out with me, she knew my preference and I knew her preference and we were just helping each other (Luke: 49 - 53).

Or by monitoring their behaviour to ensure that they do not behave in such a way that might lead others to perceive them to be LGB:

[F]eeling like you have to talk quietly about your relationships in public and things winds me up something rotten. ... And I hate being made to feel that I can't talk openly ... And why should we be made to feel that it's a taboo subject ... And I really want to show affection to my girlfriend in public, just like holding hands and things...Cos, I look at her sometimes, and we'll be walking along, and I went, 'ooh, flipping heck, I nearly gave you a kiss then', and then I get so angry, I think, 'why should I have to go 'oops?' Why should I have to hold back?' (Kate: 535 - 553).

In summary, a range of strategies may be used by LGBs to avoid being positioned as abnormal or different. These include, denying that one is LGB, not disclosing one's LGB sexuality to others and disguising one's LGB sexuality from others by 'passing' as straight. Though, as the above extract indicates, LGBs may not feel that they should have to 'hide' their sexuality from others, these strategies may function to help them avoid others' potentially negative reactions.

4.3.4 Social Practices as Strategies: Accessing the LGB 'Community'/'Scene' – A Place Where LGBs are Not Abnormal or Different?

Another social practice which may be adopted by LGBs as a strategy to avoid being positioned negatively by others as abnormal or different is to seek an environment within which they are less likely to be perceived as abnormal or different such as the LGB 'community'/'scene'.

4.3.4.1 *'We are family'*

In general, participants constructed the LGB 'community'/'scene' as an environment where LGBs are accepted:

I mean if society was more accepting of gay people, hundred percent like they are with straight people, then that would be brilliant but I don't think there's gonna, it's gonna be like that for a

very, very long time. But at the minute I think it's good that they've got gay pubs (Sarah: 867 - 871).

Further, constructions of the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' as an accepting environment for LGBs storied it as a social context within which they could behave in an openly LGB way. For example, being able to express affection towards partners in public places:

Now [my partner], she just likes the gay scene because she likes to be able to grab hold of me and kiss me (Jo: 860 - 862).

A further aspect of the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' which was constructed as being positive was the sense of 'community' and belonging that it can provide LGBs with:

It actually made me feel part of the community. It made me feel accepted even though it's like a segregated community, not all that particularly nice community but it was still something. It was better than isolation (Mike: 767 - 769).

Whilst all the participants interviewed for this study made reference to some of the positive aspects of the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' described above (and all attended a group for LGBs), some participants also constructed the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' as being, in various ways, problematic. For example, in the above extract, the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' is explicitly constructed as being separate from the wider society, and this separateness is implicitly constructed as less than ideal.

4.3.4.2 *There's a right way to be gay*

Another way in which the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' was constructed as problematic was the way in which it promoted particular versions of 'what it is' to be LGB. For example, in the following extract, the scene is constructed as contributing to and reinforcing a stereotyped image of 'camp' gay men and 'butch' gay women:

B [Young LGBs] start going out there on the scene when they're about sixteen, seventeen and they see all these old queens living it up and being so camp, and then look what happens. You get them thinking that's how you've gotta be when you're gay, you

gotta be camp, you got to talk high, you gotta walk with a mince. ...

A Do you think that's the same for women? That there's those pressures on women?

B Um, there's more pressures on women to be butch and wear trousers (Jo: 884 - 894).

Whilst then, as noted, the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' was storied by some participants as creating a positive sense of common identity, of 'community', in the above extract the notion of a 'common identity' is exposed as potentially problematic. This is illustrative of how boundaries are inevitably constructed around who is included and who is excluded from communities based upon a common identity, and how because of this, particular versions of 'what it means to be LG(B)' are constructed which may function to exclude people who don't 'fit' the prescribed image.

4.3.4.3 *Getting in on the 'scene' (or not)*

The theme of the 'scene' as exclusive was also evident in some participants' accounts of accessing the LGB scene in a practical sense. Access to the scene was constructed as unequal in a number of practical ways including, physical access for wheelchair users:

[T]hey've only got a few pubs and a club and they've got stairs in the club itself, but the pubs are open but, no, there wasn't really much there for me (Sarah: 70 - 72).

People on a low income:

[I]ncome support, it don't leave me much after board and that to go out. So, I didn't really go out anywhere (Kate: 760 - 761).

Perhaps of particular relevance for young LGBs, is that that the LGB 'scene' is predominantly located in pubs and nightclubs. Because of this, people who are under the legal age for buying alcohol and entering pubs and nightclubs may be excluded:

It must be hard for teenagers that can't go drinking cos it seems like [the scene's] situated around alcohol (Kate: 1268 - 1269).

Similarly, people who do not have their own transport, and do not live near to LGB venues, as the friend of a participant being discussed in the next extract shows, may find access to the 'scene' problematic:

[S]ome parents are really strict, you've gotta be in at a certain time, and it's awkward. And, obviously, cos he lives in [a city suburb], which is about five miles away from the city centre, and some buses run every hour, and if he's got a deadline to get [home], he can't come to a certain group (Luke: 1100 - 1105).

As the above extract indicates, these practical difficulties in accessing the LGB 'community'/'scene' may be exacerbated for young LGBs who are living at home and who are not 'out' to their parents.

4.3.4.4 *It's all about sex*

Further ways in which the LGB 'community'/'scene' was constructed as problematic for young LGBs concerned perceptions of the LGB 'scene' as being an overtly sexual environment:

I think [the gay scene's] superficial, artificial and purely sex and looks orientated.
... I think it's very seedy, and very dirty, and I think it's very repulsive (Mike: 805 - 813).

Male participants in particular constructed their experiences of the sexualised environment of the 'scene' as being frightening and threatening:

I can handle it now. ... but when I was younger, ... I was going in [LGB pub], and the majority of people looking at me scared me, you know, and in their eyes, young, meat on the market, 'ooh let's get him in bed' and that just really scared me, you know, and every time I went in, eyes looking at me, it was like they was undressing me with their eyes. I couldn't cope with that (Luke: 202 - 217).

Additionally, the scene was constructed as particularly threatening for young or sexually inexperienced people, and people without experience of the 'scene':

I think it's extremely difficult for young people, for any person basically who don't know what they're looking out for. I think you need to be extremely experienced about sex and the scene before you even go onto it.

... I think you just need to know everything about what could happen, and what to look out for. You know, and who's dangerous and who's not (Mike: 823 - 830).

Within these constructions of the LGB 'scene' as a sexually threatening environment, LGBs on the 'scene' are storied as sexually predatory. These stories both reflect and reinforce the kind of pathologising accounts discussed previously of LGBs as 'preying' on young or inexperienced LGBs, accounts which, as noted, are also embodied in the age of consent legislation. In terms of their expectations of the LGB 'scene' *prior* to experiencing it, fears about encountering 'predatory' LGBs were expressed both by female participants:

I only knew of one, [LGB pub], and I knew that it's a bit of a dive that's all I knew. And I wasn't gonna go down there on my own, cos I'd heard horror stories of being raped or something, probably got in the toilet by some big butch WOMAN. So I was a bit wary of going down on me own (Kate: 762 - 767).

And by male participants:

[I think younger people find LGB pubs/ clubs] ... hard to go into, I'd say. You know you want to and it's really easy to walk in, but to walk in and not know anybody prior to that is hard for you. The thought, 'well what are people gonna do in there, what is it like, is someone gonna come up to me and just rape me or something?' Because you hear so many rumours (Robert: 1159 - 1164).

However, whilst both female and male participants had similar expectations and/ or fears about the 'scene', there appeared to be a gender difference in terms of participants' *actual* experiences of the LGB 'scene', and whether they found it a sexually threatening environment. In particular, gay women were storied (by female participants) as less predatory or threatening than gay men:

[T]hat's the best of all the pubs, because it's mainly women that go in there and it's not such a meatmarket (Jo: 935 - 936).

Further, gay women were constructed (again by female participants) as being less predatory or threatening than heterosexual men:

It's just something about being in your own club though, it's just the atmosphere and you haven't got worry about bloody blokes looking at you all night (Sarah: 871 - 873).

Both of these extracts are consistent with dominant accounts of gender which story men as more active, dangerous and sexually predatory than women. As noted, these accounts are reflected and reinforced in the legislation relating to sex – and in the absence of legislation for same-sex relationships between women.

To conclude, accessing the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' - an environment within which LGBs are arguably not pathologised as abnormal or different (though see, for example, discussion of bisexualities in chapter 3) - is one strategy which may help LGBs to adopt positive self positions as 'normal' and 'similar'. However, as I have argued, the LGB 'community'/ 'scene' may also be in some ways problematic for LGBs. In particular, LGBs who do not conform to the versions of 'what it is to be LGB' promoted by the LGB 'community'/ 'scene', may feel excluded from it and different from those that do.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter I have examined the various effects of discourses which construct LGB sexualities in terms of abnormality, normality, similarity and difference. I have discussed the ways in which these discourses may become embodied as social practices. I have explored how these social practices can impact on the lives of young LGBs and shape the ways in which they (and others) come to understand themselves and their experiences as LGBs. Lastly, I have discussed various strategies which may be employed by LGBs as ways of coping with some of the difficulties inherent in developing a positive LGB identity within narratives of normality/ abnormality and similarity/ difference.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Initially in this final chapter, I consider my findings in relation to the aims of this study, as outlined in the introduction. I provide a summary and overview of the narratives that young LGBs draw upon in constructing an 'LGB identity', and of the functions and effects of these narratives in terms of the broader cultural contexts and institutions which shape discourses of sexuality. I then discuss the implications for therapeutic practice, training and service provision for young LGBs. Next, I consider the implications of adopting a social constructionist approach for researching LGB sexualities. The relationship between theory and practice, both therapeutic practice and research practice, are understood to be mutually constitutive of each other in terms of the way we theorise practice and practice theory. Therefore, theoretical implications are integrated into my discussion of therapeutic practice and research practice. Finally, I provide a critical evaluation of this study.

5.1 Summary and Overview of the Study

In common with the social constructionist approach outlined in the introduction to this study, I have argued that our ways of thinking about, talking about and understanding the world are shaped and limited by the discourses we have available to us. In particular, our ways of talking about and understanding sexual identities are constrained by modernist, essentialised categories of 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual' and 'heterosexual'. In this sense, the deconstruction of modernist approaches to theorising LGB sexualities and postmodern alternatives provided in chapter 1 also constituted part of the methodological approach to this study and, indeed, the first stage of my analysis. As discussed in the introduction, whilst postmodernist theorising has critiqued the notion of essentialised identity categories, because these are the dominant ways of thinking about LGB sexualities it is difficult to talk about sexuality without reference to them. The dominance of essentialised identity categories as ways of understanding sexuality was reflected in participants' constructions of their own sexual identity as 'lesbian', 'gay', or 'bisexual'. Arguably this resonates with Weeks's (1991: viii) conceptualisation of sexual identity categories as "necessary fictions", and with Epstein's (1987) contention

that the social constructionist critique of essentialised identity categories fails to accommodate LGBs' need to understand and legitimate their places in the world.

Consistent with the aims of this study, a diverse range of accounts about young people's experiences of constructing an identity as LGB were generated within the interviews. These accounts were broadly grouped into the metanarratives of 'normality/ abnormality' and 'similarity/ difference' which participants drew upon in their constructions of LGB sexualities. These narratives were, of course, prominent themes within the literature on LGB sexualities outlined in chapter 1 of this study. For example, narratives of normality and abnormality framed the debates between proponents of the pathologising medical model of LGB sexualities and LGB affirmative theorists and activists. Similarly, narratives of similarity and difference, both relative to heterosexuals and LGB others, have provided key constructs underpinning the various understandings of LGB sexualities discussed in the introduction to this study but, for example, are particularly prominent in debates around the differences and diversity within 'the LGB community'. In terms of the normal/ abnormal metanarrative, my analysis explored the ways in which LGB sexualities are constructed as abnormal, relative to the construction of heterosexualities as normal. I argue that this makes legitimate the question 'what makes people LGB?' As a result and in common with the literature explored in the introduction, a range of aetiological accounts of LGB sexualities emerged. Similarly, because heterosexualities are implicitly assumed to be 'normal' there is an absence of accounting for the aetiology of heterosexualities. An alternative way of constructing LGB sexualities was in terms of similarity and difference, relative to heterosexual others, LGB others and in relation to biographical narratives. A feature of constructions of LGB sexualities in terms of the relational constructs of similarity and difference was that this metanarrative appeared to offer greater flexibility, in that it is possible to be both similar and different. The metanarrative of similarity and difference also appeared to be less pathologising of LGB sexualities in that difference can be constructed positively.

The social, cultural and individual functions and effects of these various discourses were then considered. In particular, I discussed the ways that narratives and discourses function to sustain and legitimate particular patterns of social action

whilst excluding others. Further, I examined the ways that certain social practices, such as legislation around LGB sexualities, homophobic acts and coming out function to reproduce and reinforce particular constructions of LGB sexualities.

I argue that the dominance of discourses which construct LGB sexualities as abnormal is reflected in two key ways. Firstly, discourses of abnormality are more readily available and ‘rehearsed’ than discourses of similarity and difference. This is evident in that, even where participants used *alternative* constructions of LGB sexualities, they frequently referred to the dominant, abnormal narrative. In other words, in order to produce alternative, opposing constructions of LGB sexualities it is often necessary to first refute and, as a result, give voice to, the dominant discursive construction. Secondly, the social practices which function to regulate LGB sexualities, discussed in chapter 4, arise out of and reinforce dominant constructions of LGB sexualities as abnormal. I argue that the findings of this study have a number of significant implications for therapeutic and research practice, which are discussed in turn below.

5.2 Implications of this Study

This study has a number of significant implications for clinical/ therapeutic work which seeks to address the needs of young LGBs. In this section I discuss implications for direct therapeutic intervention, both with young LGBs and with their significant others. I then discuss the implications for service provision, including the training of practitioners. Next, I consider the broader cultural implications in terms of education, legislation and the LGB ‘community’. Finally, I discuss the implications of this study for research practice.

Whilst I discuss a range of implications for direct therapeutic intervention initially in the section below, in line with others (e.g., Coyle, 1998; D’Augelli, 1996), I would stress that many young people, including some who took part in this study, successfully negotiate the process of developing an identity as LGB without the need for therapeutic support. Further, I argue that where young LGBs do experience problems, those problems should be understood and contextualised in a way which recognises that they are developing a LGB identity in a social world in which dominant constructions of LGB sexualities story them as ‘abnormal’. They may, of

course, also experience problems that are completely unrelated to their LGB sexuality. With this in mind, the implications of this study go beyond direct therapeutic intervention with young LGBs (i.e., helping them to position themselves positively as LGB within a heterosexist world), and towards considering the implications for challenging broader cultural and social institutions which function to reinforce and perpetuate constructions of LGB sexualities as 'abnormal' (i.e., tackling the sources of LGB oppression).

5.2.1 Implications for Therapeutic Practice

One of the key findings of this study was that the similarity/ difference metanarrative appeared to afford greater flexibility and more possibilities for constructing a positive identity as LGB compared with the normal/ abnormal metanarrative. I argue that this has major implications in terms of direct therapeutic work with young LGBs (and young people questioning their sexuality). Where young people present with negative and fixed descriptions of themselves as LGB which story LGBs and LGB sexualities as 'abnormal', it would be useful to deconstruct these negative accounts in order to open up space for alternative meanings to be explored.

For some clients it may be useful to consider the ways in which they might position themselves positively within narratives of normality/ abnormality. A number of strategies for doing this were identified within the interview texts, such as expanding the notion of normality to include oneself, constructing oneself as 'normal' relative to 'abnormal' others, and individualising the notion of normality. However, the possibilities for positioning oneself positively within a narrative of normality/ abnormality are limited and may be difficult to maintain given the dominance of pathologising discourses which story LGB sexualities as abnormal within society. An alternative and potentially more useful therapeutic strategy might be to deconstruct taken-for-granted notions about what it is to be 'normal'. In doing this, we might encourage clients to question the 'usefulness' of normal/ abnormal constructions, with the aim of helping them to explore alternative accounts, for example, those which construct LGB sexualities in terms of similarity and difference.

I argue that narratives of similarity and difference have the potential to provide more positive understandings of LGB sexualities for two key reasons. Firstly, 'difference' does not carry the exclusively negative connotations of 'abnormality' and can be constructed positively (e.g., as a mark of individuality). Secondly, the notions of similarity and difference are relative, so it is possible to be both similar (in some respects) and different (in some respects) to other individuals at the same time. So, for example, one might be the same gender, the same age and share the same interests, but differ in terms of sexual identity. Further, it is possible to be similar to some individuals whilst being different to others. Given the flexibility and relativity notions of similarity and difference, it is argued that it might be useful to encourage clients to explore various ways of constructing LGB sexualities and, in particular, to consider how they might position themselves within a discursive framework of similarity and difference.

Whilst I argue that 'difference' is likely to be preferable to 'abnormal' as a discursive framework for understanding sexual identity, it is acknowledged that 'being different' is not without its problems. This may be particularly true for adolescents for whom the 'desire' to 'fit in' with peers may be especially strong. Indeed, as discussed in the analysis, young LGBs sometimes experienced difference problematically, describing feeling 'strange' or 'alien' compared to their peers. These potential difficulties may, then, need to be addressed in therapeutic work. It is suggested that where difference is experienced as problematic, one strategy might be to explore positive subject positions within narratives of difference, such as 'being an individual'.

Additionally, if young LGBs are struggling with feelings of isolation or a sense that they are 'the only one', therapists might provide information about LGB sexualities and make clients aware of the existence of, for example, LGB literature, films, magazines. In addition to helping young people gain a sense that they are not 'the only one', these sources of information may also construct LGB sexualities positively, which may help to counter culturally pervasive, negative constructions. Similarly, it might be useful to talk about LGBs in the public eye (i.e., celebrities/ musicians/ politicians), who may also provide young LGBs with positive role models. A further strategy might be to inform clients about where, if they want to,

they can meet ‘similar others’, either through local young LGB support groups (where they exist), through other commercial LGB venues (‘the scene’), or through LGB groups organised around particular activities or interests¹. Information about these kinds of groups, clubs and organisations can be found in the community listings sections of magazines such as *Diva*, *Attitude*, and *The Pink Paper*. Alternatively, contact with or information about other LGBs might be accessed via the internet. For some participants in this study, contact with other LGBs gave them a sense of ‘belonging’, of ‘community’ and a feeling of acceptance. Meeting other LGBs may, then, enable clients to achieve a sense that they are not alone and that others have shared similar experiences, etc. So, whilst clients may still feel different from some, they may also begin to feel that they have something in common with others.

Whilst this strategy may work for some clients, it may not be right for everyone and it should, therefore, be pursued with care. A number of issues regarding potential problems with accessing the ‘scene’ or LGB groups were raised by participants in this study, which therapists might usefully bear in mind. These included a lack of access for people with disabilities, a lack of transport or finances limiting access, or access being restricted by age. Perhaps more significantly, there may be issues around young people’s safety, and the ‘suitability’ of different venues for *young* LGBs. Participants in this study voiced a number of concerns about the commercial LGB ‘scene’, particularly in terms of it often being situated around alcohol and sex. One of the implications of this is that it is imperative that therapists are as informed as possible about the nature of particular venues on the ‘scene’ before they provide young LGBs with information about them. Where therapists are uninformed, they might usefully provide clients with suggestions about where they might obtain such information (i.e., LGB Switchboard). A further issue which might also be useful for therapists to consider is that, because of the multiple differences between LGBs, the strategy of young LGBs meeting others may not necessarily result in them achieving a sense of similarity with others. The recognition that some LGBs may feel that they do not ‘fit in’ is informed by and underlines the arguments explored in

¹ For example: GFSN, the Gay Football Supporters Network (national organisation); VADA (LGB Community theatre company, Manchester); Dynamo Dykes Volleyball (London); Cheek to Cheek (Ballroom, Latin and Jive dance classes, Brighton); Gay Outdoor Club (Glasgow); Leicester Wilde Cats (Lesbian and Gay football team); Pink Singers (London); Gay Caravan and Camping Club (National).

the introduction, in relation to the differences and diversity within ‘the’ LGB ‘community’. Because some LGBs may feel that they don’t ‘fit in’, therapists might productively explore issues around young people’s expectations and experiences of meeting other LGBs in terms of both similarities and differences.

Narratives of similarity and difference could also be usefully discussed in terms of clients’ biographical narratives. Some of the participants in this study spoke about experiencing a sense of dissonance between their present identity as LGB and their own and others’ previous expectations about themselves. Some clients may need help and support in adjusting to a ‘new’ sense of self. Again, the flexibility of the similarity/ difference narrative, in that one can be both similar and different, might be usefully utilised within a therapeutic context. Specifically, therapists might explore or discuss with clients the ways in which they are different in some respects but similar in others, i.e., with the exception of their sexual orientation. By emphasising the ways in which clients are largely ‘still the same person’ we may help them to develop a coherent sense of self. Further, a consideration of the potential positives associated with change or personal development and of the ways in which we all change during our lives may prove a fruitful avenue for therapeutic intervention.

Given the widespread cultural assumption of heterosexuality in the absence of evidence to the contrary, not surprisingly, coming out and in particular the disclosure of LGB identity to others featured prominently within the interview texts. Within participants’ talk about coming out, many of them storied *having* come out positively in terms of it providing a sense of ‘being honest’ with themselves and others, of it being a relief or a ‘weight off their shoulders’, and in terms of no longer having to hide an important ‘part’ of themselves. However, significantly, the *process* of coming out was almost exclusively constructed by participants as being difficult. This would suggest that is likely to be an area in which young LGBs *may* need support. As discussed, disclosing one’s LGB identity is often storied within the LGB affirmative psychological literature and within broader cultural narratives about coming out as being a necessary stage in developing a ‘healthy’ and positive LGB identity. In this study, participants’ talk about coming out or disclosing their LGB identity generated multiple stories. Specifically, young LGBs used a range of

strategies in deciding who to come out to, and when to come out to them. Fear of disclosure leading to rejection was storied as being a significant consideration in the decision making process. Importantly, young LGBs' decisions about whether or not to disclose their sexual identities were informed by factors specific to their individual circumstances. The implication of this is that there is not a single or 'right' way to come out. Perhaps for young people in particular, who are likely to be dependent on others (e.g., for housing or financial support), there may be very real risks associated with coming out. A decision *not* to come out may therefore be a very pragmatic and 'psychologically mature' one. This has significant implications for therapeutic work around helping young people make decisions about disclosing their LGB identity. It is imperative that decisions about whether to come out or not, when, how, and to whom need to be made in relation to the client's specific circumstances. Therapists might help young people to rehearse and experiment with different 'coming out scenarios' both in terms of ways to do it, and in terms of how others might react. Another useful strategy, where possible, might be to encourage young LGBs to talk to other LGBs about their experiences of coming out, or to provide information about LGB literature/ films, etc., which address issues around coming out (See for example, Rashid and Hoy, 2000: *Girl 2 Girl* – a book in which young lesbians and bisexual women discuss their experiences of coming out).

Within participants' talk about coming out to others, they described having met with a variety of different reactions, ranging from acceptance to extreme rejection. The experience of being rejected was, not surprisingly, storied by participants as being problematic. This would suggest that this is another area where young LGBs may benefit from support. Again, a range of different strategies for coping with and accounting for negative reactions emerged within participants' talk about coming out. A significant finding was that participants appeared to account for the negative reactions of parents differently to the negative reactions of others. Specifically, they accounted for negative parental reactions in ways which sought to understand or explain why their parents had reacted the way that they had, whilst they were more likely to dismiss or discredit others' negative reactions. I have argued that empathic accounting for parents' negative reactions might function to enable them to maintain relationships with people on whom they are dependent. With this in mind, care needs to be taken by therapists aiming to counteract negative reactions to

disclosure by affirming LGB sexualities and constructing them positively, so that, for example, it is the negative reaction of parents that is discredited, rather than the parents themselves.

It may also be constructive for therapists to consider working with parents/ significant others who have either reacted negatively to a young person's disclosure of their LGB identity and/ or who are having difficulty accepting their LGB daughter/ son (or friend/ relative). Such work may be done with parents/ significant others independently or with the young person present. Similar strategies to those described above in relation to working with young people themselves might usefully be employed, in terms of deconstructing normal/ abnormal narratives of LGB sexualities and exploring alternative accounts, and providing information about LGB sexualities and support groups (e.g. PFLAG – Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gay Men). An important issue within participants' accounts of parental reactions was that the disclosure of LGB identity created a sense of dissonance for parents between their daughter's/ son's 'new' LGB identity/ lifestyle and parents' previously held expectations about their future, assumed heterosexual lifestyle. Parents/ significant others may, then, need help in coping with this and, as discussed above, the flexibility of the similarity/ difference narrative might be usefully explored within the context of therapeutic work with parents/ significant others. Working therapeutically with parents/ significant others where there are difficulties around the acceptance of a young person's sexuality can serve a useful function of locating 'the problem' within the relationship between the young person and their parent/ significant other, as opposed to 'being' the young person's LGB sexuality. In this way, we might avoid the problem identified by Kitzinger (1987) and Perkins (1996), and discussed previously, that by helping LGBs to cope with their experiences of oppression, we individualise and depoliticise that oppression and therefore ignore and fail to challenge its *sources*.

It is acknowledged, however, that there may be some circumstances where young LGBs (and/ or therapists) feel certain that parents/ significant others are unlikely to change and accept the young person's LGB sexuality. For participants in this study who constructed their parents'/ significant others' negative reactions to disclosure as fixed, and therefore unlikely to change, one strategy adopted was to reject or

dismiss their parents as a way of coping with being rejected. In such cases, young people are likely to need support in dealing with rejection and/ or the loss of these relationships, both in terms of emotional support and possibly also practical support (e.g., helping them to access support with issues around housing, finance, etc.).

5.2.2 Implications for Service Provision

In addition to having implications for direct therapeutic work, it is also argued that this study has range of implications for the ways in which services for young LGBs seeking therapeutic support are organised and delivered. Given the number and variety of accounts of young LGBs' experiences generated within this study, it is unlikely that one model of service delivery or therapeutic practice will meet the needs of all young LGBs. This is consistent with postmodern calls for plurality in approaches to therapeutic practice which can begin to accommodate more adequately the diverse experiences and needs of young LGBs. It is therefore suggested that a broad range of services are required, which might be specialist or generic and within either the voluntary or statutory sectors. A further issue of relevance to the organisation of services relates to the question of whether (young) LGBs seeking support should ideally be seen by LGB therapists. I would argue that the notion of 'matching' LGB clients with LGB therapists is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, practical factors, such as the fact that there may not be any LGB therapists or 'openly' LGB therapists within a given service may mean that this is not an option. Secondly, because of issues raised by the multiple differences between LGBs, as explored in the introduction to this study, I suggest that it is simply not possible to 'match' clients with therapists in this way. Having said this, I acknowledge that LGB therapists may have some 'expertise' (e.g., experiences of coming out, dealing with prejudice, knowledge of the LGB 'scene'/ 'community') which might usefully inform their practice with LGB clients. However, there is a danger that assumed similarities between LGB clients and therapists might be misplaced or exaggerated and might, therefore, inhibit therapeutic curiosity (Cecchin, 1992; 1987). I argue that a final implication of this research in relation to service provision is that it is imperative that the issues raised in this study should be integral to the training of all therapists and others who are likely to come into contact with young people (e.g., teachers or social workers), in order that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to enable them to

adequately address the potential issues faced by young LGBs. Further, training should explore and challenge heterosexist assumptions and negative and/ or pathologising constructions of LGB sexualities – both those which are implicit within theoretical models, and those which may also be held by training providers and trainees themselves. Such interventions may, then, begin to address some of the issues around the continuing presence of heterosexism within therapeutic training courses identified by Milton (1998) and Milton and Coyle (1999).

5.2.3 Implications for Broader Cultural Practices

I argue that this study also points to the need for interventions which seek to challenge broader cultural practices which promulgate negative constructions of LGB sexualities. It is suggested that by challenging cultural practices which regulate and pathologise LGB sexualities we might make it easier for young people to position themselves positively as LGB. Potentially fruitful interventions might include introducing educational programs within schools and colleges that challenge negative constructions of LGB sexualities and which provide young people with ‘accurate’ and non-pathologising information about LGB sexualities; the introduction of anti-LGB bullying and discrimination policies within schools/ colleges; and reforming laws which reflect and reinforce negative constructions of LGB sexualities, in particular in the UK, the abolition of Section 28 and the inclusion of ‘sexual orientation’ within equal opportunities legislation and employment policies. Given the concerns noted previously about the ‘suitability’ of commercial LGB venues for *young* LGBs, one of the broader implications of this study might also be the need for increased provision of groups, services and events specifically targeted at *young* LGBs.

5.2.4 Implications for Research

This study has a range of implications for the theory and practice of research. One of most significant implications relates to the usefulness of the social constructionist framework adopted here. I argue that this postmodern approach allows for the expression of the plurality and mutability of identities and for the emergence of multiple, contextually dependent meanings. This, therefore, has considerable potential for generating new or different ways of thinking about and understanding the phenomena being studied. This is in contrast to modernist approaches which, in

the search for a single 'truth' or 'reality' employ 'scientific' methods (e.g., the production of testable hypotheses which are theory based, open to falsification and offer predictable results) which necessarily close down and place limitations on the possibility for multiple meanings or understandings to emerge.

Further, the social constructionist approach to doing research embodies a two key features which might make it attractive to therapists. Firstly, in its focus on language and, more specifically, on the effects of particular ways of talking about or constructing things, social constructionism has a direct relevance to the practical, day-to-day work of many therapeutic interventions, which often involve talking and listening to people. Secondly, the fact that within clinical sessions therapists and clients are involved in the process of co-constructing particular versions or ways of understanding the topic under discussion resonates with the social constructionist contention that our understandings of the world are a product of the social processes and interactions between people. I argue that these features would suggest that research conducted from a social constructionist perspective is likely to produce findings that therapists might find accessible, useful and relevant to their therapeutic practice.

This study, informed as it is by postmodern, queer understandings of identity has, I argue, in some ways addressed a key criticism of queer theory which relates to its efficacy in relation to therapeutic practice (and as a political strategy). This criticism is partly supported by the relative lack of its application to clinical research and practice in comparison to the expansive literature on queer theorising (though see Simon and Whitfield, 2000 discussed in the introduction). However, as outlined above, this study has a number of significant implications for therapeutic work with young LGBs, as well as having important implications in a broader political context. The rich variety of clinically relevant data generated in this study through the application of a social constructionist approach and conceptually consistent methodologies might encourage others to explore the implications of postmodern theorising for therapeutic research and practice.

5.3 Critical Evaluation of the Present Study

Below I critically evaluate this piece of research, first in relation to issues of reflexivity and second in relation to issues of research quality.

5.3.1 Issues of Reflexivity

In the following section, I go some way towards uncovering the ways in which my own values and experiences have impacted upon the research and vice versa. As described in chapter 2 of the study, a research journal was kept throughout the research in order to facilitate the reflexivity process. However, this reflexive process is discussed here with the recognition that the extent to which one can 'completely' identify one's own values and assumptions, and make them explicit, is questionable.

Firstly, my selection of research topic was informed by my own experience of having grown up questioning my sexuality and developing an identity as a gay woman. Secondly, it was informed by my clinical practice with young people. At a fundamental level, these experiences suggested that researching young LGBs would be interesting and of personal significance. This interest and, in particular, the belief that the research had important implications for therapeutic practice has helped to motivate me and, ultimately 'keep me going' during the research process. Further, these experiences undoubtedly informed and shaped the questions I asked. Perhaps one of the most significant ways in which they shaped this research relates to my understanding of LGB sexualities as 'normal', healthy variations on the continuum of human sexuality. If, for example, I held the view that LGB sexualities are 'abnormal', my analysis and interpretation of the interview text might have looked rather different!

Another factor likely to have shaped this research relates to my sexual identity, which I believe may have affected my ability to gain access to participants in this study. In my original conversations with co-ordinators of various support/ social groups for young LGBs I noticed that they were initially appropriately protective of group members and, as a consequence, were wary of my motivations for wanting to interview group members. In each case, when I disclosed my own sexuality, group co-ordinators appeared to become more open to the idea of getting involved in the

study. Though it is impossible to draw firm conclusions about the effect of this, it seems possible that a heterosexual researcher may well have had more difficulty in gaining access to participants. My involvement with group members over a six month period and, in particular, my sharing of my own sexuality with them may also have influenced their willingness to be interviewed for this study. The length of my involvement with the group also meant that participants could, to some extent, 'get to know' me and possibly, therefore, feel more comfortable about talking to me. This was perhaps particularly important, given that some 'sensitive' issues were discussed during the interviews.

Another way in which my sexual identity may have had an impact on the research is in terms the *relatively* high level of 'insider' knowledge that my experiences as a gay woman afforded me. Although, again, it is difficult to talk conclusively about the extent to which this influenced the research, I think this 'insider' perspective may have helped me during the interviews in terms of understanding what might be described as LGB 'culturally specific' references. Of course, given that one of the issues raised in this study concerns the multiple differences between LGBs, the extent to which I can claim to have 'insider' knowledge is questionable. So, for example, whilst we may have had an identity as LGB in common, we could, and did, differ in other respects, such as sex, class, age, religious beliefs and (dis)ability. Interestingly, many of these issues of difference around cultural 'categories' did not feature explicitly in participants' talk about differences between LGBs within the LGB 'community'. For example, race and/ or ethnicity was not discussed as an axis of difference in the LGB 'community'. The absence of talk about race and/ or ethnicity might be attributable to the fact that I, along with all of the participants, identify as white and British and may therefore be less sensitive to issues of racial/ ethnic difference than individuals who identify as members of a minority ethnic group.

A further way in which I may have influenced the research relates to my inexperience as a discourse analyst. As noted in chapter 2, one of the difficulties in attempting discourse analytic research for the first time is that there is no prescribed method. The difficulties I encountered in trying to do a discourse analytic study for the first time were partly due to this lack of a prescribed method but also because

the process of doing discourse analytic research was so profoundly different from my previous (largely positivist and quantitative) research experience and training. As a result, I was left with a sense of considerable anxiety about whether I was 'doing it right', or whether I was missing something that was there in the data if only I knew how to analyse it. My inexperience as a discourse analyst influenced the research in a number of ways. Firstly, when I designed the interview schedule I did not have any experience of analysing data from a discourse analytic perspective and, consequently, was not aware of the rich variety of data which could be generated from within a relatively small amount of text. My concern to have 'enough' data resulted in me having a huge, sometimes daunting, amount of text to transcribe and analyse! In retrospect I feel that, had the interviews been more focused, the analysis might have felt more 'manageable', and it is likely that they would still have generated sufficient data to provide a sample containing "the variety of discursive forms that are commonly used when speaking of or writing about the research topic" (Coyle, 1995: 247). Secondly, as noted in my discussion of the analytic process in chapter 2, my first efforts at analysing the data resulted in a number of 'false starts' which, whilst forming part of the process of learning how to analyse the text around discourses rather than content based categories, was extremely frustrating and time-consuming.

The relationship between the research and the researcher is not, of course, unidirectional and I think there are two areas in particular where the process of conducting this research has influenced me. Firstly, the experience of writing and researching the introduction to this study, in terms of exploring different ways of understanding LGB sexualities led me to reflect on the assumptions underpinning my own thinking about and understanding of sexual identities. Secondly, some of the insights and implications for therapeutic practice, highlighted above, have informed my own clinical work with young people. In particular, over the past two years I have worked with three young people who have been questioning their sexuality and/ or identified as LGB and have wanted to talk about these issues in therapeutic sessions. Many of the issues raised in this research were relevant to my clinical work with these young people, such as issues around coming out to parents and dealing with their reactions, feeling confused and isolated and worrying that being LGB is 'wrong' and 'abnormal'. The implications for direct therapeutic

interventions, explored above, have proved extremely useful in helping young people explore and deal with these issues and develop a positive identity as LGB.

5.3.2 Issues of Research Quality

A potential criticism of this study relates to the fact that the participants who took part in this study do not constitute a 'representative sample' of all young LGBs. However, given that discourses rather than individuals, provide the units of investigation in a discourse analytic study, the representativeness of the sample is not a relevant criteria for evaluating this kind of research. As suggested above, what is of importance is that a sufficient diversity of young LGBs were included in the study in order to facilitate the emergence of the range of accounts used by people to construct or story LGBs and LGB sexualities. It might reasonably be argued that has not been achieved in this study because, for example, as previously noted, all participants identified as white/ British. Despite this, I would argue that this does not render the findings of this study 'invalid', rather, it points to potential fruitful avenues for further research.

As outlined in the method section of this study, because the traditional scientific criteria for judging research quality (i.e., reliability and validity) are conceptually inconsistent with the approach adopted here, alternative criteria have been utilised in order attempt to ensure the 'quality' of this research. Firstly, I have tried to meet the four criteria for evaluating discourse analytic research outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987) and previously detailed in my method chapter. In this sense my analysis has, I would argue, firstly, given coherence to discursive constructions of LGB sexualities in terms of normality/ abnormality and similarity/ difference. Secondly, it has highlighted the relationships between these different constructions and explored their social, cultural and individual functions and effects and, thirdly generated 'novel explanations' about them. Fourthly, I would argue that this study has proved extremely 'fruitful' in terms of in generating a range of significant implications for therapeutic practice, research and theory.

Along with these criteria for evaluating the quality of discourse analytic research I have also attended to the issues of indexicality, inconcludability and reflexivity which Parker (1994) outlines and which, again, were discussed in chapter 2. I have,

then, detailed each aspect of the research process and, as far as possible, described the method in ways which makes it transparent and open to scrutiny by others. Further, my presentation/ report contains significant amounts of raw data (interview transcripts) in order to demonstrate how I reached my analytic conclusions in relation to the text. These conclusions are thereby rendered open to alternative interpretations by readers of this study. The acknowledgement that this is just one reading, my reading and analysis of the texts points to the fact that others might produce different readings. In analysing the data I deliberately sought to draw out the discourses and narratives that participants drew upon in constructing their accounts, rather than, for example, a more detailed analysis of the speech patterns and conversational devices people use to manage the presentation of their identity. Alternatively, had I approached the data as a series of case studies, it might have enabled me to draw out interpretations about the influence of demographic factors and to trace biographical stories more closely. These different approaches to analysing the data would likely yield findings which might be equally interesting and fruitful. In saying this, then, it is clearly acknowledged that my account is not the definitive account, rather it is provisional and contingent.

One of the issues that this recognition raises, however, is the apparent contradiction between acknowledging that my argument is a provisional and contingent account rather than an 'objective' portrayal of 'truth' or 'reality', and the need to convince readers that my account of the research is a 'good' account. For, as Kitzinger (1987: 189) observes "[l]acking criteria of truth and falsehood, and deprived of a priori reliance on empiricist methodologies, how can we judge the adequacy of our social constructionist methods and theories?". Whilst the issue of inconcludability of social constructionist research is yet to be resolved, and indeed may ultimately be irresolvable, in line with White (1991), I would argue that by avoiding the extreme relativist position that all versions of 'reality' are equally valid or useful, it is possible and indeed necessary, to assert that some accounts are more adequate and useful than others. I argue that, by deconstructing dominant constructions of LGB sexualities, the account produced in this study offers not simply *alternative* but more *liberating* ways of understanding LGB sexualities. Further, I would argue that good research should not simply theorise, but should be practically applicable. This study has met this criteria, in that it has produced a considerable range of

implications for practice, theory and research, as discussed above. Finally, I have outlined above the ways in which I have paid attention to what others have suggested constitutes good qualitative research practice. However, it is recognised that the extent to which I have succeeded in doing this remains to be judged by consumers of this research.

5.4 Conclusion

In this study I have shown how our ways of understanding the world and, in particular LGB sexualities, are shaped and constrained by the ways of understanding we have available to us. Through the adoption of a social constructionist approach to discursively analyse participants' accounts, a diverse range of accounts of LGB sexualities have been generated. By deconstructing dominant, taken-for-granted understandings, I have demonstrated how we may open up possibilities for alternative and more liberating ways of understanding LGB sexualities. I have argued that dominant cultural constructions story LGB sexualities as abnormal in opposition to the heterosexual norm. An alternative discursive framework which constructs LGB sexualities in terms of the relational constructs of similarity and difference was identified. This study then examined the social, cultural and individual functions and effects of these various discourses. In particular, I have demonstrated the ways that narratives and discourses function to sustain and legitimate particular patterns of social action whilst excluding others. I have shown how social practices, such as legislation around LGB sexualities, homophobic acts and coming out function to reproduce and reinforce particular constructions of LGB sexualities. I have also demonstrated how LGBs may variously position themselves and be positioned more or less positively (or negatively) within these metanarratives.

The key findings of this study are that young LGBs deployed a range of strategies in order to construct a positive identity as LGB. Relative to the discursive framework of normality/ abnormality, narratives of similarity and difference provide young LGBs with a more flexible framework and, consequently, more opportunities for them to construct a positive identity as LGB. I have explored in depth the wide ranging implications of these findings for therapeutic practice,

training and service provision for young LGBs, as well as for challenging broader cultural practices which promote negative constructions of LGB sexualities.

The findings of this study will, of course, need to be disseminated if positive change is to be achieved in these various contexts, and a number of different audiences need to be targeted in order to achieve such changes. To this end, I hope to publish this research in a range of journals, magazines and newsletters which are accessed by, for example, therapists and other professionals working with young people (e.g., in education and social service provision), service managers, training organisations and policy makers. I also hope to present this research to those working with young people through workshops, seminars and training sessions. It is hoped that the dissemination of this study's findings will prompt and facilitate real changes in therapeutic practices and in other social, cultural and political contexts and, further, that these changes will have a positive impact upon young people who are unsure about their sexual identity and/ or are constructing an identity as LGB.

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Appendix 1 - Participant Information Sheet

I am a post-graduate university student and am studying to become a clinical psychologist. Clinical psychologists are people who work in the health service and help people who are having difficulties in their lives, often by talking through problems. As part of my course, I have to do a study and, because I am gay myself, I have chosen to ask young people who are either gay, lesbian or bisexual, or think they may be, about their ideas on the subject. I am doing this not just because it will be interesting but because it could be very useful – professionals who come into contact with young people (e.g. teachers, doctors, nurses, clinical psychologists, etc.) have to understand that, at times, gay, lesbian and bisexual young people do have some special problems, and they need to know how best to help.

I am approaching several social/support groups for young people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual to ask group members to consider being interviewed as individuals about their experiences of being young and gay, lesbian, or bisexual. What I would like to do is to interview each participant for about an hour to an hour and a half. I would like to audio tape the conversation to enable me to get as full a picture as possible and to make sure that I do not miss anything that is said. I shall write up my work but will make completely certain that none of your names are mentioned or that anything you tell me can be traced to you.

Appendix 2 – Demographic Information

Participant Name	Sex	Age	Sexual Identity	Relationship Status	Dis/ability / Health Status	Occupation	Class (self-defined)
Kate	Female	22	Gay	In a relationship (3 months)	Able bodied	Unemployed	Middle
Jo	Female	20	Bisexual	In a relationship (9 months)	Able bodied	Bar staff	Middle/working
Sarah	Female	23	Gay	In a relationship (10 days)	Wheelchair user - Cerebral palsy	College	Middle
Sharon	Female	25	Gay	In a relationship (9 months)	Partial right-sided paralysis - Meningitis	Nursary nurse	Working
Dave	Male	23	Gay	Single	Able bodied	College (NVQ) Shop assistant	Middle
Luke	Male	25	Bisexual	In a relationship (5 days)	Able bodied HIV+	Unemployed (Disability Living Allowance)	Middle
Mike	Male	16	Gay	Single	Able bodied	Collage (GCSEs)	Working
Robert	Male	15	Gay	Single	Able bodied	Collage (GCSEs)	Middle/working

Appendix 2 – Demographic Information (Continued)

	Race/ethnic identity	Religious identity	Where living now	Where lived in past	Who live with now	How much £ for leisure activities	Time in group
Kate	White/ British	No formal religion	City	Always lived in same city	With partner	About £20	3 months
Jo	White/ British	Church of England	City centre	Always lived in same city	With partner	About £15	1 year
Sarah	White/ British	Church of England/ Buddhist	City centre	Town in midlands	Alone	About £15 (on benefit)	3 months
Sharon	White/ British	None	City centre	Many towns in south of England. 9 yrs in same city	With partner	About £15	5 years
Dave	White/ British	None	City centre	Town in midlands	Alone	About £55	5 years
Luke	White/ British	No formal religion. Believes in God	City	Always lived in same city	Alone	About £30 - 40	3 years
Mike	White/ British	No formal religion - Pagan	City	Many different towns and rural areas in north of England	Alone	Not much (on benefit)	8 months
Robert	White/ British	Atheist	City centre	Town in north of England	With mother and brother	None	3 years

Appendix 3 – Draft Interview Schedule

Personal Information

1. Name. _____
2. Age. _____
3. Gender _____
4. Are you in a stable relationship with a partner at the moment?

5. What is your disability status?

6. What is your occupation/employment status? (Please say if in full or part-time education, i.e., at school, college, university, etc.)

7. How would you describe your social class?

8. How would you describe your ethnic identity/race?

9. How would you describe your religious beliefs (if any)?

10. Where do you live (name of village/town/city)?

11. Please say if you have lived anywhere else when you were younger?

12. Who do you live with (parents, foster parents, in care, spouse, partner, with other lesbians/gay men/bisexuals, with straight friends, other family, university residence, with employer, alone etc.).

13. Roughly, how much 'spending' money do you have to spend on going out/socialising each week?

Self

How would you describe yourself as a person generally?

How would a close friend describe you as a person generally?

People describe their sexuality in lots of different ways. How would you describe your sexuality?

Most people experience lots of different emotions or feelings when they first realise that they may be lesbian, gay or bisexual. Can you describe how you felt when you first realised that you might be lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Can you remember what thoughts went through your mind at the time?

What did you do when you first realised that you might be lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Can you tell me about whether your thoughts and / or feelings about being lesbian, gay or bisexual have changed since you first realised that you might be lesbian, gay or bisexual?

(How do you feel about being gay now?)

Why do you think they have changed in that way / not changed?

Can you tell me about whether your behaviour has changed since you first realised that you might be lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Why do you think it has changed in that way / not changed?

What are the good things about being gay?

What are the bad things about being gay?

If you could choose your sexual identity, would you choose to be lesbian, gay or bisexual or straight, or other? Why?

In what ways does being gay affect your life?

In what ways do you think that being gay has affected who you are as a person, if at all?
(confidence, sociability, self-worth, honesty, integrity)

Have you ever hidden your sexuality from someone? If so, how did that make you feel?
(at home, at school, at work)

Some people experience psychological difficulties because of the way that they feel, or because of the way that other people feel about them being lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example: depression, anxiety, loneliness, feeling bad about themselves. Can you tell me about whether you feel that you have experienced any psychological difficulties?

People often feel pressured into looking or behaving in a way that lives up to others expectations. Can you tell me about whether you have ever felt the need to change the way you are in order to 'fit in'?

(Amongst lesbians, gay men or bisexuals. Amongst straight people? At home/work/school)

Relationships

I'd like to ask you some questions about your relationship with various different people in your life. For example, your parents, other family members, your friends. I'm mainly interested in how you think that being gay has affected these relationships.

Can you tell me about your relationship with your parents/step-parents?

Questions to ask if not covered in answer to above question:

How close are you – when you were younger, now?

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)?

Do they know you are gay? Did you come out to them, if so how?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their parents?

What advice would you give to parents whose son / daughter has just come out?

Can you tell me about your relationship with other members of your family (siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins)?

Questions to ask if not covered in answer to above question:

How close are you – when you were younger, now?

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)?

Do they know you are gay? Did you come out to them, if so how?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their families?

Can you tell me about your relationship with your friends.

Questions to ask if not covered in answer to above question:

How close are you?

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)? Are you more open with some than others?

Do they know you are gay? Did you come out to them, if so how?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their friends?

What advice would you give to friends of someone has just come out?

Can you tell me about your relationship with your peers/colleagues (other than your friends).

Questions to ask if not covered in answer to above question:

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)?

Do any of them know that you are gay? Did you come out to them, if so how? If not, do you think that they know?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their peers?

Sexual Relationships and Dating

I'd like to ask you some questions about sexual relationship and 'dating'.

Can you tell me about any same-sex relationships that you've had?

Questions to ask if not covered in answer to above question:

How old were you? How old was your partner?

How long did it last?

Was it a sexual relationship?

How happy were you in the relationship?

What difficulties did you encounter, if any?

How did it make you feel about yourself, your partner, about how others see you?

How did other people respond?

Can you tell me about any heterosexual relationships that you've had?

Questions to ask if not covered in answer to above question:

How old were you? How old was your partner?

How long did it last?

Was it a sexual relationship?

How happy were you in the relationship?

What difficulties did you encounter, if any?

How did it make you feel about yourself, your partner, about how others see you?

How did other people respond?

Have you ever had 'casual sex' with anyone?

Questions to ask if not covered in answer to above question:

How old were you? How old was your partner?

How did it make you feel about yourself, your partner, about how others see you?

How did others who knew about it respond?

Coping

How would you say that you have coped with any difficulties that you have experienced as a result of being lesbian, gay or bisexual?

(Things that you have thought, things that you have done)

What advice would you give to someone else who is young and lesbian, gay or bisexual to help them to cope with any difficulties that they may have experienced as a result of being lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Support

I'd like to ask you some questions about what support, if any, you have had. For example, whether it met your needs, and also, whether you think there is anything that could have made things easier for you, but wasn't available.

Some people experience difficulties either in coming to terms with being lesbian, gay or bisexual, or because of things that happen to them because they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Can you tell me about whether you have experienced any difficulties of this sort?

Do you feel that you need or have needed support or information to help you to cope with these difficulties, and what sort of things would have helped?

(What might help others?)

Can you tell me about any support that you have had?

(Who from - parents, siblings, other family, friends, teachers, health professionals, gay community, social/support groups, etc.? How did it come about? How did you find out about it? How available/ accessible was it? Did it meet your needs, was it helpful? Was it sought or offered?)

Do you think that it is necessary, or helpful to have support services specifically for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals?

(Can general support services offer the same quality of support? Is it important that services are staffed by lesbians, gay men and bisexuals? Should there be support that is specifically for young people?)

Can you tell me about whether you feel that you need or have needed support for things that are unrelated to your being lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Can you tell me about whether you have ever been offered 'support', or been forced to seek 'support' that you didn't want because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual?

People sometimes find it difficult coming to terms with finding out that someone that

they are close to is lesbian, gay or bisexual. Have any of the people that are close to you experienced any of these sorts of difficulties?

Do you think that they would have benefited from support or being provided with some information?

What advice would you give to people who may be in a position to help young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual? For example: parents, teachers, youth workers, the 'gay community', health professionals, etc.

Contact With, or Discussion About Other Lesbians, Gay Men or Bisexuals

Did you know anyone who was gay when you were growing up?

(Family, friends, at school – teachers/pupils)

How do you think that affected you?

(positive, negative)

Were you aware of gay people in the media? For example, music, films, TV, etc. Can you give me any examples?

How do you think that affected you?

(positive, negative)

Was homosexuality talked about by your family? If so, how was it talked about?

(Was it helpful/unhelpful? What would have made it more helpful? Or, Would it have been helpful if it was?)

Was homosexuality talked about by teachers at school? If so, how was it talked about?

(Was it helpful/unhelpful? What would have made it more helpful? Or, Would it have been helpful if it was?)

Was homosexuality talked about by pupils at school? If so, how was it talked about?

(Was it helpful/unhelpful? What would have made it more helpful? Or, Would it have been helpful if it was?)

Can you tell me about how you first made contact with other lesbians, gay men and bisexuals?

(What made you decide to? Why was it important to? How easy, and where did you find out about where you could meet other lesbians, gay men and bisexuals?)

What sort of places do you usually go out to to socialise?

(Lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight, mixed)

Do you ever go to lesbian, gay and bisexual pubs or clubs? If so, what do you think of these places?

Do you ever go out to other places, groups or organisations where lesbian, gay or bisexual people meet? If so, what do you think of these places?

Can you think of any changes to existing places that would improve them? For example, make them more attractive, welcoming, or accessible to you or other young lesbians, gay men or bisexuals?

Have you any ideas about new or different places to socialise that don't currently exist, but that you would like to see in the area where you live?

Experience of prejudice/discrimination/abuse

Can you tell me about whether you have ever experienced discrimination or prejudice toward gay people in general?

(How did this make you feel, think, what did you do? How did others react?)

Can you tell me about whether you have ever experienced discrimination/prejudice yourself because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual?

(How did this make you feel, think, what did you do? How did others react?)

Can you tell me about whether you have ever been verbally abused because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual?

(How did this make you feel, think, what did you do? How did others react?)

Can you tell me about whether you have ever been physically abused because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual?

(How did this make you feel, think, what did you do? How did others react?)

Attitudes about homosexuality

People hold varied beliefs about what makes people lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example, some would say that it's because of biological or genetic factors – that you are born lesbian, gay or bisexual. Some would say that it's to do with people's experiences as they grow up. Others would say that it's something that people choose to be. What do you think, and do you think it matters?

Do you think that sexuality is something that is fixed or can it change over time?

How do you feel about the way that society views and treats lesbian, gay and bisexual people?

Is it different for *young* lesbian, gay or bisexual people?

How do you feel about the way that the 'gay community' views and treats young lesbian, gay and bisexual people?

Other

Finally, is there anything else that you would like to discuss that we haven't covered in the interview?

Have you any other comments?

Appendix 4 - Participant Information Sheet

I am a post-graduate university student and am studying to become a clinical psychologist. Clinical psychologists are people who work in the health service and help people who are having difficulties in their lives, often by talking through problems. As part of my course, I have to do a study and, because I am gay myself, I have chosen to ask young people who are either gay, lesbian or bisexual, or think they may be, about their ideas on the subject. I am doing this not just because it will be interesting but because it could be very useful – professionals who come into contact with young people (e.g. teachers, doctors, nurses, clinical psychologists, etc.) have to understand that, at times, gay, lesbian and bisexual young people do have some special problems, and they need to know how best to help.

I am approaching several social/support groups for young people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual to ask group members to consider being interviewed as individuals about their experiences of being young and gay, lesbian, or bisexual. What I would like to do is to interview each participant for about an hour to an hour and a half. I would like to audio tape the conversation to enable me to get as full a picture as possible and to make sure that I do not miss anything that is said. I shall write up my work but will make completely certain that none of your names are mentioned or that anything you tell me can be traced to you.

I am particularly keen that the research reflects the experiences of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people themselves. As part of trying to make sure that this happens, I would like to show young people who attend [this group] the interview questions that I intend to use, and ask them for their opinion on it. Specifically, I would like to know whether there are any important areas that I have missed out, or whether they think that any of the questions need to be rephrased or omitted, etc. In addition, I am interested in making contact with anyone who is interested and would be willing to participate in a pilot interview.

Appendix 5 - Summary of Feedback on Draft Interview Schedule

1. **Questions about the need for participants to put their full name on the consent form.** Some felt uncomfortable, and suggested just asking for participants' first names. Response: to keep the request for the participant's full name on the consent form, because of the need for them to give signed consent. However, noted the need to make it clear to all participants that their identity would remain confidential, that their transcript would be fully anonymised.
2. **Some participants questioned whether the question about class and disability was relevant or necessary information.** Response: felt it was relevant to request this information in order to provide readers with detailed information about who had participated in the study.
3. **Question about the wording of the question relation to relationship status on the personal information sheet, How do you define stable?** Response: Changed to ask if participants are currently in a relationship and if so, for how long.
4. **Suggestion that asking what the good/bad things about being gay was too simplistic.** Response: Altered wording to ask 'in what positive/negative ways does being L/G/B affect your life?'
5. **Mixed response about question asking whether participants had experienced any psychological difficulties – some felt uncomfortable with the term 'psychological difficulties', others felt this was an important question.** Response: to keep the question in, but to stress to participants that not all LGBs would experience psychological problems, and that if they had, this might not be related to their sexual identity.
6. **Suggestion that the relationships section was too repetitive.** Response: to maintain the number of questions as 'prompts' for the interviewer, but to try avoid excessive repetition during the interview.
7. **Question about how casual sex is defined.** Response: to include some examples, suggested by the group, of what might be considered 'casual sex'.
8. **Members of the group pointed out that in the section on contact with or discussion about other LGBs, there was a question about growing up which was phrased in the past tense ('When you were growing up'). Some of the group pointed out that they were still growing up!** Response: changed to allow for past/present response.
9. **Suggestion that the first questions – 'how would you/ a friend describe yourself as a person generally' was too difficult.** Response: agreed! Removed the questions from the interview schedule.
10. **Suggestion that the interview is too long!** Response: agreed! I omitted the final two sections on experience of prejudice and abuse and attitudes about homosexuality, on the basis that these areas were likely to be covered in other

areas of the interview, and that I could 'draw them out' in the context of other questions where appropriate.

Appendix 6 – Revised Interview Schedule

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your time and help is very much appreciated.

Before we start the interview there are just a few things that I would like to mention.

Firstly, this study is looking at the experience of being young and lesbian, gay or bisexual, and therefore, you are the expert! There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am interested in your own thoughts, feelings, and understanding of things.

If there are questions where you are not sure what I'm getting at, then please feel free to ask me to explain more clearly. Also, please don't worry if there are any questions that you don't want to answer, just let me know and we can miss those questions out.

There will be time at the end of the interview to discuss the questions that I asked and how they made you feel.

Personal Information

1. Name. _____
2. Age. _____
3. Gender _____
4. Are you in a stable relationship with a partner at the moment?

5. What is your disability status?

6. What is your occupation/employment status? (Please say if in full or part-time education, i.e., at school, college, university, etc.)

7. How would you describe your social class?

8. How would you describe your ethnic identity/race?

9. How would you describe your religious beliefs (if any)?

10. Where do you live (name of village/town/city)?

11. Please say if you have lived anywhere else when you were younger?

12. Who do you live with (parents, foster parents, in care, spouse, partner, with other lesbians/gay men/bisexuals, with straight friends, other family, university residence, with employer, alone etc.).

13. Roughly, how much 'spending' money do you have to spend on going out/socialising each week?

Self

People describe their sexuality in lots of different ways. How would you describe your sexuality?

Most people experience lots of different thoughts and emotions when they first realise that they may be lesbian, gay or bisexual. Can you describe how you felt, what thoughts went through your mind and what you did when you first realised that you might be lesbian, gay or bisexual?

(thoughts, feelings, behaviour)

Can you tell me about whether your thoughts and/or feelings about being lesbian, gay or bisexual have changed since you first realised that you might be lesbian, gay or bisexual?

(thoughts, feelings, behaviour - what about what you do about it?)

(How do you feel about being gay now?)

Why do you think they have changed in that way / not changed?

In what positive ways does being lesbian, gay or bisexual affect your life?

In what negative ways does being lesbian, gay or bisexual affect your life?

If you could choose your sexual identity, would you choose to be lesbian, gay or bisexual or straight, or other? Why?

In what ways do you think that being gay has affected who you are as a person, if at all?

(confidence, sociability, self-worth, honesty, integrity, security)

Some people experience psychological difficulties because of the way that they feel, or because of the way that other people feel about them being lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example: depression, anxiety, loneliness, feeling bad about themselves. Can you tell me about whether you feel that you have experienced any psychological difficulties?

Relationships

I'd like to ask you some questions about your relationship with various different people in your life. For example, your parents, other family members, your friends.

Can you tell me about your relationship with your parents/step-parents? I'm mainly interested in how you think that being gay has affected your relationship with your parents/step-parents.

How close are you – when you were younger, now?

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)? Have you ever hidden your aspects of your sexuality from your parents? If so, how did that make you feel?

What problems has this caused?

Do they know you are gay now? Did you come out to them, if so how?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their parents?

What advice would you give to parents whose son / daughter has just come out?

Can you tell me about your relationship with other members of your family (siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins)? Again, I'm mainly interested in how you think that being gay has affected your relationship with your family.

How close are you – when you were younger, now?

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)? Have you ever hidden your aspects of your sexuality from your parents? If so, how did that make you feel?

What problems has this caused?

Do they know you are gay now? Did you come out to them, if so how?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their families?

Can you tell me about your relationship with your friends? Again, I'm mainly interested in how you think that being gay has affected your relationship with your friends.

Are your friends gay /straight / both

How close are you?

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)? Are you more open with some than others? Have you ever hidden your aspects of your sexuality from your parents? If so, how did that make you feel? What problems has this caused?

Do they know you are gay now? Did you come out to them, if so how?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their friends?

What advice would you give to friends of someone has just come out?

I'm interested in whether you think that being gay has affected you relationships with people at work/school (other than you friends). Can you tell me about your relationship with your peers/colleagues

How open about your sexuality are you (at first -----now)? Have you ever hidden your aspects of your sexuality from your parents? If so, how did that make you feel? What problems has this caused?

Do any of them know that you are gay? Did you come out to them, if so how? If not, do you think that they know?

What influenced your decision to come out/not to come out?

How did they react - at first, later, now?

How has this made you feel?

How has it affected the way that you behave/ are?

How do you think this has affected your relationship with them? Then, now, in the future?

What advice would you give to a young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about coming out to their peers/ colleagues?

Sexual Relationships and Dating

I'd like to ask you some questions about sexual relationship and 'dating'.

Can you tell me about any same-sex relationships that you've had?

How old were you? How old was your partner?

How long did it last?

Was it a sexual relationship?

How happy were you in the relationship?

What difficulties did you encounter, if any?

How did it make you feel about yourself, your partner, about how others see you, about being gay?

How did other people respond?

Can you tell me about any heterosexual relationships that you've had?

How old were you? How old was your partner?

How long did it last?

Was it a sexual relationship?

How happy were you in the relationship?

What difficulties did you encounter, if any?

How did it make you feel about yourself, your partner, about how others see you, about being gay?

How did other people respond?

Have you ever had 'casual sex' with anyone? E.g., cottaging, cruising, renting, one-night stands.

How old were you? How old was your partner?

Was this a same-sex or heterosexual experience?

Was this your first same-sex sexual experience?

How did it make you feel about yourself, your partner, about how others see you, about being gay?

How did others who knew about it respond?

Do you feel that you put yourself at risk?

Coping and Support

I'd like to ask you some questions about coping and what support, if any, you have had. For example, whether it met your needs, and also, whether you think there is anything that could have made things easier for you, but wasn't available.

Some people experience difficulties either in coming to terms with being lesbian, gay or bisexual, or because of things that happen to them because they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. For example, feeling isolated, feeling frightened, worrying about what is safe and unsafe sex, experiencing prejudice or abuse. Some people don't experience any of these problems at all.

Can you tell me about whether you have experienced any difficulties of this sort? If so, how would you say that you cope / have coped with them?

(Things that you have thought, things that you have done

Advice for others)

Do you feel that you need or have needed support or information to help you to cope with these difficulties, and what sort of things would have helped?

(What might help others?)

Can you tell me about any support that you have had?

(Who from - parents, siblings, other family, friends, teachers, health professionals, gay community, social/support groups, etc.? How did it come about? How did you find out about it? How available/ accessible was it? Did it meet your needs, was it helpful? Was it sought or offered?)

Do you think that it is necessary, or helpful to have support services specifically for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals?

(Can general support services offer the same quality of support? Is it important that services are staffed by lesbians, gay men and bisexuals? Should there be support that is specifically for young people?)

Have you ever been offered or forced to seek support that has been unhelpful or that has not met your needs?

(Needed support for things that are unrelated to your being lesbian, gay or bisexual?

Forced to go by others to 'cure')

People sometimes find it difficult coming to terms with finding out that someone that they are close to is lesbian, gay or bisexual. Have any of the people that are close to you experienced any of these sorts of difficulties, and if so do you think that they would have benefited from support or being provided with some information?

What advice would you give to people who may be in a position to help young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual? For example: parents, teachers, youth workers, the 'gay community', health professionals, etc.

Contact With, or Discussion About Other Lesbians, Gay Men or Bisexuals

Have you known anyone who was gay whilst you were growing up?

(Family, friends, at school – teachers/pupils)

How do you think that affected you?

(positive, negative)

Were you aware of gay people in the media? For example, music, films, TV, etc. Can you give me any examples?

How do you think that affected you?

(positive, negative, is it a good thing that more visible or just stereotypes)

Was homosexuality talked about at home? If so, how was it talked about?

(Was it helpful/unhelpful? What would have made it more helpful? Or, Would it have been helpful if it was?)

Was homosexuality talked about at school? If so, how was it talked about?

(By teachers in class (which), by pupils)

Was it helpful/unhelpful? What would have made it more helpful? Or, Would it have been helpful if it was?)

Can you tell me about how you first made contact with other lesbians, gay men and bisexuals?

(What made you decide to? Why was it important to? How easy, and where did you find out about where you could meet other lesbians, gay men and bisexuals?)

What sort of places do you usually go out to to socialise?

(Lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight, mixed)

Do you ever go to lesbian, gay and bisexual pubs or clubs, or other places, groups or organisations where lesbian, gay or bisexual people meet? If so, what do you think of these places?

(How do you feel about the way that the 'gay community' views and treats young lesbian, gay and bisexual people?)

Have you any ideas about new or different places to socialise that don't currently exist, but that you would like to see in the area where you live? Or any changes to existing places that would improve them? For example, make them more attractive, welcoming, or accessible to you or other young lesbians, gay men or bisexuals?

Other

Finally, is there anything else that you would like to discuss that we haven't covered in the interview? Have you any other comments?

Appendix 7 - Personal Information Sheet

1. Name. _____
2. Age. _____
3. Gender _____
4. Are you in a relationship with a partner at the moment? If so, how long for?

5. What is your disability status?

6. What is your occupation/employment status? (Please say if in full or part-time education, i.e., at school, college, university, etc.)

7. How would you describe your social class?

8. How would you describe your ethnic identity/race?

9. How would you describe your religious beliefs (if any)?

10. Where do you live (name of village/town/city)?

11. Please say if you have lived anywhere else when you were younger?

12. Who do you live with (parents, foster parents, in care, spouse, partner, with other lesbians/gay men/bisexuals, with straight friends, other family, university residence, with employer, alone etc.).

13. Roughly, how much 'spending' money do you have to spend on going out/socialising each week?

Appendix 8 – Interview Information

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your time and help is very much appreciated.

Before we start the interview there are just a few things that I would like to mention.

Firstly, this study is looking at the experience of being young and lesbian, gay or bisexual, and therefore, you are the expert! There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am interested in your own thoughts, feelings, and understanding of things.

If there are questions where you are not sure what I'm getting at, then please feel free to ask me to explain more clearly. Also, please don't worry if there are any questions that you don't want to answer, just let me know and we can miss those questions out.

There will be time at the end of the interview to discuss the questions that I asked and how they made you feel.

Appendix 9 - Consent Form

I have had the nature of the research explained to me. I understand that any information I give will be fully anonymised and will not be able to be traced to me as an individual. I understand that all information discussed during the interviews will be treated as confidential

I have had the need for audio taping of the interview explained to me and I give my consent to the recording of the interview. I understand that the audio tapes will be coded and stored securely, and that their contents will remain confidential and used for this investigation only.

I understand that if I give my consent to participate at this point in time, I can change my mind and withdraw my consent at any point in the future.

I give my consent to be interviewed, and for the interview to be audio taped and transcribed.

Name (please print):

Name (please sign):

Date

If you have any further questions, I can be contacted at the following address:

*Anna Engel
Department of Clinical Psychology
Centre for Applied Psychology
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester, LE1 7RH.*

Appendix 10 - Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

I am a post-graduate university student and am studying to become a clinical psychologist. Clinical psychologists work in the health service and help people who are having difficulties in their lives, often by talking through problems. As part of my course, I have to do a study and, partly because I am gay myself, I have chosen to ask young people who are either gay, lesbian or bisexual, or think they may be, about their ideas on the subject. I am doing this, not just because it will be interesting but because it could be very useful – professionals who come into contact with young people (e.g. teachers, doctors, nurses, clinical psychologists, etc.) have to understand that, at times, gay, lesbian and bisexual young people do have some special problems, and, I believe they need to know how best to help.

I am approaching several social/support groups for young people who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual to ask group members to consider being interviewed as individuals about their experiences of being young and gay, lesbian, or bisexual. What I would like to do is to interview each participant for about an hour to an hour and a half. I intend to audio tape and transcribe the conversation to enable me to get as full a picture as possible and to make sure that I do not miss anything that is said. I shall write up my work but all information provided by participants will be treated confidentially*. I will make completely certain that no names are mentioned and that nothing that is said can be traced to participants.

* All information will be treated confidentially, unless the researcher has cause to believe that someone is at risk of harm.

Appendix 11 - Consent Form

I have had the nature of the research explained to me. I understand that any information I give will be fully anonymised and will not be able to be traced to

I have had the need for audio taping of the interview explained to me and I give my consent to the recording of the interview. I understand that the audio tapes will be coded and stored securely, and that their contents will remain confidential and used for this investigation only.

I understand that if I give my consent for to participate at this point in time, I can change my mind and withdraw my consent at any point in the future.

I give my consent for to be interviewed, and for the interview to be audio taped and transcribed.

Name of Participant (please print):

Name of Parent/Guardian (please print):

Name of Parent/Guardian (please sign):

Date

If you have any further questions, I can be contacted at the following address:

*Anna Engel
Department of Clinical Psychology
Centre for Applied Psychology
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester, LE1 7RH.*

Appendix 12 - Glossary of Transcription Notations

Brief interruptions by the person who is not speaking are contained within round brackets, e.g.,

I told Tom first, (Mmm) he's my closest friend (Right).

Overlapping speech is marked by two sets of double forward slashes, e.g.,

A: So you're saying that Robbie Savage is one of the most talented
//footballers in the country?

B: Yes. No question about it.//

An equals sign at the end of a speaker's utterance and/or at the start of the next utterance indicates the absence of a discernible gap, e.g.,

A: It sounds like that was a positive experience=

B: =Yes, yes it was.

A full stop in round brackets, e.g., (.) indicates a pause.

One or more colons indicate an extension of the preceding vowel sound, e.g.,

I'm talking abou::t

Underlining indicates that the words are uttered with added emphasis; words in capitals are uttered louder than the surrounding talk, e.g.,

It's not right, not right AT ALL!

Words written in a smaller font are spoken quietly, e.g.,

He was very softly spoken, you know.

A full stop before a word or sound indicates an audible intake of breath, e.g.,

I don't know, .I suppose

Empty square brackets indicate that some transcript has been deliberately omitted. Material in square brackets is either clarificatory information or information which has been changed to protect participants' anonymity, e.g.,

I met her and Kate [her girlfriend] at [a pub] in town [].

In extracts quoted within the analysis chapters of this thesis, three full stops in a row indicate where pieces of text have been omitted from a passage of speech, e.g.,

She was the one person I was dreading telling, ... because she'd got such high expectations.

In extracts quoted within the analysis chapters of this thesis, a 'return' followed by three full stops in a row at the beginning of the next line indicate where a substantial amount of text has been omitted which includes the talk of both the interviewer and the interviewee, e.g.,

- B It was time to tell my mum and dad.
... Cos I wasn't going to tell them, cos I'd not accepted it myself.

Or:

- B If I had had a choice, I should think I wouldn't be out to my family at all.

...

- A So you had some awareness that your parents might have a negative reaction to finding out [that you are gay]?

Appendix 13 – Examples of Entries in Reflexive Diary

9/12/98

Notes on interview with Sharon —

Generally went well.

Felt more relaxed than in prev. interview -
 Able to ask questions / respond to answers
 more 'naturally' without relying too much
 on the int. Sched.

N.B. — Need to ask question re: 'difficulties
 later in interview (Koping Sectⁿ?)' :-
 info' relevant to this question is
 tending to crop up later in interview —
 Maybe because participants feel more
 'at ease' + better able to 'open up'.

N.B. — Also need to ask participants
 about their understanding of their
 'difficulties' - - to distinguish issues
 related to LGB identity + those not.

26/9/99

Had full week off work to get stuck into
 analysis — Got nowhere!

Feel completely stuck + overwhelmed +
 pissed off.

Need to talk to Sam re:

Too many categories, no structure, not
 interesting. Reading about DA isn't helping.
 Not sure what I'm supposed to be looking
 for in my data, or how to find it.

Addendum: Interview Transcripts

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for the Degree of
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at
The University of Leicester.

Anna Engel
Centre for Applied Psychology: Clinical Section

June 2001

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Interview 1
Mike
Interview Date
25/11/98

- 1 A Okay, just a, sort of, quite, um, general question to start off with which is what
2 are your thoughts about actually doing this interview and why, why did you agree
3 to be interviewed for this study?
- 4 B Um, um, I'm fine with being interviewed I'm absolutely quite, quite enjoying it,
5 um, I just think it's (.) um (.) well I think people who 'ave contact with young
6 people and where young people who have, who act', who young people actually
7 go for, go to for help should actually have some, alot, quite a bit of awareness
8 about gay issues (Mmm) You know, and, um, sexuality issues as well and at the
9 moment they just don't seem to have that. An' personally, I just, oh I don't know,
10 it's just something I enjoy doing and I seem to talk about, every conversation I
11 'ave seems to talk about men, seems to end up at men and sex, (A: Laughs) so it's
12 only just like another conversation.
- 13 A Right, I'll look forward to that (A: Laughs). Okay, um, (.) right, um, the next few
14 questions are, sort of, generally relate to you, to you. So, um, first, first one is,
15 people describe their sexuality in lots of different ways, how would you describe
16 your sexuality?
- 17 B Um, my sexuality, I, um, (.) Right, I basically, personally I believe that nobody
18 can be actually one hundred percent homosexual or one hundred percent
19 heterosexual, I think everybody's bisexual, but mo:re to one to than to the other.
20 (Mmm) Um, so I like to think of myself about ninety nine percent gay. (Right)
21 You know, (Yeah) you know, cos as as yet I've never had any any interest in
22 women in a sexual way so, (Mmm) an' and plus also I really enjoy the gay
23 lifestyle so.
- 24 A Yeah, great, okay How old were you when you first realised that you might be
25 gay?
- 26 B I first started thinking about, um, (.) first started thinking about it at about the age
27 of about ten or eleven. (Mmm) But I didn't accept it till I was about fourteen,
28 about thirteen, (Yeah) about thirteen, fourteen type of time.
- 29 A Right. I guess, most people experience lots of different thoughts and emotions
30 when they first realised that they might be gay, can you describe how you felt, I
31 mean, you said that you didn't accept it straight away.
- 32 B Well basically, I never really, like, thought about it, it was just like I was all, I was
33 the one who was called poof and queer and faggot and things like that and gay
34 and, you know, and at first it was like, 'no, no I'm not', but then it was just like,
35 kind of, got to thinking well maybe I am, you know, because like I don't have any
36 interest in girls, um, I think, I think the ide^a of heterosexual sex is repulsive. (B:
37 Laughs) Um, an' basically I just like kind just of started thinking, 'well, yeah
38 maybe I am', (Mmm) and then just, like, accepted it, kind of thing.
- 39 A Yeah, so it sounds like there was a bit of uncertainty at first?
- 40 B Yeah, yeah.

- 41 A Did you, um, did you do anything when you, sort of, started to think, think that
42 you might be, did you start to do anything differently, or...?
- 43 B What do you mean by do anything differently?
- 44 A Um, I guess, to give you, to give you an example, some people might, who were,
45 sort of, not happy about the idea or confused, I guess, might, might go an', sort of,
46 seek information about it, some people might, sort of, try to ignore it, some
47 people might go out and try to have heterosexual relationships just to disprove it
48 to themselves and those are just some examples.
- 49 B Right, well, um, I just like tried to ignore it at first cos like heterosexual
50 relationships never even entered my head, (B: Laughs) but neither did like a gay
51 relationship neither. (Mmm) So it was like, I don't know, I just like igno:red it,
52 an' the:n I didn't. (Yeah) I 'ad no choice, I 'ad no choice but not, I 'ad no choice
53 but to accept it cos, um, (.) well basically I was thrust, really I suppose I was
54 thrust into the gay lifestyle or I didn't really choose, have a, I didn't really have a
55 choice into it because basically, um, I told one, I told one girlfriend that I thought,
56 er, I thought might be gay, um, an' then basically everybody knew. (Yeah) Now,
57 and I was completely outted to the whole community, commu', my family and
58 community by the end of the day so::
- 59 A Crikey.
- 60 B So it's like I didn't have much choice in the matter after that.
- 61 A Right. How did that feel?
- 62 B At the time it felt sca::ry::, it felt really sca::ry and really, (.) um, well yeah, scary
63 cos I assumed that like reat worried me most even when I first started thinking it,
64 I was gay, was like the, um, propaganda about only gay men have AIDS and gay,
65 and all gay men are nancies and sissies and, you know, and, um, you know, and
66 targets to get beaten up, you know, (Yeah) I, I think like that was just what
67 worried me the most was like the physical violence.
- 68 A Mmm, from sor, sort of, in terms of prejudice and abuse (Yeah) and
69 discrimination? Yeah, okay, we've talked about, sort of, some of, some of your
70 thoughts and feelings around the time when you realised that you were gay. Do
71 you think they've changed as you've, you know, as you got older, are they
72 different now to what they were then?
- 73 B Um, (.) yeah, yeah, no doubts they have. (Yeah) I'm more cynical now than what,
74 than what I was when I was sweet and innocent. (A: Laughs) You know, cos, you
75 know, I was never quite really sweet and innocent cos although yeah, I lived in a
76 rural community, I'd also lived in inner cities. (Mmm), You know, and, um, I'd
77 all, I'd 'ad bullying all the way through school anyway so I was a hard-nosed
78 bitch as it was, so. Um, but, I'm more hard-nosed now than what I ever have
79 been. (Right) You know, and more, more of a bitch than I ev', than what I ever
80 have been.

81 A So you feel that you've had to, sort of, become tougher in a way?

82 B Yeah. You do, there's no doubt about it you do have to really toughen up. (Yeah)
83 You know, you have to get, er, you do have to get a hide like a rhino. (Mmm)
84 You know, to deal with, deal with other people's prejudices, you know, internal
85 prejudice. (Yeah) You know, and then all the other stuff what everybody goes
86 through like relationships and, you know, things like that, (Yeah) so.

87 A Um, um. You said that, um, sort of, around the time that you first started to
88 realise an', an' also, you know, when you were outted by your, your friend, you
89 were very frightened, (Yeah) about, about the thought of being gay and frightened
90 about possible, sort of, physical abuse or whatever. Would, would you say that's
91 changed at all? (Um) Or is it, is it the same?

92 B (.) Yeah, it 'as changed. (.) You know, because I was not, I, I was not confident, I
93 was not confident back then, um, I did not have any confidence in myself at all,
94 but now I do have confidence in my, I do have a social, a certain amount social
95 confidence. Um, and I don't take no shit from no-one now. (Mmm). You know,
96 and if somebody's homophob', homophobic then they come, I make them come
97 right up to my face and say it, I don't tolerate, I won't tolerate people being
98 homo', homophobic behind me back.

99 A Yeah, so, so one of the things that's changed is that you've become more
100 confident, and=

101 B =Um, yeah, yeah.

102 A And, I guess, less tolerant of other people

103 B Yeah, I don't, I do not tolerate, I just do not tolerate any form of discrimination
104 now. (Mmm) I just can't, I just can't, I just don't see the point in it.

105 A No. How do you, how do you, what do you when, when somebody is, does
106 behave in that way towards you?

107 B I become aggressive and confrontational.

108 A Right. And how does, how does that, sort of, make you feel when that sort of
109 thing happens?

110 B Um, well seems as that's what I'm like most of the time anyway so, um, (.) I'm
111 glad. (Mmm) Cos I know some, some people jus' will not chal', most people
112 would not challenge homophobic abuse. (Yeah) And I will. (Yeah) You know.
113 (B: Laughs)

114 A Yeah, okay, um, (.) what, in what positive ways does being gay affect your life?

115 B Positive ways. Um (.) I don't, to tell you the truth, I don't really see being gay as
116 being like positive or negative. I just think there's things that come with it that are
117 negative.

- 118 A Mmm, wh', what are they?
- 119 B Things like discrimination and homophobia, discrimination and physical, mental
120 plus work opportunities. (Mmm) You know, and soc', societal acceptance as
121 well. Um, I just think that just comes with it. (Yeah=) It's just part of the package.
- 122 A So it's not being gay its', itself //that is negative.
- 123 B It's, // it's the way people react to it. (Uh huh) That's negative that's, that's
124 negative to, which is the only negative thing towards it but (.) I don't really see it
125 as negative obvious thing apart from that.
- 126 A Are there, in the same way that you've, sort of, identified some of the negative
127 things that, sort of, go along with being gay. Are there positive things that go
128 along with it as well?
- 129 B Um (.) sometimes you can use discrimination to, to, to your advantage. (Mmm)
130 You know, say if, say if you've got fired, say if you've got fired from a job
131 because you're lazy, well you can turn round and say well, an' use it for, you
132 know, use it for you're own good but (.) otherwise no I don't really think there is
133 anything positive, any positives to go with it.
- 134 A Okay, um, (.) what ways do you think that being gay has affected who you are as
135 a person?
- 136 B (.) Um (.) I don't really think it's affected me all that much. (.) You know, cos
137 there's times, there's times when I've been vulnerable and I've been, and I've
138 been vulnerable then when I've been, whether I'd be gay or straight. (Right, yeah)
139 You know, I'd've probably got exactly the same type of abuse regardless. (Right,
140 okay), you know, so, um...
- 141 A One of the things you said earlier was that, that you had to become tougher?
142 (Yeah) Do you think that that's something tha, that would have happened whether
143 you were gay or straight or...?
- 144 B Um, I think it that, I think it'd only 'ave happened to, I don't think it happ', I
145 don't think it'd happen to such an extent if I was straight. (Mmm) No, I think I've
146 'ad to become tougher because I'm gay.
- 147 A Yeah, right. Okay, so a bit of a funny question, but, um, if you could choose your
148 sexual identity, would you choose to be gay or straight?
- 149 B Gay, definitely.
- 150 A And why?
- 151 B Why? Um, I just love being gay, I love being in your face about it. I don't, I think
152 it's summat, you know, if you're, if you love somebody, you know, and they're
153 the same sex then I think it's something to be just as proud about as if you love
154 somebody who's the opposite sex. (Mmm) Plus, also I could never imagine

- 155 having sex with a woman. (A: Laughs) Well I could imagine it, but I just don't
156 wanna do it.
- 157 A You said that you, um, you, er, love being in your face ab', about it. Is there
158 something that's, that's, sort of, positive, or, or I don't know what the word is,
159 about having something to be in your face about?
- 160 B Um. Well for me personally, yeah cos I like being, I am a confrontational type of
161 person. (Mmm) I'm either take it or leave it or nothing. You know, so I s'pose
162 really, yeah I do I enjoy being a min', minority, I do enjoy being a minority
163 (Mmm) Cos I can be that, you know, I'm proud of being in a minority, you know.
164 (Yeah, yeah) You know, I just, m', I just (.) enjoy it.
- 165 A Yeah, okay. Um, some people experience psychological difficulties because of
166 the way they feel or because of the way other people feel about them being gay.
167 For example, depression, anxiety, feeling lonely, feeling bad about yourself. Can
168 you tell me whether you've experienced any of these difficulties?
- 169 B Well, um, I do, I did suffer from clinical depression and I do have psychological
170 problems now, but none them have been directly to do with me being gay.
171 (Mmm) Um, most, when it does come into, um, the only way gay comes in to it is
172 the way society reacts towards me, (Mmm) cos I'm gay. (Yeah) You know, the
173 rea', reactions that I've had because I'm gay.
- 174 A Yeah, I think that's an important distinction to make as well.
- 175 B Yeah, not cos I'm gay it's cos the way people reacted towards me being gay.
- 176 A Yeah. What sorts of things are you talking about when you say the way people
177 have been reacting?
- 178 B Um, I'm talking about::t, er, (.) open homophobic abuse in the street, homoph',
179 um, violence. I'm talking about violence towards me, I'm talking about violence
180 off strangers.
- 181 A //Physical Violence?
- 182 B Err,// Yeah. I'm taking about verbal abuse from strangers, I'm talking about
183 verbal, verbal abuse from people I know. (Mmm) An' I'm talking about::t, um,
184 disassociation from my family because of it.
- 185 A Yeah. (.) Okay, great. I mean one of the things I meant to mention before we
186 started was there maybe quite a lot of over, overlap (Yeah) or some overlap
187 between some of these questions. So some of it, you know, if you have already
188 talked about it then, you know, don't need to, sort of, talk about it again, but the
189 next set of questions are about, um, relationships with various different people in
190 your life, so parents, other family members, friends for example. Okay, um, so
191 and, I guess, the other thing to say is that I'm going to ask you pretty much same
192 questions about each, so it's a little bit repetitive but I think it's quite important to
193 separate (Mmm) those different relationships out. So can you tell me a bit about

- 194 your relationship with your, your parents or your step-parents if you have step-
195 parents.
- 196 B Um, my relationship with my parents, right, I'm not in contact with my father by
197 my own choice, um, because of many reasons, none of which, none whatsoever to
198 do with my sexuality. Um, that's more to do with family relationships an' divorce
199 an' things like this and extra-marital relationships. (Mmm) Um, I refused to see
200 me dad, I just don't want anything to, I don't want him in my life. Period.
- 201 A Right. Have you, have you felt that way for a long time?
- 202 B Oh yeah, yeah, it's been, that's been, that 'as definitely been the case for the past
203 eight years. (Right) You know, it's just, I don't want nothing to do with him.
- 204 A Mmm, okay. What about your, what about your mum?
- 205 B Um, she refuses to, um, speak to me, she refuses, as far as she is concerned I, I
206 died two years ago.
- 207 A Right, is that when she found out about your sexuality?=
208 B =Um, no it's about three, oh it, it'd be about three years ago since, um, I was
209 outted and, um, she was, oh she thought it was a phase at first, an' then when she
210 realised it was lasting longer than a phase, she started becoming awkward and,
211 um, (.) generally more and more homophobic than ever. Um, very, (.) well just
212 very nasty, so, um, basically it's a case of, um, now it's just to the point where she
213 don't even speak to me. (Right) She refuses to acknowledge my existence now so,
214 I'm quite happy with that. (Okay) You know.
- 215 A Were you, er, I guess, how close were you before you, you were...?=
216 B =Not that close, I've nev', I've never really had a very close family.
- 217 A Right, but it sounds like your, your being outted had some, sort of, affect on your
218 relationship.
- 219 B Oh yeah it definitely did. Yeah it was a dis', it was a distant relationship to start
220 with, and then that made it more distant than ever an' it just got further and
221 further and further apart until we just can't stand each other now.
- 222 A Right, an', an' I think you mentioned earlier that, that you didn't have much
223 choice about coming out.
- 224 B No.
- 225 A That you were,// that your parents found out.
- 226 B They didn't found out, they was told by the school. (Right, okay) They was
227 actually told, they was actually called into the, on the same day and told by the
228 Headmaster.

- 229 A Crikey. They would have found out from your friend or from...?
- 230 B They found out cos of a rumour.
- 231 A Right. Did you ever find out what, what their reason for, er, your Headmaster
232 taking that action was?
- 233 B I never could get a straight answer but since then, um, I've found letters from the
234 school of a very homophobic nature, um, after being outted, um, various teachers
235 made it im', my life impossible at school, um, they made it so impossible that I
236 'ad to leave. I couldn't continue with my education because of, because of, um,
237 homo', homopho', homophobic abuse from, um, staff at that school. (Crikey) Oh
238 but, the pupils were fine, pupils were fine about it until they started seeing the
239 way staff were reacting to it, (Right) an' the adults around them were reacting.
- 240 A And, and then did that...?=
241 B =They, they start, gradually started getting more, you know, um, none accept',
242 none accepting.
- 243 A Mmm, crikey. Sounds like, well it sounds like you had virtually no choice about
244 when you came out (=Yeah=) an' who you came out to. Do you, would you have
245 do you think you would have done things differently if had had a choice?
- 246 B If I had had a choice, I should think I wouldn't be out to my to my family at all.
247 (Right) Um.
- 248 A What would have, sort of, influenced your decision not to?
- 249 B Um, I just think it's, I just think it was a case, it's a case of, um, yeah it was a
250 distant relationship befo:re but it least it was a relationship of some kind. (Mmm)
251 And now it's non-existent. (Yeah, yeah). You know, that's about it.
- 252 A So you, kind of, had some awareness that, that your parents might have a negative
253 reaction to, to finding out?
- 254 B Oh I knew they would. (Yeah, yeah) I knew they would, cos they're homophobic
255 and racist. (Right) An' yet they call themselves a Christians. (Okay) Then, so did
256 many of those teachers at that schoo:l.
- 257 A Yeah, yeah. Sounds like from what you say that your mum started off (.) by, sort
258 of, rationalising that your, in a way that you were going through a phase and then
259 actually reacted progressively worse towards you.
- 260 B Yeah.
- 261 A That's quite interesting cos I think that some people's experience is that people=
262 B =The other way around. Yeah=

- 263 A =Go through shock an' react badly at first, an' gradually get, get more and more
264 used to the idea, but it sounds like f', for your mum it, it's gone the other way
265 round.
- 266 B Yeah, cos at first she just pretended she knew, she didn't, nothing had been said
267 an' nothing was different.
- 268 A Right, so she ignored it, kind of, in a way.
- 269 B Yeah, she's tried to, she ignored it even though she completely acted completely
270 different. (Right) But, (.) you can't ignore summat like that.
- 271 A No. What about other, your relationships with other members of your family.
272 Have you got, sort of, siblings or...?
- 273 B Um, yeah, but because of thing, other family, um, history and problems, um,
274 there's not all, there's not all that much contact in the first place and now there's
275 none at all.
- 276 A Right, so (.) those people have, have re', been rejecting of you as well?
- 277 B Yeah.
- 278 A Because of your sexuality?
- 279 B Yeah.
- 280 A Right. Is there anyone in your family that, that, that has been //supportive?
- 281 B No.//
- 282 A That must be very difficult. Um.
- 283 B That's why I'm a hard-nosed bitch.
- 284 A (A: Laughs) Okay. Is there any advice you'd give to a young lesbian or, or gay or
285 bisexual person about coming out to parents?
- 286 B I'd say be fucking sure and be, make sure you're financially independent and you
287 don't live with them. (Mmm) Make sure you're completely and utterly
288 independent of them. (Right) You know, because it, you know, cos it's the worst
289 thing of all to just have, (.) you know, have nothing.
- 290 A Yeah, yeah. Did you continue to live in your parents home, were you able to
291 continue to live in your parents home even when they were being rejecting of
292 you?
- 293 B Yeah, yeah for a while, until, well basically all the time until, um, I reached the
294 end of my compulsory education. When I reached my compulsory education
295 leaving date it was 'ta ta!'
- 296 A Right, and that was your choice?

- 297 B Um, well it was mutual choice.
- 298 A Right, okay
- 299 B It was like go out before you're kicked out, //kind of thing.
- 300 A Right.// What about advice that you'd give to parents whose son or daughter had
301 just come out.
- 302 B They're no different to what they were before. (Mmm) Exactly the same person
303 what they were before.
- 304 A Sounds like good advice. Okay. What about your relationship with your friends,
305 and, I guess, this is quite a difficult question because, cos the, you know, the were
306 your friends at school and friends that you've made, sort of, I guess, since leaving
307 school as well, so, sort of, previous friends and friends that you currently have.
308 You know, an' I guess, I'm mainly interested in thinking about how being gay,
309 um, has affected those relationships. We talked a bit about, sort of, the reaction in
310 the school already.
- 311 B Um, well basically, um, all my life I've never had much to do with lads and that
312 was my choice cos I don't have anything in common with, um, most lads. I don't
313 have anything, when I say lads I'm talking about straight boys interests, I just
314 don't, I just don't see the point in them, u:m, no so I've always had mainly female
315 friend, well practically always had a, no not practically, always had a female
316 friend circle and it's always been female friends so:, um, I s'pose yea:h, in a way
317 it does alter your friendships cos you tend to go from, I don't, I don't, no cos, like
318 I say, I've always had the same type of, you know, friend, it's always been female
319 friends, you know, all me life, so.
- 320 A Have, um, I guess, if we think about, sort of, friends at school at first. You
321 mentioned the general reaction within school an' how that was changed by
322 p'r'aps some of the teachers reaction to, to your being outted. What about the
323 people that you were close to at, at school?
- 324 B They knew, they knew already before I told 'em.
- 325 A Right. (B: Laughs) And were they, were they accepting?
- 326 B Oh yeah.
- 327 A Yeah?=
328 B =Fine, fabulous.
- 329 A Right, okay. So, (.) that was quite a positive //experience?
- 330 B Oh yeah.//
- 331 A An', and what about, were, were they, were they straight friends or...?

- 332 B I do not know, they was fem', they was pra', they was all female, um, I do not
333 know what their sexualities are, were because I never asked.
- 334 A Right, fair enough. (B: Laughs) What about now, sort of, your current friends
335 and?
- 336 B My current friends tend to be, they still are mainly fe', practically all female, um.
337 I do, I do have, um, I do have close, um, gay female friends, um, I have some
338 bisexual female friends and I have a lot of straight female friends.
- 339 A Right, okay, an' are you, sort of, equally open about your sexuality with all of
340 them?
- 341 B Yep.
- 342 A Yeah?
- 343 B Yep, yeah, every conversation I have with all of them always ends up on sex and
344 men so, yeah I s'pose yeah really I am, yeah.
- 345 A Yeah, okay, right. The last, sort of, bit of this, um, section was just thinking
346 about, um, whether you think that being gay has affected your relationships with
347 people at work or school other than your friends, and, I guess, in some ways
348 we've already talked about that. Um, we've talked about that in terms of your
349 school, um, sort of, your compulsory education, what about now in, in, in
350 college?
- 351 B Now it's practically, it's all accept it. Partly, yeah partly, like ninety seven percent
352 accept it, you know, you still get this stu', you know, there's no like, there's not
353 very much outright homophobia, it's just like stupid com', stupid smutty
354 comments and things like that. (Mmm, mmm) You know, from the immature
355 people who do it to anybody anyway, so.
- 356 A And how open are you about your sexuality within college?
- 357 B I've been open for, for, I've been open, open about my sexuality in college ever
358 since I went for my first interview cos my first question when I went for my
359 interview was 'Is there a lesbian, gay, bi, a les, is there, is there an LGB society at
360 the college?' 'What's an LGB society?' 'A lesbian an' gay, a Lesbian Gay and
361 Bisexual Group. If not, why not?' (A: Laughs) An' that was the first question I
362 asked them, asked at my first interview, so I've been really open about my
363 sexuality ev', ever since I started college.
- 364 A Right. What about when you meet, sort of, um, I guess, that was in, in your, sort
365 of, interviews at, sort of, um, college, what about when you met, sort of, peers //at
366 college?
- 367 B Open.// Um, I was open with my sexuality there.
- 368 A Right, okay, And how, how do, how do you, how were you open about it? (Um)
369 Did you sort of...?

- 370 B Um, I never really went 'I'M GAY' or anything like that no, it's just like, you
 371 know, some of, some of my best friends, some of my bes', my girl, best girl
 372 friends now, they were just like talking about their fellas of the ti:me and I'd be
 373 like, I'd say something like, 'oh I wish I 'ad one', or 'I wish I had yours' or thing,
 374 something like that. (Yeah) An', you know, I never really like, 'oh I'm gay, by the
 375 way' or 'I'm the gay guy' or anything like that, no it's just, like, as people I knew
 376 were talking about their fellas I'd be talking about mine if I 'ad one. (Yeah, yeah)
 377 Or mine, if I didn't.
- 378 A Is there any advice that you'd give to young lesbian, gay or bisexual person about
 379 coming out to peers or colleagues?
- 380 B Be extreme', be extreme', be extremely confident when you do it and be
 381 extremely sure when you do it if you can't handle being isolated.
- 382 A Yeah, yeah. Is that something that you've, I mean, that you feel that you've
 383 experienced?
- 384 B Oh yeah, I've experienced isolation in my time cos of living in rural communities.
 385 (Yeah, yeah=) You know, I was excluded from the community and ex', excluded
 386 from everything. (Mmm) Because of my sexuality.
- 387 A Right. What sorts of things were you excluded from?
- 388 B Um, peer activities, um, even just going, even just doing, doing things like going
 389 to the cinema and things like that. You know, even cin', even nice things, even
 390 every day things like walking down the street, I could never walk da', I could
 391 never walk down the street at night. (Right) Well not at night in the dark, as soon
 392 as it started going dark I, I couldn't be out. I 'ad to be in', inside.
- 393 A Through fear of somebody...?
- 394 B Well through down right knowing that there'd be, er, trouble if I wasn't.
- 395 A Right, right. Frightening. Okay, great. Um, (A: Laughs), this is the fun bit this is
 396 where you get to talk about men and sex. (A: Laughs) Yeah, just a few questions
 397 about sexual relationships and dating. Um, (.) I guess, it's a fairly, fairly broad
 398 question but can you tell me about any same-sex relationships that you've had?
- 399 B Um, I've 'ad, I've had, I've 'ad two types of, um, same-sex relationsh', same-sex
 400 relationships, um, one type has bee:n, (.) um, a boyfriend-boyfriend, you know,
 401 nice relationship, proper, good thing, been a nice thing. Then the other
 402 relationship 'as been based purely sex, pure, yeah, yeah literally purely on sex.
- 403 A Mmm, okay, um, okay. What, let's think about I'm just trying to think about how
 404 to deal with those two things separately. What was your, sort of, your first same-
 405 sex relationship?
- 406 B My first same-sex relationship was the pure, pure sexual one.
- 407 A Right, okay. Can you tell be about how that came about, was it...?

- 408 B Um, well basic', basically, um, (.) I went to the local gay bar, had my first
 409 alcoholic drink an' lost my virginity all on the same night. (Right) An', basically
 410 when I came out I needed, it wasn't when I, yeah, I yeah, it was when came, it
 411 was when I came out I needed to find (.) acceptance. (Mmm) And, um, (.) yeah,
 412 not just acceptance but it was also looking for like Mister Right as well. (Mmm)
 413 You know, but it was very mainly, very mainly, was all being ba', basically one-
 414 night stand. (Right=) Um, very quick, very anonymous sexual relationships.
- 415 A Right, so you've had several, or more than one?
- 416 B Yeah, several.
- 417 A Mmm, how did they, kind of, make you feel?
- 418 B They fucked me up basically, um. I think although I don't regret it, I don't regret
 419 it because if, I wouldn't be the person I am now if that hadn't 'ave 'appened, bu:t,
 420 um, (.) if I'd had, if I'd had the strength then of what I do now, I'd have turned
 421 round and said no to everytime. (Mmm) Instead of not saying anything.
- 422 A Right, okay. Were they, were, I mean you said that now you'd have said no. Was
 423 it that you actually wanted to say no at the time or...?=
 424 B =Well with most, yeah, (Right=) it was, I wanted to say no but I did not have the
 425 (.) confidence or the ability to say no.
- 426 A Okay, what, you said this was, sort of, around about the time that you came out so
 427 you'd be about thirteen:n?=
 428 B =Yeah, thirteen, fourteen.
- 429 A How, how old on average were your, were your partners, were they the same age,
 430 sort of, age or much older than you or?
- 431 B Um, (.) most were about, most were eight', definitely eighteen plus, mo', no mo',
 432 most were twenty five plus.
- 433 A Right, okay, um, (.) did that, how did that affect your, you know, how other
 434 people saw you?
- 435 B Well nobody really knew about it (Right=) because it was (.) well nobody I knew,
 436 nobody who, nobody I knew who was straight knew about it and I didn't tell no-
 437 one about it, so. (Mmm) No, it didn't really view, it did change anybody's view
 438 about me.
- 439 A Right. What about, an' what about how, how you felt about being gay?
- 440 B Um, It didn't change the way I felt about being gay myself, it just changed my
 441 attitude, attitude, well, not changed my attitudes, I finally woke up and saw, saw
 442 the light and saw what the gay scene actually was. (Right) You know, and I
 443 actually saw what most men, I literally realised what most men were after, but I
 444 didn't reali', I didn't know that at the time.

- 445 A Right. When you say you, sort of, realised what the gay scene actually was like
446 what, what do you mean?
- 447 B Superficial and sex-orientated.
- 448 A Yeah. Do you think it's um, how, sort of, um, (.) accepting of young people do
449 you think the scene is?=
450 B =Young people are basically, um, well basically there's a mixed reception for,
451 there's no, no accept', there's not very much acceptance for anybody under the
452 age of sixteen, but for sixteen to eighteen there's mixed acceptance, but eighteen
453 to twenty one there is a lot of acceptance because that's new meat and new flesh
454 and it looks good.
- 455 A Right, right. So back to it being about, (Yeah) sex, essentially.
- 456 B Yeah.
- 457 A Okay, you said that, sort of, since then, I guess, since then, you've had, sort of,
458 more, (Yeah=) more meaningful relationships. (Yeah) I guess, can you tell me a
459 bit about, about them and how they've, (Um) //affected you?
- 460 B Well they've// tended to be with people not my own age but nearer my own age
461 basically under the age of, well ranging between the age of seventeen and twenty
462 three. Um, they've been, (.) they've been nice but they haven't lasted because of,
463 of, basically because I've always gone for the wrong guy.
- 464 A Right, okay. (.) But have they, how've they made you feel, I guess, how've they
465 made you feel about yourself and about being, //being gay?
- 466 B Um, // well they don't really, yeah again, they don't really affect me as a way, as
467 gay, as the way I view gay but, more like it does affect you like it affects, like it
468 affects anybody if they're rejected.
- 469 A Yeah. So, sorry, I mean, I guess...=
470 B =Or gets dumped or anything like that.
- 471 A Yeah, yeah so that, sort of, a common experience.
- 472 B Yeah, everybody knows what it feels like to get dumped.
- 473 A Yeah, yeah, okay, brill. Can you tell me about any heterosexual relationships that
474 you've had?
- 475 B I've never had one. (Right) About the closest I ever had was, um, about the age of
476 about nine holding hands with a lass, a ginger haired lass called Kate Taylor on
477 the way back from school, (A: Laughs) an' that's about the closest I've ever 'ad.
- 478 A Okay I won't ask you any follow up questions about that then (A: Laughs).
479 Alright, we're getting, we're getting there. Um, I'd like to ask you some questions

- 480 about coping and what support, if any, that you've had, For example, sort of,
 481 whether it met your needs and also whether there was anything that could have
 482 made things easier but wasn't available. Okay?
- 483 B Yeah.
- 484 A So, (.) again, I guess, this is going over some, some ground that we've already
 485 gone over, but some people experience difficulties either coming to terms with
 486 being gay, or as, as you've, sort of, emphasised because of things that happen to
 487 them, (Yeah) because they're gay. So for example, some of the psychological
 488 difficulties we've already talked about, but also things like experiencing rejection,
 489 prejudice or abuse, worrying about what's safe or unsafe sex, for example, and I,
 490 I'd have to say as well, you know, that thankfully some people don't experience
 491 those things and, I guess, it's similar to the point you were making that, sort of,
 492 being gay doesn't necessarily equal problems. (No) Um, so can you tell me
 493 whether you've experienced any of the, any difficulties of this sort and if so, er, I
 494 guess, I'm particularly interested in, in, in how you feel that you've coped with
 495 them? Um, either how you have coped with them or how you continued to cope
 496 with them? I mean, I s'pose you've already referred to quite a lot of the things
 497 I've mentioned but there may be other things that you feel are relevant here as
 498 well.
- 499 B Um, well like I say, I give as good as I get with things like homophobia and
 500 things like that. An' relationship-wise, I think I cope the same as what anybody
 501 else my age copes. (Mmm) You know, um, you get fucked up by somebody and
 502 you get, you get fucked up by somebody.
- 503 A Yeah. I'm just think', thinking about some of the things that you've, sort of,
 504 referred to earlier, um, for example the, sort of, er, experiencing, sort of, overt
 505 um, discrimination, either, sort of, verbal abuse or physical abuse. How would
 506 you say that you've, sort of, coped with that?
- 507 B Um (.) well at first it scared me but now I just like, that's a breeder thing, you
 508 know, that is what they do, that is what they think, who cares! You know. (Right)
 509 I don't give a shit, I really don't no more. (Yeah) There's better things in, there's
 510 bet, bigger things to worry about than just what other people think.
- 511 A Right, yeah, and what about, um, ag', again a, sort of, similar question to, to one I
 512 asked you before, what about in terms of your behaviour, do you, have you, um,
 513 changed your behaviour in a way, in any way to help you to cope with some of...?
- 514 B Um (.) no not really cos I've always had a dirty gob, I've always had a dirty mind
 515 and basically I've always talked about se:x, but, um, no not rea:lly I haven't really
 516 changed anything. Yes, yeah admittedly, yeah I do camp it up a bit to, to annoy
 517 peop', to annoy, if I know someboby who's gonna get, if I know somebody who's
 518 get, gonna get annoyed, um, through that and I know that they're homophobic
 519 then I'll do it all the more.
- 520 A Right, fine, //yeah.

- 521 B You// know. I've, that, that's the type of thing I do but if I feel, only if I feel like
522 doing it. (Yeah) I've got to be in the right frame of mind.
- 523 A And do you feel that helps you to cope with it, to cope with, sort of, dealing with
524 the people who are, (Um) behaving or being homophobic?
- 525 B No, er, it doesn't really alter the way I cope with it cos it's just like, it's a breeder
526 thing, (Mmm) you know. They jus', they can think what ever they want, I'm not
527 interested.
- 528 A Um, also referring to stuff that you've already sp', spoken about, um, you know,
529 you, you've talked about an imm', immense amount of rejection an' experiencing
530 an immense amount rejection from people, you know, who were, I guess,
531 important in your life even though you might not describe them as being close.
532 How do feel that you, sort of, coped with that?
- 533 B Um, well I didn't. U:m, basically, um, over my time I've had numerous suicide
534 attempts and, um, I'd suicide for quite a while and I was, er, I was very, I was
535 very depressed for qui', for a long time. (Mmm) You know, and I still have
536 remnants of that now. You know, and, um, (.) and, you know, at one time cos of,
537 um, no con', I felt like I had no control over, um, what was happening, um, I
538 became, I didn't became bulimic, I actually, I suffered a eating disorder. You
539 know, it, it hasn't got a particular name of, of any kind. (Mmm) But basically,
540 um, I've suffered quite, I s'pose I really 'ave suffered quite a few mental
541 problems, um, because of, um, rejection from people.
- 542 A Um, did you ever either seek or receive support, (U:m=) or help or...?
- 543 B Yeah, um, I've received help from numerous places and I've seeked h', help from
544 numerous places and services, um, some services that are market', marketed
545 'pecifically towards young gay people I find to be, um, one, the most unreliable of
546 services, you know, and other you', er, services that are actually aimed towards
547 young people I've actually found to be the most unreliable services and the most
548 harmful actually.
- 549 A Why, in what ways harmful?
- 550 B Well, from one, er, gay youth (.) counsellor or worker or whatever 'e was, I was
551 receiving emotional support from at the time, I was actually raped by. (Crikey!
552 Right) Um, and I think that if there's, I, I think that if there's actually proper rules
553 and regulations for the, for youth groups and 'pecific, and especially gay youth
554 groups, then I think that things like that wouldn't be able to happen, you know,
555 or, well, I wouldn't say they wouldn't be able to 'appen because it probably
556 would still 'appen but there would be more, um, protection if it did happen.
- 557 A Mmm, yeah, yeah, (.) yeah. (.) Um, okay, so you, you mentioned that you, sort of,
558 you'd sought support through some, sort of, youth, various youth groups?
- 559 B Yeah, and various youth agencies. (Yeah) And then, um, and then I've also, um,
560 received help through, um, various Health Authority Mental Health Services and,

561 um, well basically some have been alright and then others have been, 'well if this
 562 is, you only feel like this because you're gay' and things like that, and been
 563 really, and been very homophobic. (Right, right) So, I, I can't really, I can't give
 564 a general picture because each service I've been to has been different.

565 A Mmm, were the, thinking about the, sort of, Health Service or Mental Health
 566 Service, sort of, support, if, if it was support you've had, or contact, (Yeah) um,
 567 was it, was that support or contact that you, you sought or was that something
 568 that, that...?

569 B Um, some it was sought and some it was forced basically. (Right) Um, well, yeah
 570 basically some of it, sometimes yeah, I did go after, er, go after it, pursue it an'
 571 other times I didn't. (Right) It was just like (.) you go along, you know, you're
 572 sent off for a, er, appointment with the psychiatrist, the child, child psychiatrist of
 573 the area.

574 A Right, and who was sending you?

575 B Um, various agencies, education welfare, um, school, um, parents, GP, um, var',
 576 various agencies like that.

577 A Right, and what was your understanding of their motivation for sending you off to
 578 the psychiatrist?

579 B Um, mmm, (.) well the school and the education welfare was literally after their
 580 own aim, after their own ends, you know, um, they weren't really bothered about
 581 me as a person they just wanted what, er, they just wanted what, what they wanted
 582 to say on paper an' that were it. (Right). You know, and they wanted their allotted
 583 money for, per, per pupil and things like that an' they didn't want people, er,
 584 people running around saying bad things about their schools an' things like that
 585 an' bad things about their services and so, um, they was literally after their own
 586 ends with them. Um, when GP and parents have been collab, have collaborated
 587 with schools in the past so, it's just been mainly, um, after their own ends.

588 [Interview briefly interrupted.]

589 A Right, sorry about that. Um, so mainly for their own ends?

590 B Yeah, um, basically it's, basically it was a case of they wanted, they wanted
 591 hundred percent pass mark an', um, things like that and they wanted their allotted
 592 money from the government per pupil and they wanted the inspectors to come in
 593 and say 'yes you have a good attendance rate' and not 'oh so why is there X
 594 amount of pupils' and things like that. (Mmm) You know, which I think are
 595 pathetic.

596 A Yeah, and when you went to, to, just think about the, the Psychiatrist that you
 597 were, sort of, sent to, I guess, how did you, how did you find the, the support that
 598 was offered, was it, was it helpful, was it unhelpful?

- 599 B Um, sometimes yeah it was helpful, when I, when I wanted it, it was helpful.
 600 (Mmm) But, um, other times when I wanted it, um, it was very homophobic an' at
 601 other times it was just homophobic and I didn't want it anyway, so.
- 602 A Yeah, right, yeah. Do you feel that, I mean, you mentioned, you made a, sort of, a
 603 distinction earlier on when we were talking about, kind of, problems that were to
 604 do perhaps with not being gay itself, but, but other people's reactions perhaps to
 605 you being gay and problems that were nothing to do with being gay really, you
 606 know, you mentioned your, your, your family, (Yeah) um, divorce and
 607 relationship problems things that, that, you know, happen to lots of people
 608 whether they are gay, straight or bisexual. Um, did you find I'm just wondering
 609 whether, um, the support that you've had has been sensitive to that fact or
 610 whether people have tended to focus in on the fact that you're, you're gay?
- 611 B Most of the time it's focused in on the gay thing. Even though that's never really
 612 been an issue. (Right) You know, it's been like other issues, but it's always been
 613 focussed in on the gay issue.
- 614 A Right, and have you found that to be something that's met, you know, been
 615 helpful and met your needs or, or not?
- 616 B No, cos I've never was really after it for a gay thing anyway.
- 617 A Yeah, yeah, okay, (.) um, have you had, you, so you mention, sort of, going to see
 618 psychiatrists and you've mentioned, sort of, youth groups. Have you had any
 619 other support?
- 620 B Um (.) no, not really.
- 621 A Okay. How accessible was or how easy to find out about were the, the groups, did
 622 you find?
- 623 B Very hard. Um, (.) basically because of where I was living at the time which was
 624 a very rural a:rea, um, a very backward community, um, if you didn't know where
 625 to look in the first place, you'd 'ave never 'ave known it was there. (Mmm) But
 626 because of knowing people within the drugs scene and within the drug, and drugs
 627 and gay scene being very linked, um, I knew roughly where to start looking.
 628 (Mmm) Plus also going on local rumour as well.
- 629 A Yeah, okay, right. I guess, this answers my other question which was, sort of, how
 630 did you find out about it. Um, okay, just thinking about, um, and we have already
 631 talked to some extent about, sort of, the way other people have reacted to your
 632 being gay but, you know, again, some people find it difficult coming to terms
 633 with finding out that someone that they're close to is gay. Thinking about the
 634 people that are close to you or important to you, um, do you think that they
 635 experience any, sort of, any of these sorts of difficulties and also do you think that
 636 they would have benefited from support or information or advice or, or did they
 637 benefit, you know?

- 638 B Well I don't know because most of them, most of the people that are close and are
639 important to me now are actually gay themselves. (Right) Gay or bisexual or very
640 accepting of gay, gay and bisexual people.
- 641 A Mmm, so okay then, sort of, rephrasing the question, I guess, thinking about
642 about perhaps your family, people in your family?
- 643 B Um, well personally I think it would need a rocket up, rocket up to the flipping
644 moon to make them any different. Um, I think basically if it was, wasn't, I think, I
645 think it's just the way society and their generation, um, (.) you know, because I
646 'ave older parents as it is, their gener', an' what their generation view things as
647 and, um, well basically it's like what their generation thinks.
- 648 A Mmm, right, okay, great, last, last leg. Are you still surviving?
- 649 B Yeah.
- 650 A There's just a few questions about, um, kind of, contact with other or discussion
651 about other lesbians, gays, bisexuals. .Um, so, did, you know, anybody who was
652 gay when you were, or, you know, gay or lesbian and bisexual, when you were
653 growing up?
- 654 B Um, no. (Right) No.
- 655 A How do you, do you think that had an effect on you do you think it would have
656 been different if you had?
- 657 B Um, (.) of course if would of, my life would be completely different now because
658 basically if, the only way I'd have 'ad contact with anybody who was gay, lesbian
659 or bisexual as I was growing is if my parents knew them and were friends of them
660 (Right=) and in that case then they wouldn't 'ave acted the way they, (Right) did,
661 so I just wouldn't be the person I was now.
- 662 A Okay. Do you think that, sort of, I guess, do you think that not knowing anyone
663 who was gay, um, kind of, had an impact on, I don't know how you, how you
664 reacted when you first thought that you might be gay?
- 665 B Um, I don't think it'd of, I don't, I don't think it'd change things anyway.
- 666 A No, okay. Were you aware of gay people in the media, for example music, films,
667 TV?
- 668 B No.
- 669 A Okay. None at all?
- 670 B Well , yeah, well not really any like, (.) um, it was just like, um, (.) you know, just
671 like things like Julian Clary and Boy George, you know, big poofs and things like
672 that, (Mmm) and, AIDS and things like, yeah AIDS, and AIDS and more AIDS,
673 um, but apart from that, no not really.

- 674 A Right. Do you think that (.) that had a, either a positive or negative effect on you,
675 I guess...?
- 676 B I think it had a very negative. (Right) With no doubt. I think the way the me', the
677 media portrays, um, gay people, um, is very, very, very negative. You know, and I
678 think it, I think, an' I think society literally does place it's view upon what it reads
679 in the ruddy paper. (Mmm) And seeing as that most of bloody country seems to
680 read the, either the Sun or fucking Mirror, no wonder it's a fucking homophobic
681 country.
- 682 A Mmm, yeah, okay. An' (.) was homosexuality talked about at home and if so, was
683 it talked about? (.) Sorry, if so how was it talked about?
- 684 B No, it was not talked about and even if it was a very few times, it wasn't like
685 discussed or anything like that it was just like, (.) if Boy George would come on
686 the, on Top of the Pops or something like that, 'poof' and turned over and things
687 like that.
- 688 A Right, so very negative then.
- 689 B Mmm.
- 690 A How, how do you think that impacted on you?
- 691 B Um, I think it added to, I think that's what's made my internalised homophobia
692 of, err, err, because being, having gay images very badly portrayed. (Mmm) You
693 know, a, at a young age but, um, (.) as a direct impact, I don't think there really
694 was a direct impact as such.
- 695 A Mmm, I guess, I was, I was thinking more along the lines of, of, you know, what
696 you were saying about, you know, I guess, if, if you're confronted with negative
697 portrayal of, of, of gays or lesbians or bisexuals that, that, you know, that can
698 have an influence on how you perceive what it is to be gay, I guess.
- 699 B Yeah. No I don't think it really altered. (Right) Altered in that way no.
- 700 A Okay. Was homosexuality talked about at school at all?
- 701 B No, or if it was, it would be gay, or poof, or nancy, things like, er, gay nancy,
702 sissy, poof, um, dyke, bulldyke, was very negative ways of as one of the worst,
703 seems one of the worst types of abuse, you know, to call someone a bastard or
704 bitch or a cow was one thing, but to call them a dyke or a poof was the next step
705 up. (Mmm=) The highest step, the worst place of, you know, the worst place of
706 like, um, I don't know, humiliation.
- 707 A Mmm, right. I'm guessing, but I hope I'm right, that you're talking about, sort of,
708 pupils at school?
- 709 B Yeah. (A: Laughs)

- 710 A Was, was there any talk about homosexuality by teachers or, either in lessons or
711 out of lessons or?
- 712 B No, no.
- 713 A Not discussed at all?
- 714 B Not discussed at all.
- 715 A So not, sort of, even in, I don't know, sex education or english literature or...?
- 716 B Um, sex education as it was, was very ss', stale and very, not all that very
717 informative for straight people, (Mmm) let alone anybody who's gay. (Yeah) You
718 know, so in a way sex education, I've lit', I've never really, um, I think the only
719 sex education I ever 'ad at school was about the age of tw', about the age of
720 thirteen being told that girls had a period, but I knew that already. (A: Laughs)
721 Everybody knew that anyway cos everybody all the lasses we knew were all
722 having PMT by that time anyway so, (Mmm), you know, so it's like, no.
- 723 A Right, so nothing about, um, //sort of, sex education.
- 724 B No nothing at all, // nothing at all about gay, gay issues or gay sexuality or
725 anything //at all.
- 726 A Right, // right, okay. Can you tell me about how you first made contact with other
727 lesbians and gay men, bisexuals?
- 728 B Um, (.) it's was through the local gay and lesbian switchboard. (Right) Um, cos
729 basically, um, I got in through the ss', through bugging the switchboard enough
730 times over the weeks, they basically gave me a name of somebody who, who was
731 safe, as they put it, and I got in contact with him an' started going down the local
732 gay pub with him. Um, but before that, that, well that was the way I, kind of, went
733 on to the gay scene, had the first contact, ever known contact with somebody who
734 was gay or lesbian.
- 735 A Mmm. There's two things I want to ask you about what you said. One is, I guess,
736 what, what made you decide to, sort of, phone switchboard up an', an' //attempt
737 to make contact?
- 738 B I needed // acceptance. (Mmm) I needed acceptance from somebody, anybody.
739 (Mmm) You know, I wasn't getting the acceptance from anywhere else apart from
740 a few, apart from a girlfriend and apart from that there wasn't any.
- 741 A Mmm. And how do you, how, how did, um, it sounds like you had some
742 resistance from people at switchboard, how did they //respond?
- 743 B Um, // they weren't very helpful at all cos (.) it was a young kid who was phoning.
744 You know, they didn't want anything to happen to their, their one and only gay
745 pub in the area, you know. (Mmm) They didn't what, they didn't want it to be
746 raided by the coppers an' find somebody under age drinking an' get the place shut
747 down. (Mmm) You know, because that was their, cos there was only one gay pub

748 in the ar', in about a fifty mile radius (Right=) at least. You know, so they literally
 749 had the personal, that, that was the only reason I can think of. (Mmm) You know,
 750 cos they were very resistant in, to giving inf', to giving information out in the first
 751 place.

752 A Yeah. When you said they'd, sort of, eventually, sort of, gave in an' //helped you
 753 to...?

754 B Yeah, gave information, // yeah.

755 A To, to, sort of, get in contact with someone who was safe.

756 B Yeah.

757 A What do you think they meant by safe?

758 B Um, (.) safe as i:n, um, (.) well safe as in non-threatenin', um, non-sexually
 759 threatening, non', er, somebody who wouldn't put any pressure on you. (Mmm,
 760 (.) yeah) You know.

761 A An', an' was that the case?

762 B Was that the case? That was the case, yes. There was never any se', um, any
 763 sexual advances come from that, that person for what, for quite a while.

764 A Right. How did, (.) you, sort of sai', you said that, you know, it was important to
 765 make contact with, with other gay people because you had a need to be accepted.
 766 How did it actually make you feel?

767 B It actually made me feel part of the community. (Mmm) It made me feel, feel
 768 accepted even those it's like a segregated community, not all that particularly nice
 769 community but it was still something. (Mmm, right) It was better than isolation.

770 A Right, so it was wi', wasn't without it's own difficulties and problems, but it was
 771 somewhere that, that, that you were accepted.

772 B Yeah.

773 A Okay. What, sort of, places do you go out to to socialise now?

774 B Um, I go all over the place I go, I go to gay pubs and clubs, I go to straight pubs
 775 and clubs, um, I go to various gay youth groups which none of which seem to be
 776 any use at all. They never seem to get very many people there at all. (Right) And
 777 of the people that do go, I already know them anyway so, um, (Right) I, kind of,
 778 socialise all over that place, plus I socialise through college as well and student's
 779 union, things like that so...

780 A Mmm. What, sort of, things do you do at at the youth groups, you say they're not
 781 much use?

- 782 B You just seem to sit around staring at each other. (Right) You know, and talking
 783 about homopho:bia and, or who's shagging who. Or the la', er, or, or the la', or
 784 the latest like fucking, whoever fucking, who's ever fucking who or latest gossip,
 785 you know, it's never anything more than that.
- 786 A Right. Do you think that, I mean, it sounds like you don't, or there are things that
 787 you don't find useful about, about them. Do you think that, how do you think that
 788 other people find them?
- 789 B Well most people find them boring. (Right) Cos you don't do anything. (Yeah,
 790 okay) I don't really know what you're supposed to d', supposed to do but there
 791 should be something. Rather than just sitting in a quiet room waiting for
 792 somebody to speak.
- 793 A (A: Laughs) Okay, do they offer any, sort of, services? (Um) These groups?
- 794 B Most group, most of the groups I got to offer, um, a counselling/emotional
 795 support service. (Right) Um, sexual health service, um, usual things going around
 796 se', um, sexual health and things like that.
- 797 A And do they, sort of, perf', perform most functions successfully do you think?
- 798 B Um, I don't know cos I've never been involved in that side of things.
- 799 A Right, fine.
- 800 B Um, well, well I haven't been involved in them, um, for quite a long time
 801 anyway, but when I was involved with them they weren't much use anyway, so.
- 802 A Mmm, okay, um, you say you go to, sort of, sometimes go out on the scene, to, to
 803 gay pubs an' clubs and to, to the groups, um, what do think of, what do you think
 804 of these of places? Stick to the, sort of, pubs and clubs.
- 805 B [sighs] I think the gay scene, which is basically the pubs and clubs I think it's
 806 superficial, artificial and purely sex an' looks orientated. (Right) You know, if
 807 you're eighteen to twenty one, you are it. (Mmm) Well not just if you're eighteen
 808 to twenty one, if you're, you're eighteen to twenty one an' you look al', an' you
 809 look alri:ght (Mmm) then you are fucking it, you've got everybody, every fucking
 810 old queen in the place crawling all over you. (Mmm) Or even if you're just young
 811 then you get every old tart in the place slugging their way over to you.
- 812 A Right, okay. How does that feel then being there, is it, is it...?
- 813 B I think it's very seedy, an' very dirty, (Right) and I think it's very repulsive.
- 814 A Mmm, um, I guess, you still, you still go to them so is there something positive
 815 that, that can be got out of them despite...?
- 816 B They're gay friendly. They're non-abusive. (Mmm) You know, um, and you never
 817 know that you might get a fresher come in one day while you're there.

- 818 A Mmm, so there's a chance to meet, (Yeah=) potentially meet people?
- 819 B Yeah. (Okay) There is that, always that slight, little, ickle chance that somebody
820 nice might come in, (A: Laughs) (Right) who's not complete and utter bitch.
- 821 A Do you, (.) how do you think it is for younger people. Do you think it's different
822 for younger people? You said that, I guess, //they can be more of a target?
- 823 B I think it's difficult.// I think, I think it's extremely difficult for peop', for young,
824 well for young people, for any person who's not, um, basically, who don't know
825 what they're looking out for. (Right) I think you need to be extremely experienced
826 about, er, sex and the scene before you even you onto it.
- 827 A Right. What, sort of, kind of, experience do think you need?
- 828 B I don't know, I don't know. Um, I think you just need to know everything about
829 what could happen, you know, an' what to, an' what to look out for. (Yeah) You
830 know, and who's dangerous and who's not.
- 831 A How do you think, I'm just thinking about, about that. How do you think that
832 could come, that that could happen?
- 833 B I personally think that should happen with gay youth groups. (Right) I think that
834 should be one of their main functions.
- 835 A Mmm, yeah, yeah. I mean it sounds like it's, it's a, an important topic.
- 836 B Yeah, you know, because like, well anybody who go', goes on to the gay scene
837 who is, um, especially first time there, they'll have everybody on top of 'em.
838 (Mmm) Regardless whether they're male or female, gay or bisexual. (Right) You
839 know, they're gonna have everybo', everybody on top of 'em cos they all want to
840 shag 'em.
- 841 [Interview briefly interrupted]
- 842 A Um, yeah, yeah, I mean I think that's an important point. What about, um, I mean
843 you talked about, sort of, people being vulnerable to being, people being out to
844 shag people. What about, um, information about, sort of, sex and safe sex?
- 845 B I think it, I think it should, I, I think the information on, on, I think sex education
846 in schools for stra', straight people need to be a hell of lot different to what it is.
847 (Mmm) From what I've seen, should I say. Um, and I think gay sex, I think um,
848 homosexuality and sexuality an' gay safe sex should be incorporated in to that
849 and should be just as equal and just as important.
- 850 A Mmm. How did you find out about those sorts of things, I mean about (.) sex?
- 851 B Safe sex?
- 852 A Safe sex, gay sex, what, you know?

- 853 B I just, (.) I just found out, you know, I found out through the, um, I've always, I've
854 always known about safe sex anyway because, you know, um, (.) well I just
855 always 'ave. (Mmm) You know, and then everything else, I think, just comes with
856 experience.
- 857 A Mmm. So you have had to, it sounds like you have had to learn through, sort of,
858 //experience?
- 859 B Yeah, trial and// error.
- 860 A Yeah?
- 861 B Yeah.
- 862 A Okay, it sounds like, um, (.) I guess, that you, you'd mentioned lots of things that
863 you, that are not that positive, I guess, about the commercial gay scene, and also
864 about the, sort of, youth groups that you've attended. Are there, and you already
865 have actually made some suggestions about, sort of, things that you think would
866 be useful, um, are there other things that you would like to see available in the
867 area where you live or changes to places that do exist that would improve them?
- 868 B I just think there should be a lot more places, basically. (Mmm) And I think they
869 should of, I, I think there should be a lot more gay youth, gay youth groups than
870 what there is and I think they should be registered. Some way of registr',
871 registering them and also, um, (.) you know, making sure the people who run
872 them are okay and not old leeches.
- 873 A Yeah, yeah. Have you got any, is there any advice you'd give to people who are, I
874 guess, in a position to offer su', support to young people?
- 875 B Be bloody sure you make sure you're, you know, what you're doing before you
876 even start.
- 877 A Right, mmm. How do you think they can do that? Do you think that, um, for
878 example, do you think that people who offer support to young gay people should
879 be gay themselves? Or do you think //they should be trained?
- 880 B I don't no.// I should think they should have training. (Mmm) I think, I think
881 anybody who comes into young pe', into contact with young people, be that be
882 doctors, nurses, teachers, you know, youth workers, whatever, that they should all
883 have training within sexuality issues. (Mmm, yeah) Cos they 'ave training within
884 race issues, so why can't they have it in sexuality issues?
- 885 A Yeah, yeah, okay. Is there anything that we haven't talked about already that
886 you'd like to mention? (Um) Anything at all?
- 887 B No not really, not that I can really think of.
- 888 A Okay. How do you feel having completed the interview? (A: Laughs)

889 B Well I feel alright. I feel the same, much the same as what I did before I started.
890 (Yeah?) Um, I'm glad I've done it.

891 A Good.

892 B I just hope that you can put it to some use.

893 A Yeah. Thank you very much. I really appreciate your time. Okay.

Interview 2
Sharon
Interview Date
9/12/98

- 1 A Um, the first question is just quite a general question which is to ask you, um,
2 how you feel about doing this interview and, kind of, why you agreed to do it?
- 3 B How do I feel? I feel alright cos I'm used to doing interviews. I've 'ad interviews
4 loads of times so, I feel alright doin' it. It's helping you out.
- 5 A Right, okay. Alright, so we'll move, move on to some questions that are, sort of,
6 are qu, specifically about j, just you. Okay. Um, people describe their sexuality in
7 lots of different ways. How would you describe yours?
- 8 B Gay
- 9 A Okay (.) .An' how old were you when you first thought that you might be gay?
- 10 B Um, 'bout nine, ten.
- 11 A Fine, okay. Most people experience lots of different thoughts an' feelings when
12 they first realise that they might be (.) gay. Can you describe how you felt, and,
13 sort of, what thoughts through, went, went through your mind? And what you did
14 when you first realised?
- 15 B 'Oh my god I'm weird!' (B: Laughs) Um, I thought it was just a phase, I'll pass it,
16 (Right) but, it, it didn't.
- 17 A Okay (.) And did you, did you do anything (.) when you, when you, sort of...?
- 18 B What when I first realised (Yeah) that I might be different? (Yeah) No. I went,
19 went out with blokes, like pushed it aside. (Right) But, they like helped me
20 change my mind cos I'd 'ad a rough time (.) with blokes.
- 21 A Right, okay, //so...
- 22 B Like.// Sorry.
- 23 A I, I was going to say, so you say you pushed it aside, sor', sort of, tri, tried to
24 ignore it (Yeah) at first.
- 25 B Cos I thought it was just a phase, (Right) but it wasn't.
- 26 A Okay. So, can you tell me about whether your thoughts and feelings about being
27 gay have changed since then.
- 28 B Oh yeah, I love it (B: Laughs).
- 29 A Okay. So, how do, how do you feel about it, being gay now?
- 30 B How do I feel? Great.
- 31 A Yeah?
- 32 B Yeah.

- 33 A Good.=
- 34 B =Everybody's their own individual. Like me mum, like she accepts it but she
35 doesn't, like she keeps saying when I go down there, um, 'oh you'll find a nice
36 bloke one day'. I says, 'but I won't mum'. (Right) I says this is me. Just because
37 I'm gay, doesn't mean I'm, I've changed.
- 38 A No. //Right.
- 39 B Which// is fair enough.
- 40 A So, it sounds like you are quite, sort of, had some negative feelings about being
41 gay when you, when you first //realised.
- 42 B Yeah,// cos I'd never heard of it.
- 43 A Yeah, //right
- 44 B I'd never// heard but, well heard of it but never known anybody, (Yeah) didn't see
45 anybody.
- 46 A So, I guess, you, sort of, s, said you thought you were weird.(Yeah) Er, but now
47 you feel quite positive about it. Why do you think, why do you think you've
48 changed, like that?
- 49 B I've experienced it. I've been there. (Right) You know. (Okay) It's, it's good.
- 50 A So you've had=
- 51 B =It's me. I've had time to, I accept it myself (Mmm) and now I've accepted it
52 meself, (Yeah) I feel good about it.
- 53 A Yeah. What, what things do you think helped you to accept it?
- 54 B .Me family for one. They says, 'you are what you are'.
- 55 A Right. That was their, their attitude.
- 56 B Yeah. They says, 'people take you for what you are'. Me friend said 'you'll find
57 out who your true friends are', (Yeah) 'with summat like this'. (Yeah) Said, 'if
58 you are gay, then be gay'. (Yeah) 'You don't have to hide it'. And like coming
59 here helped me, (Mmm) accept it more.
- 60 A Yeah. When you said like, you said that you'd experienced it now, um, what do
61 you mean by that?
- 62 B I've been out with women. (Yeah) Like, all I was used to was like, men treating
63 me like shit, excuse me language=
- 64 A =No, that's alright.

- 65 B And I, I'd, probably being a little bit sexist, but women tend to know how you
66 feel. Like you can talk on their level 'bout women's stuff (Mmm) and there's just
67 a good feeling.
- 68 A Mmm, mmm. Okay. Do you think it was important, sort of, part of you, um,
69 starting to accept the fact that you were gay, actually having a relationship with a
70 woman?
- 71 B Yeah. (Yeah) The most hardest thing for me coming out was accepting it meself.
72 And like once I'd done that, like the biggest weight off me shoulders.
- 73 A Mmm. Mmm. Okay. Wh, in what positive ways does being gay affect your life?
- 74 B (B: Laughs) Um, I find it easier, I've got lots of straight friends, loads, but I find it
75 easier to talk to like gay people. (Mmm) I have a good laugh with them.
- 76 A Yeah. Okay, anything else?
- 77 B Um, not that I can think of no.
- 78 A Okay, what about negative ways, in what negative ways has being gay affect your
79 life?
- 80 B The name-calling an' (.) like 'ooh she's gay'. Finger-pointing and stuff, I don't
81 like that. (Mmm) Like, me and Jo was walking, um, up the road and these black
82 lads started calling me, calling us gay bastards and stuff like this (Yeah) and I
83 didn't like that at all. (No) There's no need for things like that.
- 84 A No, no, quite. Okay. If you could choose your sexual identity, would you choose
85 to be gay or straight or bisexual?
- 86 B Gay.
- 87 A Right, why?
- 88 B (B: Laughs) It's me now. (Yeah) I like women, (.) it's me.
- 89 A Fine, okay. In what ways do you think that being gay has affected who you are as
90 a person, if at all?
- 91 B How do you mean?
- 92 A Um, (.) do you...=
- 93 B =Like me sense of humour? Like //Friends?
- 94 A Yeah, // things about yourself that, that you think, an', an', you may, you may not
95 think that anything's different because of being gay. But do you think that being
96 gay has affected how you are as a person, who you are //in anyway?

- 97 B No.// Like when I went out with blokes I was like really shy, (Mmm) like all to
 98 myself, I didn't go out nowhere, nothing. (Right) But like coming out, it helped
 99 'cos I started coming out me shell a bit more, (Right) an' (.) I'm, I'm happy.
- 100 A Okay, so you, yo it, it, it sounds like you feel like your a bit more...
- 101 B Confident.
- 102 A Confident, yeah.
- 103 B Yeah. About myself.
- 104 A Yeah. Okay, um, some people experience psychological difficulties cos of the
 105 way they feel, or because of the way other people feel about them being gay. And,
 106 sort of, examples are, are people feeling depressed, or anxious or lonely, feeling
 107 bad about themselves. Can you tell me about whether you feel that you've had
 108 any of these sorts of difficulties?
- 109 B Um, not at all.
- 110 A Great, good, pleased to hear it. Okay, movin' on. Um, I'd like to ask you some
 111 questions about relationships with different people in your life. Okay? Um, and,
 112 um, to start off with, er, people like your parents, other family members and your
 113 friends, and then we will, there are some questions about, sort of, sexual
 114 relationships, dating relationships as well. But, um, just a, sort of, sort of,
 115 warning, basically what I'm going to ask you si, similar questions but for each of
 116 those different groups, because it's a bit repetitive if, (B: Laughs) but I think it's
 117 quite important to separate, separate those different relationships out. Okay. So
 118 starting off with your parents or your step-parents if you, if you have them. I'm
 119 mainly interested in how you think being gay has affected your relationship, but
 120 can you tell me jus', just a little bit about your relationship with your parents.
- 121 B Very, very close. (Right=) Always have been. (Right) Very close-knitted.
- 122 A Right. Okay. Is it, is it your mum, your mum and your dad.
- 123 B Yeah.
- 124 A Right. Okay, and how open about your sexuality are you?
- 125 B Very open towards me mum and dad. Like at first, mum and dad says, 'it's fine',
 126 well me dad backed me up hundred percent, but me mum still, she 'ccepts it, she
 127 knows that I'm happy and that's all she wants (Mmm) but, it's in the back of her
 128 mind that she, like the trouble she like went through with me as a kid, as a baby
 129 like with meningitis and stuff. She imagined me walking down the aisle with a
 130 bloke an' 'aving a family, (Yeah) but that's not gonna happen. (Yeah) Not with a
 131 bloke anyway. (Right) I think it hurt her, (Mmm) but she's, she loves Jo to pieces.
- 132 A That's nice.
- 133 B It's just fine now.

- 134 A Okay. Were you (.) open about your sexuality right from the start?
- 135 B Oh yeah. (Yeah?) I took my, quite funny, I took, I told my sister on Christmas
 136 Eve 'bout five years ago that I were, thought I were gay, an' after Christmas, my
 137 mum and dad had ideas, I took my girlfriend, first girlfriend round to introduce
 138 her as a friend, an' I was a bit scared of telling 'em, but then Tracey [sister] says
 139 you've got to tell them, so, okay, so Jenny, she was in the car, ready in first gear,
 140 ready to pull off.
- 141 A That's your girlfriend?
- 142 B Yeah, at the time. And I says, 'mum, dad, I'm gay'. Course my dad says 'yeah we
 143 know, (A: Laughs) we've known for the past ten years'. I was like more shocked
 144 than they was.
- 145 A (A: Laughs) That sounds like it was quite a positive experience (Yeah) then. Yeah.
 146 So that was, when did you come out to your parents? How...?
- 147 B 'Bout five years ago.
- 148 A Okay, and had you, cos you said that you first started to, to think that you might
 149 be gay when you were nine or ten. (Yeah) So, there'd been a bit of gap between
 150 when you first wondered about it and when you actually decided to (Yeah) tell
 151 your parents.
- 152 B But I've known. (Yeah) Always known.
- 153 A What was it that, that, sort of, made you decide to tell them then?
- 154 B Um, well, one because I had a girlfriend (Mmm) an' I really couldn't keep that
 155 from them. Um, two because we're very, very close, I don't want to keep (.) them
 156 in the dark, (Mmm) an' three, cos I'd like accepted it myself. (Yeah) and it was
 157 time (.) to (.) tell me mum and dad.
- 158 A Right=
- 159 B =Cos I wasn't going to tell them, cos I'd not accepted it myself. (Mmm) So I'm
 160 not gonna to tell my mum and dad when I've not accepted it myself.
- 161 A Yeah, yeah, right, yeah. Okay. Um, (.) how did, how did it make you feel when
 162 you, the way your parents reacted?
- 163 B Shocked.
- 164 A Yeah?
- 165 B Cos they said they knew for like ten years, I'm like so why didn't they tell me?
- 166 A (A: Laughs) Yeah.

- 167 B But I've felt great because they said that they'd support me no matter what I did.
 168 (Right) 'Long as you're happy, that's all we care about', an' I said, 'I am, that's
 169 what I, that's what I want'. (Right) And I felt brilliant.
- 170 A An', and how do you think it, do you think, sort of, coming out to them has
 171 affected your relationship with them?
- 172 B Not at all.
- 173 A Good. If you were, sort of, to give advice to a young gay person about coming
 174 out, what advice would you give them?
- 175 B Well I've done it before (A & B Laugh). Um, I'd ask them like, I'd tell them to
 176 make sure that your sitting down and say, 'are you sure this is what you want?'
 177 Um, if it is, 'just like accept it yourself first,' (Mmm) 'an' then like once you get
 178 over that barrier, well it will not be fine, but it'll be a next step', (Mmm) 'ahead
 179 of what you were.' (Yeah) 'Another hurdle over.'
- 180 A So it sounds like you've, you feel that it's quite important that you're, you've
 181 accepted it yourself, you're happy...?
- 182 B Yeah, and your friends accept you for who you are as well. (Right) Friends are
 183 important. (Yeah) Cos I lost no end of friends, cos I said I gay, was gay. And I
 184 knew a, knew a friend when I was about s, er, seven years I'd known her. Because
 185 I'd said I was gay, she didn't, she stopped me from seeing the kids and I've seen
 186 'em all grow up. (Right) She stopped me from seeing the kids and didn't have me
 187 round the house again. I've not heard from her since.
- 188 A Right. I was, sort of, going to go on and ask you about, sort of, your relationship
 189 with your friends.
- 190 B Most of my friends, apart from that one, they've accepted me. An', I'm just the
 191 same person, like I say before. I just like women, not men.
- 192 A Yeah. Going back to when you were, sort of, at school an', and your friends at
 193 school, were you, were you open about your sexuality when you were at school?
- 194 B Yes and no. I'd, I'd mess about a bloke and say, 'well she's nice, isn't she', and
 195 she, he goes, 'yeah'. It's stuff like that, messing about. (Mmm) But I, I didn't
 196 really, I didn't, didn't know what gay was when I was nine or ten. I knew I had
 197 these feelings for women. (Mmm) Right from like I say ten years old, nine or ten
 198 years old. I'm thinking well, why am I feeling like this? (Mmm) Like questions,
 199 questions all the time.
- 200 A Mmm. Right. So, when, how old, sort of, were you roughly when you started to,
 201 to tell people, tell your friends that you, you were gay?
- 202 B When I was about nineteen.
- 203 A Right, so it was, sort of, after you'd left, left s', school and stuff. And generally
 204 their, their response was, was positive apart from this one friend= ?

- 205 B =Yeah.
- 206 A Okay, do you think that being out to the', to them affected any of those
207 friendships?
- 208 B No.
- 209 A So it was //just.
- 210 B Cos// they've all been, like (.) it's like people I've grew up with from school 'an
211 they don't mind. (Mmm) They take me for what I am. (Right) //They don't care.
- 212 A So it's just this one,// (Yeah) one person (Yeah) that reacted negatively. And you
213 say you've, sort of, lost contact with her now?
- 214 B Yeah.
- 215 A How, how did it make you feel, the way that she reacted?=
216 B =It really, really hurt me because, like I say, I'd, I'd known her from the age of
217 like say nine, ten. An' I'd seen like all three kids grow up, an' like they're
218 thirteen, (.) ten an' six now. An' it really hurt me, (Mmm) cos we were ever so
219 close as friends. Really, really close. (Mmm) As soon as I told her she just went
220 mad.
- 221 A What sort of things did she do, or say, or...?
- 222 B Well she smacked me for one.
- 223 A She actually hit you?
- 224 B Yeah. Saying 'you're never coming round to see my kids again'. She goes, 'get
225 out you dirty lesbian'. All this stuff, but I went out in tears. I've tried to go back,
226 I rang her up an' like every time I rang her up she just put the phone down. Said,
227 'I don't want to know you no more you dirty hussy'. That's the exact words she
228 said. (Right. Crikey) An' I says to her when I, I did actually speak to her, an' I
229 says, 'well if you don't like, you're no frien, you couldn't of been a true friend'.
230 (Mmm) 'Like we was ever so close, and like now I told you that I'm gay', I said,
231 'you couldn't have been a true friend to me (.) if this is your reaction'. (Mmm)
232 She goes, 'don't let me see you near my kids again cos I'd kill you'. That really
233 put the knife straight there [B points to heart]. (Mmm) Broke me down.
- 234 A Mmm. Very strong reaction. Okay, do you, would you have any advice to to
235 people coming out to their friends?
- 236 B Be careful. Like, like I say, I've have come out to a friend at work when I was
237 nineteen, like I was her shadow, like she showed me the ropes and everything, she
238 was brilliant, an' she said to me, 'you know who your friends are', (Mmm) 'your
239 real friends when you tell 'em something like this'. (Mmm) 'You know who they
240 are'. (Yeah) Then you've got like acquaintances, an' like true proper, true friends
241 you can really rely on.

- 242 A Mmm. Okay, you mentioned earlier your, you told your sister, but what about
243 other members of your family? Your, you know, other siblings or your
244 grandparents, uncles.=
- 245 B =I didn't have to tell, I only told me sister, me mum and dad, me mum, me mum
246 told everybody else. (B: Laughs)
- 247 A Right. Did you want her to tell everybody else?
- 248 B Um, yes and no. I didn't mind like me family like knowing, but then she told her
249 boss at work, her boss, (Right) an' his other half. And like they've been negative
250 towards me as well since knowing. (Right) Like my mum, she, she went through
251 a stage where she accepted it at first, then she went through a stage where she
252 didn't like me. She said some really hurtful things to me, me mum. (Right) Um,
253 she told, like I say, everybody else. I did, like I say, didn't mind me family
254 knowing, it's just people outside me family she started tellin'. I had to tell her, I
255 did didn't want any, everbody to know. (Mmm) Tell me family, yeah, I don't
256 mind me family.
- 257 A And how did she, she...?
- 258 B She said she was sorry. (Right) She said, 'you hurt me and I, I needed to hurt you
259 back'. (Right) That made a big blazing row. Both of us started crying then
260 cuddled each other (A: Laughs) after the row. Then we said we were sorry.
- 261 A So you, you're mum was say, saying that she'd felt hurt by what you'd told her.
- 262 B Yeah. She said she needed to hurt me in some way, which she did. (B: Laughs).
- 263 A Right. Okay. (.) And when your mum told your other sor, your other members of
264 your family, how did, how have they reacted?
- 265 B .Um, a bit shocked at first, but they're fine about it. I say, everyone loves Jo to
266 pieces now. (Right) They're, she's one of us now, so me mum and dad says. One
267 of us, one of the family. (Mmm) Every, me Grandma and Grandad love her. I
268 thought they'd be a bit, you know what I mean. (Mmm) But, no they're fine.
- 269 A Good. Do you think, do you think any of your, your relationship with any
270 members of your family have been affected?
- 271 B Not really, no.
- 272 A Once they //found out you were gay.
- 273 B Not at all.// Not at all.
- 274 A Good.
- 275 B They still treat me as Sharon, which, that's what I want.

- 276 A Yeah. Would you have any advice to, I guess, either parents or other family
277 members like p'rhaps brothers or sisters or, like you say, grandparents of
278 somebody who's, who's just come out to them, a fam, family member?
- 279 B What, advice telling their mum and dad or summat?
- 280 A Yeah, what, what, advice would you give to (.) a mum or dad or a brother or sister
281 (.) //about how to...?
- 282 B Um, tell 'em, // tell 'em.
- 283 A Tell them?
- 284 B Yeah, cos I thought my mum and dad would disown me. (Right) Um, but I
285 can't say that really cos I don't know really how they've been up, how they've
286 been brought up. (Mmm) I've been brought up in a very close, like atmospheres
287 an' I've been sheltered as well. An' no matter what I say to 'em, I can't shock
288 them no more. (B: Laughs).
- 289 A (A: Laughs) So, if you were to, if you were to perhaps, sort of, talk to parents an',
290 an' give them advice on how to respond to someone who'd just come out...?
- 291 B I don't know.
- 292 A What would you say to them?
- 293 B I'd, 'be behind them'. I'd explain that they're still the same person deep down.
294 (Mmm) Just, like I say before, 'just cos they don't like men doesn't mean that
295 they've changed'. (Mmm) 'Just try to accept 'em. I know it's going to be hard (.)
296 at first, just to try to accept for what they are. They're your own flesh and blood'.
- 297 A Brill, okay, the, the last, sort of, group of people in this section is, um, people at
298 work, I guess, your, sort of, colleagues, your peers or whatever, and whether or
299 not, um, you think that being gay has affected your relationship with people at
300 work?
- 301 B Not at all. They love me, they do. Like the kids, obviously they don't know, they
302 don't understand, [works at a nursery/playgroup] but as soon as I started working
303 there, they all had ideas, cos I didn't wear a dress like, you know, a skirt. (Mmm)
304 I had short hair, so they had all ideas. And then, er, Cathy and Liz, they turned
305 round and they asked me whether I was. I said, 'yeah, I am'. So she goes, 'so why
306 didn't you tell me before?' I said, 'because I don't want to push it into your face'.
307 (Mmm) I said, 'if you'd asked me, like you just have then I'd tell you the truth'.
308 (Yeah) Like we've got a brilliant working relationship, we have a laugh. Then
309 like everybody else found out. Um, like (.) about me and everybody's great.
- 310 A Did you tell them, or did they find out by just, sort of...?
- 311 B .Um, they've asked, couple of them asked me what my sexuality was an' I told
312 them, (Mmm) and like (.) they were great. Like they've met Jo, she was Santa's
313 Helper on Saturday. (A: Laughs) At work, Santa come to see the kiddies, and

- 314 they've all met Jo and they think she's great. I was off work with this cold I've
 315 had, (Mmm) an' Jo rang up in the morning, an' she knew she was pregnant then
 316 cos I went into work and I told them. Anyway, um, Cathy didn't get the message
 317 an' she rang up and left a message on the phone, um, worried about Jo, um, cos
 318 I'd not rang them up they thought Jo was up, something was up with Jo, and can
 319 you let us know what's happened to Jo. It's not, not like what's up with me, like
 320 Jo.
- 321 A (A: Laughs) Right. Oh great, so it sounds like everyone's been supportive at
 322 work.
- 323 B Very.
- 324 A Good. Okay. Right, I guess, just very similar questions about sexual relationships,
 325 really. So, first of all, can you tell me about any same-sex relationships that
 326 you've had?
- 327 B Same?
- 328 A Women. Relationships with women.
- 329 B Er, how do you mean?
- 330 A Well.
- 331 B Sorry.
- 332 A No, no, it's, it's me . Um, (.) just can you tell me anything about, I guess, how
 333 many relationships you've had //with women?
- 334 B Three.//
- 335 A Three. Okay. When were you, when was your first relationship, how old were you
 336 when you had your first //relationship?
- 337 B .Um,// well I'd been out 'bout five, six years. It was quite funny actually cos I
 338 went on the scene like three weeks of through coming out, (Mmm) and I co, got
 339 my first girlfriend (B: Laughs). Three weeks.
- 340 A That's not bad going! (B: Laughs) And how, how, how was that relationship?
- 341 B It was a, it was great to start off with, brilliant, but then she started to muck about
 342 behind me back. (Right) And we was together two an' 'alf years. And the first
 343 year an' 'alf was brilliant, couldn't ask for anything better. Then she started
 344 messing about behind me back with me best friend. (Right) An' she, going out
 345 she'd become like an alcoholic. (Right) She'd get nasty if she didn't have a drink.
 346 So she was always down the pub, (.) leaving me on me own in the flat, like you
 347 said going out together, she went down on her own. (Right) An' on a number of
 348 occasions I've, um, friends down the pub says she's been like getting off with (.)
 349 blokes, (Right) getting off with women. An' before, I just come in from work one
 350 day and I found 'er in bed with, in our bed with a bloke, at it. (B: Laughs) So I

351 smacked him. (Right) An' I just walked out. She was running down the road
 352 'baby I love you, I love you, come back!' [in a high voice] Like, go away! (Right)
 353 So that was the end of that one.

354 A Okay. What, how did the, it sounds like the, sor, sort of, were some difficulties
 355 towards the end of that relationship, but how did it make you feel (.) about being
 356 gay. I mean thinking about it being your first, kind of, relationship, with a woman.

357 B It hurt. What when she was messing about? //Or at the end?

358 A Well, I guess, both.// Both at first, and=

359 B =At first, I felt on top of the world. I felt, I can't describe how I felt, it was great.
 360 Like when she started messing about and I had proof. (Yeah) An' it just, that
 361 really, really hurt, (Mmm) cos I thought I was gonna be with Jenny forever.
 362 (Mmm) But it didn't work out like that. It just really, really hurt.

363 A Okay, so you've been in, you've had two other relationships?

364 B No. Jenny 'an Yvette, then Jo.

365 A Right, okay, and how long, how long did, did your relationship with Yvette last?

366 B .Um, [sighs] well at first, um, got together May the first. She dumped me for her
 367 ex-husband who is now a woman, (Right) (.) in August. I got back with 'er (.) in,
 368 (.) no she dump', dumped me in June, got back with 'er in the August, she
 369 dumped me on Christmas Day last year. (.) Cos that really, really hurt me. (Mmm)
 370 She 'ad two kids as well she use', used them against me. (Right) She just used me
 371 from like August to December to buy all the kids their presents and stuff. The
 372 thing that really, really hurt me about it was she let me watch the kiddies open
 373 their presents, and then threw me out in the middle of [name of a nearby county –
 374 the countryside]. Took me money. I had to ring up, I rang me dad to come and pick
 375 me up and he did. (Mmm) I was in a mess.

376 A It doesn't surprise me.

377 B But I'm a fighter. I 'ave to be, you know.

378 A You do. So you're now, you're now in a relationship with Jo and you've been
 379 your relationship with 'er for about //nine months.

380 B Nine months.//

381 A Okay. Now how's that, how does it make you feel //about yourself?

382 B Brilliant.// I love her to death. She's brilliant.

383 A Good.

384 B She's the first person that like takes me for me, loves me for me, not what like I
 385 can give her or stuff she likes, she loves me for me and I'm top of the world at the
 386 moment.

387 A Great.

388 B We have our little tiffs, but everybody does.

389 A And Jo's pregnant in't she?

390 B Yeah, eighth of June. It's, it's a y', it'll be a year exactly since we got engaged,
 391 an' the baby's due.

392 A Wow.

393 B So.

394 A Are you looking forward to that?

395 B At first I wasn't, it was a bit of a shock but, I am now. (Right) Can't wait.

396 A (A: Laughs). Okay. Can you tell me about any relationships with men that you've
 397 had? (.) If you've had any.

398 B Um, well I wouldn't say relationships. Um, .I went out with one bloke, I'd just
 399 come out of hospital with an appendicitis, an' I'd just had the stitches out and
 400 we'd moved up to [a town] and because his dinner wasn't on the table at a certain
 401 time, he got a crowbar and smacked it straight into me stomach as honest to god.
 402 An' I've been in intensive care 'bout twelve times, previous to blokes beating me
 403 up.

404 A Oh, crikey. So what, how old were you when this was...?

405 B I was fifteen, sixteen, just left school. (Right) So I've had no...

406 A So you've had a number of?

407 B I've 'ad two blokes, (Right) an' each bloke smacked me in as much as possible, I
 408 was like their personal punch bag.

409 A Right. And were they sexual relationships?

410 B Through, not through me no. Through them, yeah, but not through me. (Right) I
 411 didn't agree with it. So every time that they wanted sex they 'ad to rape me for it,
 412 an' like I didn't like it. I couldn't do no, cos like I say, I was, it was me first, first
 413 flat on me own, I was away from me parents and like I was really scared of 'em.

414 A Yeah. So were you living with, with these men?

415 B Um, first one I was, yeah. (Right) And like it was weird because I'd been going
 416 out with 'im nine months previous, not on a sexual relationship, (Mmm) just like
 417 (.) kissing, whatever. (Yeah) 'An' 'e was lovely, I couldn't have wished for better,

418 know what I mean? (Mmm) Like 'e lived in [a town] and 'e'd ring me up at 'alf
 419 past ten at night asking me if I was alright an' 'e asked me if I wanted any fags or
 420 money. I said, 'well no I'm fine'. He says, 'I know you're not', and 'e used to
 421 travel from [a town] to [a city] to, 'e'd buy me two hundred fags and give me
 422 thirty quid, an' then 'e'd travel back. (Right) An' like soon as 'e got me into that
 423 flat, 'e changed. He was a right animal.

424 A Mmm, sounds like it. So how did those (.) relationships make you feel about, I
 425 guess, about yourself first of all?

426 B It, 'e brainwashed me both of them brainwashed me. I shouldn't have let meself
 427 fall into the trap the second time but, 'e w', 'e was alright, they, they were both
 428 alright until like they moved in. (Mmm) Then like they'd just changed, and like
 429 I've, me self esteem went straight to the floor. (Mmm) I hated it. (Yeah) Like 'e,
 430 'e'd say to me, when I was in [a town], 'if you ever left [a town], I've got people
 431 all over [a town] that know who you are and whoever, if you ever try to escape
 432 from the flat, they'd blow your knee caps off'. An' like I was a prisoner in that
 433 flat for (.) four months.

434 A Right, gosh.

435 B All, all he give me was, I lost, within them four months I was in that flat, I lost
 436 five stone cos all 'e give me to eat was like dried bread and beans an' 'e give me
 437 water three times a day. That's all he'd give me. I've had a rough time with
 438 blokes.

439 A It sounds like it. How did those, (.) um, relationships make you feel about, about
 440 you being gay? Cos you said you'd, sort of...=

441 B =Yeah I hate, I hated men after them experiences. I detested men. (Mmm) I really,
 442 really detested men and I swore that I'd never, ever, ever have another
 443 relationship with a bloke. I was sexually abused by me grandad (.) from the age of
 444 nine to the age of seventeen and like that didn't help matters at all.

445 A Right. It sounds like you've had a lot of negative experiences with men. 'Ave,
 446 'ave there ever, 'ave there been any (.) positive men in your life?

447 B Only David, now 'e's gay, an' I love 'im to pieces. I really, really love 'im.

448 A Is he someone you know now?

449 B Yeah, (.) but apart from that, (.) no. Apart from me dad, of course. (Right) Love
 450 'im to pieces.

451 A Okay. So we've talked about, we've talked about, sort of, relationships with
 452 women, your relationships with men. Um, have you had any, sort of, casual
 453 sexual (.) encounters as opposed to //relationships.

454 B What like// one night stands?

455 A Yes.

456 B No.

457 A Okay, that's it on that bit. (.) Alright, where are we up to, we've got, sort of, two
 458 more sections to go. Um, this group of questions are about basically (.) coping
 459 and support, any support that you've had. Um, so, for example, any support that
 460 you've had, whether it met your needs, whether you think there's anything that
 461 would have made things easier for you that wasn't available, things like that. An'
 462 h', just generally how you've coped with any difficulties. Okay. There's, some
 463 people experience difficulties either coming to terms with being gay or because of
 464 things that happen to them because they're gay. For example, feeling isolated,
 465 feeling frightened, worried about what's safe and unsafe sex, experiencing
 466 prejudice or abuse, people, um, you know, verbally abusing them. And thankfully
 467 some people don't experience any of those problems, but some do. So, can you
 468 tell me whether you've experienced difficulties of this sort, and if so, how would
 469 you say you'd coped with them or you have coped or you do cope with them if
 470 they're still=

471 B =I've only 'ad name-calling, that's as far as it's gone.

472 A Right. And how, how do you or have you coped with=.

473 B =Well now I shrug it off. 'Get a life', kind of, thing. (Yeah) But at first I was, I
 474 was sheltered, I wasn't, I've had a bit of shit when I first come out, say name-
 475 calling whatever, (Mmm) but I just shrugged it off, like it scared me a bit. God,
 476 does that happen? I didn't know that happened.

477 A Right, so it was a surprise?

478 B Jenny just talked to, and she sheltered me from a lot of it.

479 A Who, who was, who was doin' the, doin' the name-calling, an', sort of, where,
 480 where was it happening //to you?

481 B .Um, // round town. Um, it sounds horrible but it was mostly black lads. (Mmm)
 482 Oh, I remember I went down to shop, to Asian Pete's, just round the corner from
 483 me, and this black lad started having a bit of, he was drunk outta 'is head, and he
 484 was stoned, you could tell he was. He started calling me a lesbian and like I'm
 485 saying like, 'so'. Like he, he punched me. (Right) He, he, he punched me then he
 486 got, grabbed hold of me head and put it against the floor. I said, 'what's this
 487 achieving?' I was scared, and 'e said, 'nothing', 'e says, 'y', you like women'. I
 488 says, 'so do you, what's the problem?' I says, 'is it because I'm a woman as
 489 well?' He says, 'well yeah'. I says, 'well I 've got no problem with it'. He let me
 490 up an' went. (Right) So, I think I handled that quite well. (Yeah) I was shaking, I
 491 cried afterwards, but (.) I think I coped quite well. I've 'ad to, an' with like me
 492 experience in the past, (Mmm) like I'd say like, get a hard, if you like to say that.
 493 (Right) So I can cope, I can cope with nearly anything. (B: Laughs)

494 A Do you mean hard like physically or hard //emotionally?

495 B No, // emotionally.

- 496 A Yeah.
- 497 B I don't get no trouble, not now. I've got too many, say protectors round [a city].
- 498 A Right, yeah. .Do you feel that you've either need, or have needed support or
499 information to help you cope with, with, sort of, being gay or, or coming to terms
500 with it, you know, getting more, um, (.)?
- 501 B Surely, yeah=
- 502 A =Accepting it?
- 503 B When, when I first come out I was at [a refuge] for domestic violence. Um,
504 through my previous relationships, (Mmm) and my blokes and 'e says. Losing my
505 bearings now (.). Yeah, um, when like I says I was at [a refuge] an' I come, me
506 key worker, um, Lisa, she was gay and we, we 'ad a really good, close
507 relationship, like key worker come student. She told me about [name of the LGB
508 youth group], was a gay group. So I come down, and I was outside for twenty-five
509 minutes, I was scared to go in. (Yeah) And, um, I come in, finally come in an'
510 like everybody like stopped, there was only about four, five people in, but
511 everybody stopped and watched me come in, and I'm thinking, 'oh my god!' An'
512 Sue come up (.) to me, she was like the head of the group, she goes, um, 'we're
513 not open, like it's not open access, this is a lesbian and gay group', she go', I says,
514 'yeah I know, that's why I'm here'. She went, 'oh fine', an' talked to me for about
515 forty-five minutes, telling me everything about [the LGB youth group], like the
516 support an' the help I could get. (Mmm) She was really, really nice, but
517 unfortunately she died (.) of cancer.
- 518 A Oh crikey, I didn't know that.
- 519 B Yeah. Did you know Sue?
- 520 A No.
- 521 B No. She was brilliant. She was, you know, in her either early thirties or late
522 thirties. She died of cancer.
- 523 A That's very young i'nt it.
- 524 B That upset a lot of people. Cos she done a hell of a lot work around [a city], outer
525 [a city], (Mmm) all over the country. Like, I think, I think there was about seven
526 hundred people at the funeral, if not more.
- 527 A That's nice that so many people (.) ...
- 528 B Very popular person she was. But she was so nice-hearted. She helped me
529 through a lot of it. That was four, five, five years ago.
- 530 A Right. So (.) h', you got quite a bit of support...
- 531 B Through [the LGB youth group].

- 532 A Through [the LGB youth group].
- 533 B Yeah.
- 534 A Okay. Um, (.) have you had any other support, support from elsewhere?
- 535 B No, I've always come here, (Right) an' if I've got a problem I talk to one of the
536 staff, and they help me out, I've never been nowhere else. (Mmm) Cos I like
537 talking to people I know. (Yeah) Don't like talking to strangers.
- 538 A And do you think, do you think it's, sort of, um, just cos [the LGB youth group]
539 as you say is great for gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Do you think it, was it
540 important that was a, a gay group?
- 541 B .Um, not really because I used, like I say used, um, the centre [young (14-25)
542 people's service/centre where the LGB youth group takes place] as well. (Mmm)
543 And like there's Jacky, she's gay, she's the counsellor, (Yeah) and I, I had her to
544 talk to. I had Tanya, she was gay, she used to work here. Then Sarah, Claire. Like
545 I had friends connecting with them. (Yeah) So I've not really had to go nowhere
546 else. (Right) It's always been here.
- 547 A Okay. Do you think that it's (.) helpful to have support services, um, that are run
548 by gay people?
- 549 B Definitely. (Yeah) I'd have cracked up, well not cracked up but I wouldn't have
550 known what to do, (.) if it hadn't have been for this place. Cos like I was new to
551 the scene an', I didn't know what I was doing, like, I hadn't a clue. Then, like I
552 say, me key worker mentioned this place. And like from starting to come here,
553 (Mmm) I've like got me confidence back, (Yeah) an' I feel great.
- 554 A So what sorts of things (.) have they helped you with, would you, sort of, say?
- 555 B Like I say, abuse, they've helped me with that. Um, they've helped me like fight
556 for me flat. (Mmm) Um, they've helped me coming to terms with being gay. (.)
557 Loads of things.
- 558 A Mmm. So it sounds like a mixture of, sort of, some practical things, (Yeah) but
559 some more, sort of, um, personal, emotional (Mmm) stuff as well.
- 560 B They've always been there for me an' I've been, like I say, I've been 'ere five
561 years. (Right) They've always been there for me.
- 562 A Great. .Have you ever been offered or, or forced to ss, seek support that, that you
563 didn't want, that was unhelpful or didn't meet your needs or anything like that?
- 564 B No.
- 565 A Good. Um, Okay. .Um, just thinking about, sort of, the other people in your life
566 that, that you're close to, an' I think we, sort of, um, (.) you mentioned earlier on
567 your mum actually, sort of, found finding out that you were gay quite difficult.
568 There's some people find, do find it difficult themselves to come to terms with

- 569 finding out that someone they're close to is gay. Do you think that any of the
 570 people, perhaps like your mum but, anybody else as well that's close to you that,
 571 that may have found it difficult at first...?
- 572 B Me nannan and grandad, um, (.) an' me mum. Me dad, I'm not sure about, he
 573 was, he was okay about it. My sister was, she was like, before I told her that I was
 574 gay, she hated gay people. (Right) Not hated 'em, but she was like really wary of
 575 them. She wouldn't talk to, to 'em. So I've like helped 'er (.) like come to terms
 576 like an' understand there are gay people out there, (Yeah) an' we're all the same.
 577 Like she's thanked me for that, thanking me, 'for making me [Sharon's sister]
 578 understand. Cos like I [Sharon's sister] had a negative attitude towards gay people
 579 and I shouldn't of done'. (Mmm) An' like she was really hurt by the fact that
 580 there's like people out there, (.) she didn't want to entertain 'em. (Mmm) But like
 581 I've helped her realise that we're all the same people.
- 582 A So can, do you think that there's anything, sounds like you, sort of, in a way were
 583 a support to your sister. Do you think that there's, can you think of anything else
 584 that would have supported either your, your mum or your gran and grandad or
 585 your sister? Anything else that would have helped them to come to terms with,
 586 with, I guess, getting, getting used to and accepting the fact that you were gay?
 587 Do you, do you know what I'm getting at? (Yeah) Cos, I guess, y', you, you did
 588 find, fortunately, some, you know here, (Yeah) and got support an', and=
- 589 B =Like me, me family they like confided in each other, (Yeah) for like support.
 590 (Yeah) An' like me mum, like she spoke to me grandma and grandad, me
 591 grandma and grandad spoke to another member of the family. (Right) Just, like,
 592 for, like, support, did you, like they weren't being nasty about it. (No) Just, like,
 593 talking, (Yeah) an' they all says to me, (.) 'if it's what you want then we accept
 594 it', (Right) 'as long as your happy'.
- 595 A So, they, kind of, sorted it out amongst themselves. (Yeah) An', an' is that
 596 something that y', you, it sounds like you, you've got quite close family in some
 597 senses, is that generally the way your family would deal with, (Yeah) an issue
 598 that, any, sort of, issue like that?
- 599 B Yeah.
- 600 A Yeah? Okay. Have you got any advice that you would give to people who might
 601 be in a position to help young people who are gay. Either, I don't know, teachers
 602 or youth workers or, or, or group leaders or?
- 603 B Yeah, make it more known. (Right) Cos, (.) like kids today (.) they, they should,
 604 they don't, they like banned it from schools about gay and lesbian people, an'
 605 they don't know anything about it. (Mmm) They should talk ab', more about it, in
 606 like schools and colleges. They like protect 'em from us, cos like we're aliens
 607 from outerspace or summat. (A& B Laugh) You know, they should be more
 608 aware, (Right) that we do exist.
- 609 A Yeah. You mean ch, sort of, young people or the, the, the, people? =

- 610 B =Not too young cos they won't understand. (Right) Like I mean like
611 comprehensive (.) like ages.
- 612 A Okay, yeah. An' you, an' it's, sort of, teachers' and youth workers' (.) job to do
613 that, (Yeah) or, or you...?=
614 B =It's like just making them aware that we like we do exist, (Yeah) and we're not
615 aliens, (Yeah) we're, just like (.) I say, same as everybody else. (Mmm) That's
616 how it should be, equal opportunities.
- 617 A Yeah. Okay, the last section. .Um, just a few questions about, I guess, how much
618 or whether you've had, um, contact with other gay men or lesbians or bisexuals,
619 and also, sort of, how much, um, discussion there was about, about gay people
620 either at home or at school or in different settings. .So, first of all did you know
621 anyone who was gay when you were, when you were growing up?
- 622 B No. Not at all.
- 623 A Not at, sort of, family or friends or school or anything? (.) Okay, how do you
624 think that affected you, not, not knowing anyone?
- 625 B Well I don't know, because I didn't know what it was, (Right) when I was a kid. I
626 didn't know what it was so (.) didn't really affect me (.) when I was growing up.
- 627 A Okay. Were you aware of gay people in the media, for example, sort of, music or
628 films or T.V. Or...? [B shakes head] No? (.) Okay. When did you, sort of, first
629 become aware of gay people in the media or...?
- 630 B When I was about eleven or twelve. (Right) Saw two women kissing, and I'm
631 thinking 'that's two women, (.) why are they kissing?'
- 632 A Was this in, where was this, where did you...?=
633 B =It was, we was just walkin', um, I can't remember were it was but we was
634 walkin' to the shops, me and me mum and me dad, like a family outing or
635 summat, can't remember, but two women kissed, and I'm thinking, 'oh they must
636 be family'. (.) That's what I thought, (Mmm) I just put it aside.
- 637 A Mmm. Okay. What about, um, (.) at, was, was, um, was discussion, was, sort of,
638 homosexuality or gay people talked about at home at all?
- 639 B No.
- 640 A No?
- 641 B Not at all.
- 642 A Would it, do you think it would have been helpful if it had been?
- 643 B From, what when before I like realised?

- 644 A Yeah. Or, or before even when you, before you were, I guess, out.
- 645 B Um, I don't know. Because, like I say, before I realised like nine or ten, before
646 then, I didn't know what it was. (Mmm) So like I say no.
- 647 A Do you think it would of made it any easier for you if you had known what it
648 was?
- 649 B Going back probably, yeah. (Mmm) Yeah.
- 650 A What, what, what difference would it, would it have made, what, what would
651 have been different had you, kind of...?
- 652 B I, I, I'd have been aware of it. (Mmm) I'd of known what it was. It probably
653 would have helped me as well, (Mmm) like knowing what like lesbians was, like
654 gay people. (Yeah) If I was aware of it, yeah.
- 655 A Yeah. (.) Yeah, do you think it would have been, I'm, I'm just wondering whether
656 it would have been, kind of, less confusing in a way?
- 657 B Yeah, yeah.
- 658 A Yeah. I just think it must be quite difficult if you have these feelings and are not,
659 (.)...
- 660 B You don't know what they are, //yeah, yeah.
- 661 A Don't quite know// what they are, yeah. Okay What about at, at school was there
662 any, sort of, discussion about gay people at school? Eith'...=
- 663 B =I haven't heard of.
- 664 A No?
- 665 B Never.
- 666 A Either, sort of, in class or... (.)
- 667 B No.
- 668 A What about just in the playground or pupils talking on a bus ride to school?
- 669 B No.
- 670 A No?
- 671 B I didn't hear anything anyway.
- 672 A Okay. Can you tell me how you first made contact with other lesbians, gay men,
673 bisexuals?

- 674 B .Um, five years ago when I first come out, oh um, when I was at [a refuge], me
 675 key worker, she was gay, (Right) an' she told me, like once I got to know 'er a bit
 676 more, she told me like 'er status, (Mmm) then I was fine with it. Like she, she,
 677 she helped me if you like, like come to terms with me as well (.) cos I was still
 678 like confused, (Mmm) whether I was or I wasn't. An' like we like 'ad a really
 679 good talk about it. She goes, 'if you are, you are. That's it'. (Mmm) An' like that
 680 helped me a little bit as well. That was the first time.
- 681 A Mmm. What do you think, um, (.) what do you think (.) made you (.) stop being
 682 confused?
- 683 B I'm not sure, I don't know, um, (.) I'm not sure.
- 684 A Okay. So, about, so that you met up with your key worker who was gay and that
 685 was, (.) how long ago?
- 686 B .About six years ago.
- 687 A Yeah. And then, an' then she, kind of, directed you down here. (Yeah) Right, and
 688 is this where you first, kind of, met (Yeah) other gay people to socialise with?
- 689 B Yeah.
- 690 A Okay, what made you decide to, or why was it important to, sort of, meet up with
 691 other (.) gay //people?
- 692 B Because// it was new an' I needed like to talk (.) to people who had been through
 693 (.) like coming out. (Mmm) It was important for me to like get things off my
 694 chest, an' talk to somebody else. Cos like when I first came out, I had nobody, I
 695 didn't know nobody at all, (Mmm) apart from me key worker. Like she directed
 696 me down here, an' (.) it was good for me, (Yeah) to talk.
- 697 A Okay. Um, (.) what sort of places do you usually go to to socialise? (.) As in, gay
 698 or straight or mixed or both or...?
- 699 B Um, I come here, [name of a gay pub], [name of a gay pub], [name of a gay pub].
- 700 A So those are all gay, or predominately gay, gay pubs.
- 701 B Yeah. And I go to [name of a club], they 'ave a gay night.
- 702 A Right. So most of the nights when you go out, do you choose to go to a gay place?
- 703 B Yeah.
- 704 A Yeah. And is that, sort of, mixed, men and women or?=
 705 B =Yeah.
- 706 A Yeah. Okay. .Um, what do you, what do you think about those places?

- 707 B I like it. (Yeah) They're good. (Yeah) Cos like [name of a gay pub], is like mixed
 708 like mostly gay people, but straight people come in, an' we just 'ave a laugh. And
 709 people are treated equal in there. Like my friend, well so-called friend, went in
 710 with him, and he smacked this lesbian straight in the face. Probably didn't realise
 711 I was a, gay as well, an' like the landlady's went up the wall. (Mmm) They says
 712 'why, why did you do that?' 'Cos she's gay'. She goes, 'so your going to fight
 713 everyone in this pub then? Because we're all gay'. Then 'e just ran out.
- 714 A Right, so it's quite a, does it feel quite a, sort of...?
- 715 B The atmosphere in there is outta this world. (Yeah) Like most of my straight
 716 friends, um, love going in there, because every, they 'ave a laugh. (Yeah) Like pe,
 717 some people think, 'they're gay, do they fancy me? They're gonna, they're gonna
 718 jump on me'. (Mmm) And you think, 'don't flatter yourself', kind of thing. (A:
 719 Laughs) But (.)
- 720 A So it feels...=
- 721 B =It's not like that.
- 722 A Does it feel quite a ...? (.) I'm just trying to, sort of, think what the atmosphere's
 723 like. Is it quite a friendly...?
- 724 B Friendly, relaxed, easy pub to just walk in, (Mmm) and have a laugh, like.
- 725 A And I'm wondering also whether it sounds like from what you describe when,
 726 when the guy came in and hit, hit a woman, whether it doesn't also feel quite a
 727 safe or, sort of, something, there's something about feeling a bit (.) protected or
 728 something because of people being together? I don't know. Is there anything
 729 about that or, that might be just me.
- 730 B Um, no (.)
- 731 A No, okay
- 732 B We just like, like I say loads of straight people go in there for a good time.
 733 (Mmm) And straight people who are friends have turned round and told me that
 734 gay people are better to get on with than straight people. (Mmm) And I says, 'so
 735 why's that?' 'Cos you can have more of a laugh with them. You can, you can
 736 talk'. I says, 'but you can talk with straight people as well'. (Mmm) But, she goes,
 737 um, she said, 'well they tend to be a bit more serious'.
- 738 A Straight people?
- 739 B Yeah.
- 740 A Right, okay. .How do you think those sorts of gay pubs and clubs that you go to
 741 treat young gay people? What do you, how do you think they are for...?
- 742 B Alright.

- 743 A Yeah?
- 744 B Specially [a gay pub], across the road. (Right) They welcome anybody in.
- 745 A Great.
- 746 B An' they make you feel at home. It's like a homely pub. (Mmm) Like if there's
747 any trouble, they sort it out straight away.
- 748 A Right, okay. Have you got any ideas about new or different places that you'd like
749 to socialise in that aren't around or, or changes to places that do exist that would
750 make them better or...?
- 751 B Um, we've been up to Manchester, that's a new place. I've been up to [a nearby
752 county], um, that's it, I don't, that's it.
- 753 A Fine. Is there, is there, are there things in Manchester or [a nearby county] [end of
754 tape - that there isn't here)?
- 755 B It's more like homely, it's more homely down here, (Yeah) but there's a whole
756 gay village up Manchester.
- 757 A So there's more there, an' it, it's, kind of, (Yeah=) concentrated in a area isn't it.
- 758 B Manchester, er, ninety-five percent of it is gay. It's a big town, big place. (Yeah)
759 Like I say, everywhere you go there's gay people. (Yeah) It's like run by gay
760 people. (A: Laughs) Like the village, the village is massive. (Yeah) There's like
761 gay shops, gay barbers, gay doctors, gay dentists. (Mmm) Yeah, it's like massive.
762 Like the scene is like that down here [gesticulates: hand close to the floor]. (Yeah,
763 yeah) Manchester scene is like way... [gesticulates: hand high in the air].
- 764 A Yeah. So it's much bigger.
- 765 B Yeah.=
- 766 A =Do you think it, it's a good thing that there are, sort of, um, gay doctors, gay
767 dentists, gay //barbers.
- 768 B Yeah.//
- 769 A Okay, yeah. So you'd like, you'd like there to be, to be more of a, sort of, village,
770 with more, dif, different services and things available that are gay run...?
- 771 B Mmm
- 772 A Ideally. Okay. Right, I mean basically that's it unless there's anything that you'd
773 like to discuss that we haven't covered yet? Or if you've got any comments?
774 How's it been?
- 775 B Alright.
- 776 A Yeah?

777 B It's been alright.

778 A Okay. Do you feel okay after...?

779 B Yeah.

780 A Right, good, brilliant, well thanks very much.

781 B Anytime.

Interview 3

Jo

Interview Date

20/1/99

- 1 A Um, people describe their sexuality in lots of different ways. How would you
2 describe yours?
- 3 B Um, I'm, I know I'm bisexual, but I definitely prefer women to men, and that's
4 the only way I can describe it really. (Mmm) An' I mean I used to say to Sharon,
5 and she used to say 'oh, you're gay or you're bi', and I say 'I don't like to be
6 labelled'. I know it's, er, people say it's easy, but to me, I'm just me, I'm not
7 either gay, lesbian, I'm not bisexual, I'm just me. (Yeah) Don't label me. (B:
8 Laughs) But now I've, kind of, got used to it, so... (B: Laughs)
- 9 A So you, you're, sort of, attracted to both men and women?=
10 B =Yeah, but more women, more than men.
- 11 A Um, okay. Um, this is, sort of, probably going back in time a bit. Um, most
12 people experience lots of different thoughts and emotions when they realise for
13 the first time that they might (Mmm=) be, be lesbian, gay or bisexual. Can you
14 describe how you felt and what, sort of, thoughts went through your mind and
15 what you did, sort of, when you first realised...?
- 16 B The first time I realised I was attracted to women I was about eleven years old
17 cos it was the last year of me junior school. I had a very good friend and I started
18 having lots and lots of dreams about her in a physical way, more than a friendship
19 way. And, um, I was, I kind of, I knew about gay people but I didn't know a lot. I
20 hardly knew anything about it, I just knew that there were some people who went
21 with the same sex a:nd it was, (.) it kind of, I kept that shut up inside me. I was
22 quite an open person when I was, I used to go round screaming about a lot of
23 things, but that I kept shut up inside me for about two to three years before I told
24 people about it. Um, because that's when I found, started to find out more about it
25 and I realised what I'd felt earlier on when I was only eleven years old was what
26 was natural in a sense. And so, an' that's when I, I picked and chose the people to
27 tell. By the time I was fourteen, I had actually told my mum that I was bisexual,
28 did it in a car so she couldn't hit me, so, (B: Laughs) but, er, she also, she also
29 had at the time, which made it easier for me, a gay best friend. He was, erm, a
30 very close friend of hers, and she made it easier for me to tell 'er because when
31 Frank came round they, they talked, he talked about his, um, experiences when he
32 was younger in front of me, and me mum didn't shuffle me off, she let me listen
33 and she kept saying 'well, I, I wouldn't chastise me children if they were like this
34 or they were like that or anything', she says, 'they are what they are and I love
35 them'. So, when I told my mum it was very easy and she was very open about it.
36 She did say, 'maybe your dreams, it may be your hormones changing, it could be
37 that'. I says, 'but this has been for, like, three years now', I says, 'so I don't (.)
38 know (.) whether it is or not, um, but I, I'd rather say it's not just hormones, it's
39 me', and she said, 'fair enough'. And then it wasn't mentioned again for years
40 until I was probably about, it wasn't mentioned for about two or three years un',
41 until I was about seventeen, eighteen. I started going to college, still didn't have a
42 relationship with a woman an' we, we didn't, we didn't talk about it but we knew
43 it was there. Then I started going to gay clubs and I was going to gay clubs for
44 about a year but I still didn't meet anybody an', I never got off with anybody, I
45 never went home with anybody. An' then I met Sharon an' that was it. This is my
46 first relationship but, I know it's right because I've had relationships with men in

47 the past. (Mmm) But this was a totally different ball game an' it felt a lot easier
 48 and, right for me and I felt quite comfortable. So that's, kind of, all the steps I
 49 went through before I finally accepted it, cos I don't think that I was really ready
 50 to accept it until the day I met Sharon.

51 A Right, so that was quite a big, (Yeah) a big turning point?

52 B Yeah it was.

53 A And you say, you say you've, sort of, you've accepted it, (Mmm) or you accepted
 54 it when you met Sharon? Can you just, sort of, tell me about how, how you feel
 55 about being gay now?

56 B It doesn't bother me at all. I mean, I thought when I came, when I eventually
 57 came out big time, I mean, a lot of my friends knew I was bi, that I did like
 58 women and they were fine about it, but when I came out big time, because most
 59 of my close friends an' my relatives already knew that I had tendencies to feel
 60 that way, it wasn't a shock. Cos my mum came home, er, no, my mum came to
 61 wake me up in the morning to go to work, there was a women beside me in bed.
 62 No questions asked, she wasn't bothered. (Mmm) And she hasn't said anything to
 63 this day that she was upset about it, she was actually quite glad that I'd got
 64 together with someone I suppose. But, I don't know, um, when I came out at
 65 work there was never anyone, a gay, well, a female gay person working there.
 66 There were some gay men working there at the nursing home and, um, ninety
 67 percent of them made it very easy for me, um, they were really good, but there
 68 were these couple that, 'ooh, what if I'm in the bathroom with her, what if she
 69 does something to me'. This was a fifty year old woman that said this an' when I
 70 got to hear about it, I'm thinking 'well, one, I'm in a relationship, two, I don't,
 71 you know, really fancy you, an' three, you're older than my mother', you know
 72 (B: Laughs). An' then there was some graffiti in the bathroom about it, er, 'J T is
 73 a lesbian bitch'. That got nipped in the bud and the person was sacked when they
 74 found out who it was. So that, that, but, though, that kind of stuff what, before I'd
 75 met Sharon, or, would have bothered me, it would have really got my back up
 76 and made me upset an' cry, but this time it didn't, cos I didn't care. As far,
 77 because I felt safe and comfortable in my relationship now, when I came out, I
 78 didn't care anymore because (Mmm) they could go do what they, say, do
 79 whatever they wanted because I knew I'd got the majority behind me and all my
 80 friends cared about me, (=Mmm=) and that's all that mattered to me.

81 A So, would you say that you'd, kind of, it sounds like you'd, you'd come out to
 82 your mum and to some, some friends before you'd met Sharon. (Mmm) And that,
 83 but, cos, because you sort of, you'd said that when you came out big time an', an'
 84 came out at work, did that take place after you'd met Sharon?

85 B That took place after I'd met Sharon. I wasn't ready to discuss my personal life,
 86 er, other than with my close friends. But when I got into a relationship with a
 87 woman, er, with Sharon, I decided I wanted to tell the world and I didn't care.
 88 And I went to my boss first an' I told my boss, and, the matron there, and the
 89 matron says 'I stand behind you one hundred percent, don't worry about it'. An'
 90 once I'd got her blessing, I didn't care who else knows. As long as the residents
 91 didn't hear about it or get to, er, get worried or upset about it, she didn't mind.

92 (Mmm) And, er, when they started, it wasn't me being funny, all I did was tell
 93 one or two people and it was spread like wildfire round the nursing home. An'
 94 when people started being funny, because she knew I'd handled it in a subtle way,
 95 I'd just told one or two people and then let them more or less take its course, an'
 96 such gossip flow, um, she wasn't bothered and she knew it wasn't me flaunting it,
 97 and she knew it was just them making up the worst.

98 A Mmm. So it sounds like, um, meeting up with Sharon and having a relationship
 99 with Sharon was quite a big, sort of...? =

100 B =Swaying point. Yeah, it was. I'd, I'd not had, I, I mean I'd had a friend that was
 101 also gay and we'd, um, talked about going out together but we never did anything
 102 about it, we never kissed, we never went out on our own, an' we never, we talked
 103 about it but never did anything. We were, we both knew were gay, we wanted it
 104 but we didn't (.) want to (.) accept it at that point and we were leaning on each
 105 other for the support.

106 A Mmm, mmm. How would you say, kind of, I'm just thinking about, um, cos it,
 107 you know, you said you were eleven, kind of, when you first (Mmm) realised
 108 and, (.) um, and that, sort of, before Sharon, you weren't, kind of, ready to accept
 109 it. (=Mmm=) How did, how did that feel, how did you, kind of, cope with it?

110 B Um, I don't know. I kept, I kept, well, saying I was, but thinking that one day I'd
 111 realise I wasn't. I, there was half of me that would say, 'yes, you are, you're
 112 bisexual, you like women' and, then, um, there's me other half saying 'oh no,
 113 you're just saying that to fit in with your gay friends.' (Right) And, er, because
 114 I'd not had, for the year I was on the scene, I did not have one relationship, get
 115 off with anybody, or meet anybody that took my interest, an' I, I star', you know,
 116 I kept, that's probably cos I was, kept saying to myself 'you're just doing it to
 117 make', you know, cos, 'to get in with your gay friends, (Mmm=) you're doing it
 118 to get in with your gay friends', but the other half of me was saying, 'no, you are,
 119 you are, you are'. So, I was, kind of, split in two. (Yeah, yeah) So, it was really
 120 hard. I mean even, I knew I was because of the dreams, but I didn't wanna accept
 121 I was because I thought I was just doing it to get accepted by my gay friends.

122 A Right, so it sounds like you were, sort of, quite confused in a way?

123 B Mmm, I was.

124 A How did you, how did you feel about, did you, how did you feel about, kind of,
 125 um, about the thought of being gay. Did you want to be gay or bisexual or did
 126 you really not, or, was that something that you thought about?

127 B Um, I thought, I, the half of me that, saying I was just doing it because of my
 128 friends, that half kept saying to me that I thought was, um, 'you want to be gay,
 129 you're only doing this because you want to be gay, you want to be with your
 130 friends, you want to be gay'. (=Mmm=) Um, but the other half of me was saying
 131 'no, cos this is too hard, this is too hard, (B: Laughs) you don't want to be gay cos
 132 this is too hard'. So again, I still had the two, kind of, separate voices in my head.
 133 You know, one minute I'd feel like I definitely was, one minute I'd think I was,
 134 you know, just there to make an impression with my friends.

- 135 A Mmm. Thinking about now, what, what, in what positive ways does being
136 bisexual affect your life?
- 137 B Um, (.) I mean, I've got Sharon an' I'm happy, an' I'm in love for the first time in
138 my life, an' that has brought some, being bisexual has brought her, (=Mmm=)
139 and brought me happiness, but I don't think it's, apart from the work, when I was
140 at work an' the few bad things I had said about me at work then. (.) It, an', oh an'
141 being pregnant an' being classed as gay cos I'm with a woman, it's not caused me
142 any problems, it's not really highlighted my life, apart from meeting Sharon, and
143 it's not really caused me many problems. (Right) Er, it, to me it's been a really
144 easy ride. (Mmm) Apart from a couple of days when everybody was getting to
145 know at work and, um, a week or so after everybody found out I was pregnant
146 there was a bit of up in arms, 'oh god, she's gay, she's pregnant'. But when I
147 actually, er, apart from my Aunt Sarah and my gran, well my gran's disowned me
148 cos I'm pregnant, on me mum's side, my gran on my dad's side doesn't care,
149 basically she's 'whatever, do what you want'. (B: Laughs) Um, I've, er, I've lost
150 her over being gay not through being pregnant and me Aunt Sarah's, er, gone up
151 in arms because I'm gay and pregnant. But once, my mum was a bit funny about
152 it at first, but she says 'I'm always gonna support you, I've just got to get used to
153 the idea', and, er, then I just said, I says 'look', I says, 'if I was a single mum or
154 if I was, if I was with all men, I was all going out for men and everything', I says,
155 'and I came home one day and I'd had a one-night stand and I was pregnant,
156 didn't know who the father was', says, 'it'd be the same thing more or less'. She
157 says, 'what do you mean', I says 'it's still got a mother (.) and it doesn't have a
158 father, and if I was a single parent it'd be the same'. I says, 'but I think, think in
159 this case it's better', she says, 'Why?' I says, 'because it's got just two loving
160 parents, two people to love it is a lot better than just one on its own'. (Mmm) An'
161 I think after that she just, every doubt in her mind went out 'er head, she didn't
162 care. But that, I think that's the only two problems I've had with being bisexual
163 or gay and I, I think compared to a lot of people, I've had such an easy ride,
164 (Mmm) along the path of coming out. An' I think it's probably because of the
165 friends I've had an' because I've been so open-minded, my friends have had to be
166 open-minded because of how I am. (.) And, er, coming out to them was so easy
167 because they were open, as open-minded as me, so that's probably why I've had
168 such an easy ride of it.
- 169 A Mmm, mmm. Um, I was going to ask you, um, what, what is it about, what do
170 you think it is about being gay and pregnant that, that your, is it your aunt and
171 your gran, or your aunt...?
- 172 B My, well, my, my gran was fine about me being pregnant, then she found out I
173 was gay an' she didn't care about, then she just says 'I'm a Jehovah Witness,
174 don't...', you see my grandma's (B: Laughs) a Jehovah Witness on me mum's
175 side. 'Don't want gay people in my house'. Haven't heard or spoken to her since,
176 neither's my mum cos she, she's very protective an' loving after me. After the
177 family break up, I'm the only one she still has. (Right) So she still really, she was
178 close to me when she split up with my dad because she only had me left, um,
179 because my brothers, kind of, disowned her as well. So she's very protective of
180 me. (Mmm) Um, (.) but, er, my gran just disowned me cos I was gay, she's just
181 anti it. My Auntie Sarah disowned me cos she i:s one of these people who has her

182 own views, won't listen to anybody else's, won't accept anybody else's views
 183 unless they agree with 'er own, and won't support them. And if they do
 184 something she doesn't agree with, she won't stand by them an' let them get on
 185 with it an' let them make their own mistakes, she'll, if they what, don't do what
 186 she says, she cuts them off. (Mmm) An' I think, because she thought 'I don't
 187 agree with this and she's, she's upsetting me', she pushed me away, but she
 188 didn't have any consideration for (.) me, as in, 'this is my decision, my life, let
 189 me ruin it or (.) do with it as I please, and you just stand by and support me'.
 190 (Mmm) That's, I mean, that's how my mum was and I wanted my auntie to be the
 191 same, (Mmm) but she wouldn't.

192 A Mmm. How did that make you feel when, when your aunt and your gran reacted
 193 like that?

194 B My, my gran didn't bother me so much, I knew if she found out I was gay, I'd be
 195 cut off from her. But, that was a risk I was willing to take (.) (Mmm) um, (.) but,
 196 um, my, my Auntie Sarah, I thought would be a little more understanding. But
 197 the, kind, arguments, she started getting in arguments with my mum, and, um, she
 198 started bringing up the past with my mum, and, er, in the end the row wasn't
 199 about me anymore, it was about past things that had happened between my mum
 200 and my dad. Thing, things that had happened between my mum, my Auntie Sarah
 201 and my dad in the past, she'd started bringing that up and pushing that all into the
 202 argument, and (.) when my mum and my Auntie Sarah stopped talking, my mum
 203 was in tears for a couple of days and I kept, I actually rang my Auntie Sarah, I
 204 says, 'look', I says, 'this (.) is (.) something I've done, please don't fall out with
 205 my mum about it. Because, it's nothing, I, I, she has not done this, I've done this',
 206 and she says, 'it's nothing to do with you anymore, just (.) leave it alone, your
 207 mum's being pig-headed' and put the phone down on me. Now, I couldn't see
 208 how she was being pig-headed because all she was doing was supporting me
 209 (Mmm) and doin' the best she could for me, and supporting me whether she
 210 thought I'd done right or wrong because that's what she always believes in.
 211 (Mmm) An' it hurt, it hurt me more knowing that she'd upset my mum and
 212 broken off with my mum because they had been close at some times (.) than it
 213 had, the cutting off of me. (Mmm) Because, although she was my auntie, she was
 214 my mum's sister, and sisters are more closer than aunties and nieces, and I didn't
 215 want my mum to lose the friendship she had, for me. Like, the same as I didn't
 216 want 'er to lose the friendship she had with my gran, for me. I was more upset for
 217 my mum, than for myself. I, I really hated them for what they'd done for my
 218 mum. Didn't give a damn about me, but no-one has ever crossed my mum in my
 219 eyes. I, if they cross my mum, that's it, they've upset me (B: Laughs). So...

220 A Right, yeah. Do you think that, that being gay has affected who you are as a
 221 person, or being, being bisexual or gay?

222 B Um, it's (.) I don't know, cos (.) I was brought up with all these views anyway,
 223 through my mum an' her friends. I was brought up with all these views that I
 224 have now, so, my views wouldn't (.) change through being gay because I was
 225 brought up in an open, 'equal rights, equal opportunities, don't care who you are
 226 as long as I get on with ya', kind of, thing. And so being gay hasn't affected me
 227 that way because I was brought up in it, I was brought, an', an' I saw gay people
 228 an' I got to know gay people from such a young age. (Mmm) So, so, no, I don't

- 229 think it has changed me or affected me in anyway because I was, I was brought
230 up with it.
- 231 A Right, okay. If you could choose your sexual identity now, (Um) what would you
232 choose?
- 233 B I'd choose to be exactly the way I am. I would because it, apart the two things,
234 the two different times in my life when it's caused me a bit of hassle, there's
235 nothing else that's ever pointed to not being gay. (Mmm) It, it's not made me
236 who I am because I, I've made meself who I am, but (.) it's, erm, cont',
237 contributed, I, I wouldn't say it's contributed, it's just, the experiences I've had
238 (.) with (.) the work (.) and my Aunt Sarah have made me stronger as a person.
239 (Mmm) That's what it's done for me, it's made me stronger as a person, but it
240 hasn't brought me up to be, made me who I am.
- 241 A Yeah, so it's, kind of, um, I s'pose not changed you, who you are
242 fundamentally,...=
- 243 B =No=
- 244 A =But it's kind of...
- 245 B It's backed up my own personal views and, (.) it's backed up (.) my strength to (.)
246 tell everybody my views. Before I, maybe I've said one or two things and then sat
247 in the corner and put my two penneth in now an' again. Now, I will stand up and
248 shout for what I believe in, because of what's happened the last two times.
249 (Mmm) It's just made me a little stronger to stand up and say, 'wait a minute,
250 that's not fair'.
- 251 A Yeah, yeah. The next lot of questions, and some, I think some of them, I think
252 we've already, kind of, touched on, are about relationships, (Mmm) and there's
253 stuff about, the questions that, that I'd, sort of, split it into, um, um, parent, step-
254 parent, kind of, relationships, and then other family members, and then friends.
255 An', an', I guess, you've, kind of, answered part of, a lot of the, the questions,
256 (Yeah) cos, (.) I mean, I s'pose what I'm interested in is, is whether you think that
257 being gay has affected your relationships with those people, um, an' we've
258 already, sort of, mentioned your aunt, and your gran, an', an' to some extent your
259 mum.
- 260 B My mum, er, my relationship with my mum has grown, grown stronger through
261 mistakes a:nd things I've done, (.) for the things we've done together. (Mmm)
262 Um, I've made mistakes and my mum's been there for me, made our relationship
263 stronger. She's made mistakes, I've been there for her, made our relationship
264 stronger. Bein' (.) gay, bisexual, has never affected my relationship until I got
265 pregnant, an' then it, kind of, wobbled (.) like a weeble for, (.) I knew it was
266 never gonna fall down, but it was a bit shaky for a while, like a week or so and
267 then it's back on track an' now she's, like, one of the happiest grandmothers ever
268 to be, you know (B: Laughs). Um, so it's never, apart from that one week, it's
269 never affected my relationship with my mum. My dad, I'm not sure. I mean, I,
270 kind of, go and see my dad once every three months if I can get away with it
271 being that long (B: Laughs). Um, he's never said what he thought about me being

272 gay, but he's (.) had gay people round in the past and he seems to tolerate them,
 273 an' has never been nasty about them, and when I took Sharon over for the first
 274 time, (.) he was very, he laughed and joked with Sharon like he laughed and
 275 joked with ex-men partners, (Mmm) so I, I don't think that my dad's had a
 276 problem with it either. Neither's my brother, my brother's stuck up for me in
 277 some, in some places with his friends, 'ooh, you've got a lesbian sister'. 'Hang
 278 on, I've got a sister, she just happens to be a lesbian', (Mmm) that kind of thing.
 279 Um, so, it's not affected my broth', my brother's relationship. Family
 280 relationships, (.) I'd say, (.) apart from my gran and my auntie, never affected any
 281 other relationships, the thing in my life that did affect all my relationships was my
 282 mum and dad breaking up, that was bigger than anything, compared to being gay,
 283 gay was like tiny on the Richter scale, mum and dad breaking up was huge on the
 284 Richter scale, cos I've had to adjust and go about things differently, (Mmm) um,
 285 there's people I haven't seen since my mum and dad broke up that were god
 286 parents, I haven't seen since they broke up. Um, (.)

287 A How old were you when your mum and dad //broke up?

288 B I was, er,// I was eighteen, nineteen. I was nineteen, yeah, it was just after my
 289 nineteenth birthday. I helped my mum move out. I told my mum to move out
 290 because she was miserable. (Mmm) I knew it was going to affect me but, excuse
 291 me, I didn't realise it was going to affect me so much. Most relationships in the
 292 family have got weaker, apart from my mum and mine which has got stronger,
 293 (Mmm) and, er, I don't think that, in a way that's a bad thing because it's made
 294 me, I've stepped away and seen what my family are for, I'm mean there's still
 295 nothing wrong with my family, but I still wouldn't, sort of, like shout from the
 296 roof tops 'they're great, they're great', because (B: Laughs) they're not. An' I,
 297 I've taken a step away from my family, my mum is the best thing in my life, and
 298 Sharon. They, st', stand, both stand on an equal pedestal, an' everybody else can
 299 just bugger off, (Mmm) because they were very funny about my mum leaving my
 300 dad after twenty years. Not that, 'oh (.) don't worry about it, these things happen',
 301 it's 'how could you leave him after twenty years?' And I'm thinking, she didn't
 302 love him, she stayed with him for ten years just to keep everybody else happy and
 303 now she's doing what she wants. So, (.) (Mmm) um, that's, that affected me more
 304 than being gay, definitely, an' it affected my relationships with people more so
 305 than being gay, (Mmm) apart from me Aunt Sarah and my gran.

306 A Yeah, I think that's, you know, that's, that's quite an important distinction to
 307 make, that, that, you know, um, that, that there are lots of other things going
 308 (Mmm=) on in your life, have an impact on all of these things.

309 B Oh yes. I, I mean I've, that is the biggest thing in my life. Everybody goes 'being
 310 gay is the biggest thing in your life'. No! The biggest thing in my life was my
 311 family, (Mmm) and the break up of my family, that is the biggest thing that's ever
 312 happened in my life. Probably the next biggest thing that's going to happen in my
 313 life is the baby being born. (Mmm) Cos that's going to change my life radically
 314 an' all relationships are gonna to shift round and change again. But, for the
 315 moment, that was the biggest thing. Being gay is (.) minute, nothing, to me,
 316 because I've not had to work at it, go for it, I've not had to, sort of, like flit from
 317 partner to partner to find the perfect one, it just came along. (Mmm) An' I was
 318 lucky. So, no, it's not big, it's not a big thing. You don't, you make it what it is,

319 (Mmm) an' if you make it a big thing, it's a big thing, or if other people make it a
320 big thing, it's a big thing, but if you've got support, it's not a big thing.

321 A Mmm. Can you tell me a bit about, about your, your baby, cos I know you're
322 really excited. How many months have you got to go?

323 B Yeah, I'm half way there. There's forty weeks to full term and I'm twenty weeks
324 now. And I'm really, really excited (B: Laughs). I just, I go out in the shops an' I
325 just find myself, I go in to buy myself some clothes and I just wander into the
326 baby department and I'm wandering around there for about fifteen, twenty
327 minutes (B: Laughs), and I spend about five minutes looking, shopping for
328 myself and about twenty minutes shopping for my baby. (B: Laughs) So I'm,
329 definitely (.) got the mother fever (B: Laughs)

330 A Looking forward to it?

331 B Yeah, and Sharon's just as bad (B: Laughs).

332 A Was it something that you'd planned to do?

333 B Um, we'd spoken about it when we'd first met in March. Me and Sharon have
334 only been together ten months, been engaged seven months, er, we've had, had
335 the baby on the way for the last four and a half months, so, (.) I don't know
336 whether we planned it, it's, kind of, the opportunity came up and we took it. We
337 talked about it, um, we knew we were going to do it, we knew I was going to be
338 first to carry, even though Sharon wants to carry later on, (Mmm) um, but (.) the,
339 er, we were talking about it with a friend, the opportunity came up, we decided to
340 take the opportunity, and um, we haven't looked back since. It's probably been
341 something, (.) it's put a strain on our relationship as far as my hormones go cos,
342 er, I, I, I, kind of, Sharon'd joke with me normally and I'd, she'd call me names
343 and I'd call her names back and it wouldn't bother me and now and again, er,
344 with my hormones when they were really, really active, er, Sharon'd call me a
345 name and I'd just flare up an' start screaming and pointing fingers an' going for
346 very, very long walks (B: Laughs) and coming back half an hour later and then
347 apologising. But, er, it's, um, definitely enhanced our relationship for love and
348 care for each other an' a lot more respect for each other. (Mmm) Because she's
349 had to learn to respect that I've got feelings and, er, I feel weak sometimes and I
350 feel strong sometimes an' I don't wanna go out when she does and, um, I feel
351 low, er, low, very low and depressed sometimes, I hit rock bottom an' I just cry at
352 the smallest things. But I've had to also respect that she's had to go through some
353 changes. (Mmm) And she's had to put up with me, and I, I have to say that she's,
354 she's done her best, it's not always been easy for her to put up with me, but she's
355 definitely done her best. (Mmm) And, er, I, I, if I go back and do it again, the
356 only thing I wouldn't do is try not to shout at 'er so much (A & B: Laugh).

357 A · When you say that, that the opportunity came along, how, how have you, kind of,
358 gone about (Um) getting pregnant?

359 B Well, we have, um, we 'ad quite a few friends and, um, we talked, we, the more,
360 we were talking about it, more and more, as the, er, before, the more we talked
361 about it, the more we wanted to do it, and we were, we talked about it with a

362 couple of friends and, er, someone took us on side and said 'look, I'll do it, won't
 363 tell anybody I did it, er, I'll just, um, come round leave you what you want, and
 364 go'. (Mmm) And, er, 'e did, and me and Sharon were left to finish everything off
 365 (B: Laughs) as it were. (Mmm) But, er, there was always a, I mean, that's
 366 probably, I think that's how a lot of gay children, gay parents conceive their
 367 children, (Mmm) because, women that is, because men can't conceive, obviously.
 368 (A & B: Laugh) Um, I, I've seen a programme, I don't know whether you've
 369 seen, called Pink Parents. I taped it an' brought it in for [the LGB youth group],
 370 and we're gonna be watching it in a couple of weeks and, er, this was actually
 371 after, while I was pregnant this ca', was on, an' they brought up, erm, a lot of
 372 issues we hadn't thought about but didn't really concern us because we, of family
 373 an' things and, er, they also brought up, er, they, they, they, there was one people
 374 who went to a sperm donors (Mmm) and there was some, about three or four
 375 people who'd just unnaturally conceived their baby like test tube and, um,
 376 syringe, kind of, thing, (Mmm) and, er, it, it made me feel more easy knowing
 377 that (.) I was not the only person who'd gone out there and done the syringe baby,
 378 I knew that I wasn't before, but seeing, actually hearing other people talking
 379 about it, (Mmm) made me feel easier. It was a good programme to watch, (Mmm)
 380 er, so, it, it answered a lot of questions. But before that, I thought, um, syringe
 381 babies or turkey-baster babies as they're commonly known (B: Laughs) were
 382 illegal, and, (.) er, seeing that programme and seeing so many people express (.)
 383 that they'd done (.) this on television an' open, an' weren't bothered about it,
 384 made me think, 'well, if it was illegal, they wouldn't be letting people openly talk
 385 about it on television'. (=Mmm=) .So it can't be illegal for that to happen. So, I
 386 was alright about that, I felt better, I thought, (Mmm) I mean, I thought I'd done
 387 something illegal, 'no I haven't' (B: Laughs).

388 A Was this, was it, did you, was it something that you'd tried to get, sort of,
 389 information about, or, were you able to get information about...?

390 B We talked about going to the group in Leicester, but I think they were, do a little
 391 thing on a Tuesday night or something for lesbian par', er, couples who want to
 392 be parents. (Right) They collect the sperm, screen it, and, er, if you're in Leicester
 393 you don't pay anything, if you're outside Leicester you pay an administration fee
 394 of about, er, fee of about five pounds. (Right) So, um, but it was a case of having
 395 to get there and get back. I also knew that the person that we'd had the sperm off
 396 had had an AIDS test two months prior to, um, giving the sperm so, that didn't
 397 worry me either that, because he'd had the AIDS test, (Mmm) an' I knew I wasn't
 398 going to be catching anything from just his sperm, (Mmm) so I was very sensible
 399 there. If he hadn't of had the AIDS test, I would have asked him to go and have
 400 one before we did anything. (Yeah, yeah) But me and Sharon, we got the sperm
 401 and we did it and it was first time, I caught first time. I thought it was probably
 402 gonna be like three, four, five, maybe twenty tries down the road, an' we're still
 403 trying, but we were very lucky that I caught first time.

404 A Mmm. Great, exciting. (B: Laughs) Right. (.) Um, (.) okay, we've talked about,
 405 sort of, relationships with family and stuff, (Mmm) um, just a few questions
 406 about sexual relationships or, or, or dating, kind of, (=Yeah=) relationships, um,
 407 and you've mentioned that you've had some relationships with blokes...

408 B Yes.

409 A Men, can you, can you tell me about those?

410 B Yeah, I mean there's not much to tell really, none of them really lasted over, um,
 411 about four months (B: Laughs), kind of, thing. In fact, I've never had a
 412 relationship that lasted over four months apart from Sharon. An' (.) we used to,
 413 (.) I used to meet them an', er, the first month getting to know each other, the
 414 second month knowing each other and going out with them, and the third month
 415 just getting tired of them, an' probably by the fourth month just saying 'bye!' (B:
 416 Laughs). Um, I had one, two (.) two, I'd probably say two long-term sexual
 417 partners that's probably over, I had two partners that I was with over two months,
 418 (Mmm) an' I actually had sex with them, but men just, although I was attracted to
 419 them and I loved going out with them an' (.) everything else an' I quite enjoyed
 420 sex with them but not 'alf as much as I know I do with a woman. Um, it just, by,
 421 always fizzled out by the fourth month. I could never put up with men or hold a
 422 relationship down with a man for more than four months because they'd just get
 423 on my nerves by that point (B: Laughs).

424 A Did it, did it, cos, cos you must have been at a time, cos they, they pre-dated
 425 Sharon, these relationships, (Mmm) it must have been at a time when you were
 426 still, kind of, a little bit unsure about, um, you know, whether you were bisexual
 427 or not, (Mmm, um) did it sort of...?

428 B When I first met Sharon an' we first had, started going into the relationship, I
 429 thought 'that's it I'm definitely gay, never will, never ever will I look at another
 430 man', but probably three months down the line, after all the lovey dovey bit had
 431 started to wear off, and you were just left with the feelings and emotions you had
 432 for each other, the care and the love, I started to realise that I wasn't actually gay,
 433 gay and I would look at other men and find them physically attractive but, on the
 434 other hand, I would never, while with Sharon, or with any partner, go with
 435 another man (Mmm) or go with another woman for that point, because, er, I don't
 436 think that's fair, and especially Sharon, I'd, I'd stay away from them totally
 437 because of what she's been through in the past, (Mmm) and she's been cheated
 438 on so many times, and I love her so much, and I care about her so deeply, I could
 439 not do that to her. (Mmm) And I know, and, I, I know how much she's been hurt
 440 in the past, and I know how much she trusts me an' how, know how hard it must
 441 be to trust someone after you've been hurt so many times an' that trust means a
 442 lot to me, (Mmm) it really does. And, but, I, I was honest with her, at first I
 443 thought I was just totally, totally gay, an' then as these feelings started to come
 444 back, I sat her down an' I says, 'look', I says, 'I know I said I thought I was gay,
 445 an' I thought I was bi' before, an' then when I met you I was gay, but, I realise
 446 now that it was just new relationship, all big emotions coming out an' you've got
 447 to, an' now they've levelled out, I know I'm still attracted to men in a small way',
 448 I says, 'I'd never sleep with anyone, man, woman, behind your back', I says, 'but
 449 I've got to be honest with you that I know I'm not totally, totally gay'. And she
 450 was fine with that, she really w', because I'd been honest with her. I think, I mean
 451 she had her relationships in the past where she'd got a woman and this woman
 452 had said no, I'm totally, totally gay and she came home and found her in bed with
 453 a bloke. So, an' that's probably one of the factors why I was so honest with her, I
 454 had to sit her down and tell her that, (Mmm) because if I'd hidden it from her,
 455 and she'd found out later, it probably would have upset her more an' probably (.)

- 456 ruffled her trust for a while. (Mmm) So I, I thought it was best to be honest
457 (Yeah) about everything.
- 458 A Yeah, okay. The next lot of questions are, kind of, about coping and support,
459 (Mmhm) and again, I guess, there's, there's probably some overlap, (Yeah) an'
460 there's stuff that we will have, sort of, touched on as well. But, just (.) thinking
461 about: t, um, well I s'pose some people experience difficulties, and, I guess, you've
462 already said that you feel that you've had a relatively, kind of, easy ride. (Mmm)
463 Some people experience difficulties with either themselves coming to terms with
464 being lesbian or gay or bisexual, (Yeah) or because of things that happen to them
465 because of other people's reactions and whatever. (Mmm) Um, and some people
466 don't, some people, you know, don't have any difficulties...
- 467 B A very rare majority that don't have any difficulties.
- 468 A Yeah?
- 469 B I, I think. Still, even now, a very rare majority, that don't have one or two
470 difficulties. I mean, I thought I was lucky, I didn't have hardly any, but it's v', I
471 think it's very rare that you find people that don't have some, um, problem, either
472 with their partner's family, or with their own family.
- 473 A Mmm, mmm. I s'pose, I mean, what I was going to ask you was whether you
474 think you've, you've had any difficulties, and, I guess, you've, you've already
475 talked about, (Mmm) about that, but I suppose what we didn't, we didn't
476 necessarily touch on is, kind of, how you, how you coped with that, how you
477 coped with those, sort of, difficult moments?
- 478 B Mmm, cried a lot (B: Laughs). No, that's with, when it was happening about the
479 pregnancy I just, um, cried a lot. I was more upset for my mum and what I
480 thought I was, I don't know, all through it, all through it I kept thinking, 'what am
481 I putting my mum through, what am I putting my mum through?' And, you know,
482 I was, that's all that was on my mind, 'what am I putting my mum through?'
483 Because the last thing I wanted to do was put her through hell, cos she's, she's
484 already got her own problems cos she's going through a divorce. So, an' she'd
485 got problems with my brother as well, so that's, I, I was just crying, an' I wasn't,
486 I think my way of coping with it was not to think of me, but to think about how
487 my, you know, the next best thing, my mum. How was my mum coping, because
488 Sharon was there supporting me and it really, in a way, didn't affect her as much
489 as it did me and my mum. So it was, like, my mum, how was my mum coping,
490 'my mum, I'm so worried about my mum' an', er, I was just so concerned about
491 what I was putting my mum through. (Mmm) An' that's probably how I stopped
492 it, you know, I coped with it. I, I thought about how she'd be feeling rather than
493 myself and then blocked out any mental stress. But as for work, I just said, 'sod
494 'em', I coped because I knew I was happy. (Mmm) And I knew I was doing the
495 right thing, an' I couldn't give (.) a flying leap what anybody else thought
496 basically, especially them at work because they're not (.) like, um, the closest
497 people in the world to me. (Mmm) So, I, er, that's it.
- 498 A Yeah. Do you think other, have other people been a support to you? It sounds like
499 those, those are, kind of, the ways that, that you've supported yourself (Mmm) in

500 a way, sort of, thinking about your mum, (Yeah) an', an' taking the attitude that
501 'well, those people aren't important'.

502 B Um. I think, yeah, d'ya know there's only two people in my life that have been a
503 support to me. Actually, I mean my mum's boyfriend she's got now, I mean he's
504 great. I mean I, I've, I've actually been told off for not 'phoning and asking for
505 help because (B: Laughs) I don't want to bother them, him, on his day off, you
506 know, cos I wanted a washer picking up an' I let the washer go, not buy it,
507 because I didn't want to disturb him on his day off to come and pick it up for me.
508 I was actually told off for that. (B: Laughs) So, um, he gives me a lot of support
509 but in a lot of other ways, um, he, he's, he, he says he thinks of me and Sharon as
510 his family, we are his daughters and that's how he thinks of us, an' I think that is
511 really great because, to me, I can ring him up and ask for anything an' he'd do it,
512 but if I rang my own dad up I'd get a load of moaning and groaning (Mmm) (B:
513 Laughs) before he'd do anything, you know, 'oh bloomin' hell it's my day off',
514 an' that's probably why I hesitate to ask David to do anything because I, I don't
515 want to upset him, because I know what my dad's like but, I actually got told off.
516 (B: Laughs) Er, but apart from that, it's just, like, again, it's Sharon an' me mum
517 that have been always the biggest supports to me. (Mmm) I don't think there's
518 anyone else in this whole, entire world that I could say had been any better to me.

519 A What, what is it about the way that they've been for you. What is it that's, sort of,
520 so positive about...?

521 B Well my mum, she's, um, she, kind of, lets me get on with what I wanna do, she
522 knows I might not be doing the right thing, but she always lets me get on and do
523 it and then she, when I go to her and say 'oh, oh god I've done this and I'm so
524 sorry', then she'll sit and talk to me about it, an' she'll say 'well it's alright, we
525 all make mistakes' an' she'll sit an' listen to me, sit an' listen to what I have to
526 say, er, and she'll never hold me back. (Mmm) She'll always let me get on with
527 it, do what I want to do in my life an' then, when I make the mistakes, be there to
528 pick up the pieces for me. (Mmm) An' I think that is so great because I feel like
529 I've got so much freedom (B: Laughs) an' I can do whatever I want but, an' she
530 will never disown me. An' it, it's great. (Mmm) An' I think Sha', Sharon's, she's
531 just (.) there for me, if I wanna sit and burst into tears, I'll sit and burst into tears
532 an' she'll try an' cheer me up, er, I feel low and down and I'm fed up of bein' in,
533 she'll spend her last couple of quid on taking me out and making sure I cheer up.
534 It's that, kind of, way, an' we do it vice versa. (Mmm) She, she just, she's just
535 there to make me happy, she makes me feel like all she's there for in my life is to
536 make me happy, I'm the only thing that matters. (Mmm) An' that's what a
537 support she's been to me. I mean, in that, in that sense if, I feel like I can rely on
538 her, or lean on 'er whenever I need to.

539 A Mmm. Sounds like that, um, sounds like your mum and Sharon are, are
540 wonderful sources of support. (Mmm) How do you, do you think that, that having
541 them affects, affects how you are, kind of, with other people or how you've been
542 able to cope with other...?

543 B I don't like other relationships. (B: Laughs) It must sound really funny but I've
544 got such, I'm, I'm so close to other pe', my mum and Sharon, an' I know so much
545 that they would not cross me, that in past rela', friendships, I've been friends with

546 someone and they've crossed me, (Mmm) and I've just felt that I've got two
 547 people that I know would never, I know in my heart of hearts would never, ever
 548 cross me or let me down or upset me purposely, an' then I, I think I, I'm very I, I
 549 think it's probably because of my star sign as well, I'm a Virgo, I'm very wary of
 550 any, any other person, I have to know them for a really, really long time before I
 551 totally trust them, (Mmm) and know they're gonna to do something when they
 552 say they're gonna do it. (Mmm) An' I don't know why that is, probably because
 553 I've been let down so many times in the past, I mean, everybody has let me down
 554 apar', bar two people in my life and in, in one form or another, whether it be a
 555 school mate letting me down over silly little things, you know, family members
 556 letting me down over other things, (Mmm) um, maybe bigger things, but that's
 557 probably why I'm like that because I've, I've got two people I know in my heart
 558 of hearts that won't, (Mmm) do that, an' I'm very wary of other people. (Yeah)
 559 Sharon's not. I, I can't understand that, she's so different to me, she's not. She'll
 560 say 'but, give them a chance, give them a chance', I'm going 'no, cos this is
 561 gonna happen, they're gonna let you down, they're gonna let you down'. An'
 562 when they let, let her down, and she gets, an' she's in shit, I say, I don't say, 'I
 563 told you so', I say 'trust me next time' (B: Laughs). No I, I, I, I can see what's
 564 coming, I'm very, I can see everything that's coming, I'm always on the look out
 565 for something to go wrong, so I know to expect it. Sharon's not, she always sees
 566 the good in people and they carry on letting her down an' letting her down. Me,
 567 let me down once, that's it (B: Laughs), you know, (Mmm) never gonna rely on
 568 them again.

569 A You, you mentioned there, I guess, um, that, that you thought it was quite
 570 uncommon for people to, kind of, have no problems, (Mmm) um, with being,
 571 with being gay, either, either themselves, (Yeah) or because of what other people,
 572 how other people react to them. Do you think that, what do you think about, kind
 573 of, support services for, for gay, lesbian or bisexual people? Do you think they're
 574 necessary, do you think...?

575 B Um, I've never used one myself, so I don't exactly know what happens there,
 576 what they do on the phone. I mean I come here, but, um, you don't see an' you
 577 don't hear the private conversations that go (.) on between a member of staff and
 578 a [the LGB youth group] user, (Mmm) so I can't comment on that, but...

579 A So here's more of a social thing with the option, (Yeah) to get support?

580 B Yeah, but on the 'phoneline, I've never used a 'phoneline so I don't know what
 581 they are like, but I think having the outlet, an' having somewhere to phone when,
 582 if, if you really need to is a good idea. (Mmm) Because y', you feel 'oh god, oh
 583 god, what do I do' and someone just, say, hands you a 'phone number an' you
 584 may feel funny about 'phoning it at first, but if you're really down, an' you gotta
 585 talk to someone, you'll 'phone them, an' I think it is a good idea.

586 A Yeah. Do you think it matters wheth', who, kind of, runs those support services?
 587 Do they need to be gay, gay or bisexual?

588 B I don't think they need to be gay or bisexual people. I mean the biggest influence
 589 on my life has been a total heterosexual woman, an' she still can put a good point
 590 of view across. Er, because, I mean, I, I think they need to have gay friends

- 591 maybe, or had a daughter, or a mother, or whatever who's gay so that they know
 592 the, the scene, an' the people around the scene, an' know a little bit of
 593 background, but they don't necessarily have to be gay themselves.
- 594 A Mmm, Yeah. (.) Do you, um, (.) what do you think about any support for, that
 595 maybe available or may not be available for, kind of, relatives or friends or
 596 people who are close to people who are gay who have difficulties... ?
- 597 B I've read one booklet for parents of gay children an' I've not seen anything else at
 598 all. Um, I would love for there to be a little more literature, (Yeah) um, but I think
 599 these 'phone lines for gay people, also their parents, friends, and relatives are able
 600 to 'phone in and they're not turned away, but maybe having that advertised would
 601 be a good thing, but, not just gay people ring in, it's friends, family with queries,
 602 worries, an' things like that. An' it, it's, I, I think, I mean I'm not sure whether
 603 they can or not but I think that, I think if one of these people rung up, they
 604 wouldn't turn them away. (No) Definitely. An' I think they probably ought to
 605 advertise more, maybe, you know, an' advertise that if you do need support for
 606 the parents, because just because the parents don't live with them that doesn't
 607 mean they still don't need the support because, you know, you don't just stop
 608 being a parent when they become twenty. You don't stop being a parent, [tape
 609 inaudible] that's not an option. You never stop being a parent when they're no
 610 longer there to look after or be with. So I think there should be something,
 611 (Mmm) for everybody.
- 612 A Yep. This is, kind of, the last section and there's, um, well there's a number of
 613 questions that are about, kind of, how much contact with or discussion about
 614 lesbians, gay men and bisexuals did you have while you were growing up, [tape
 615 inaudible] and again we've touched on some of this (Yeah) earlier. Um, so the
 616 first question is, did you know anyone who was gay when you were growing up?
- 617 B I knew, there was two girls. I was the first to come out to those two girls and then,
 618 afterwards, I had them individually come to me and say, 'I think I'm bi' or 'I
 619 think I'm a lesbian', an' we, kind of, we never spoke about it to anybody outside
 620 of the three. I mean, we all had, um, the same friends or other friends but we
 621 never spoke about it to them, the only people who we spoke about it to was us
 622 three, cos in senior school if anybody else had got hold of that information, your
 623 life would have been made hell. (Mmm) You know, an', at one point, er, there
 624 was a rumour, not based on any evidence because I'd never spoken about it other
 625 than to two people, about me being bisexual, and it died down in a couple of days
 626 and nothing was ever said about it because they had no evidence, so it was just
 627 hearsay an' talked up into different rumours basically. But, er, these, um, we
 628 talked about it an' when someone had a feeling that they didn't quite understand,
 629 we just talked to each other, an' then, I think that was a support to each other in
 630 school, knowing that if we had the feelings while we were at school we could talk
 631 to each other, (Mmm) an' it wouldn't, an', because we were all in the same boat,
 632 so none of us were going to shop any one of them because we could shop, you
 633 know, we could quite easily shop them in.
- 634 A You, I mean, you mentioned that you'd, sort of, you'd kept it quiet in school.
 635 (Mmm) Was that something...?

636 B Well, I mean we kept it quiet at first because we just imagined it'd be made hell,
 637 but when they just got a snifter of a little rumour that I was bi, I mean, problems
 638 it caused, an' the teachers didn't stop it. It was going on in the classroom an' the
 639 teachers didn't stop, you know. I was in a sewing class an' I, I had comments
 640 flying, um, I was in the middle of the room an' I had comments, comments kept
 641 flying from one student to the other an' all the way round. An', you know, an' I
 642 just stood there an' kept looking up at the teacher, an' she's just carrying on with
 643 work an' not listening, or not acknowledging, an' not sorting out what's going on.
 644 An' it happened, that happened on a Friday, that did, an', er, that was a Friday
 645 afternoon that rumour went round. I went on Monday and there was, er, a few
 646 little, er, questions, er, still to be answered, but luckily enough, at the time, I had a
 647 boyfriend, and Monday night like two of these girls saw me walking down and
 648 holding hands with a bloke at the time. 'Oh she can't be, she can't be, she's got a
 649 boyfriend now, we were told she was with a girl' (B: Laughs). An' so that was
 650 stopped, an' I was lucky. (Mmm) But, not having the teacher intervene, that was
 651 so nasty. (Mmm) An' I felt, I felt like I had no support. I 'ad no friends, er, to fall
 652 back on because, you know, your friends support you, they're gay, an' I, an' I,
 653 sort of, like, said, 'just keep out of it'. (B: Laughs) You know, 'you stick up for
 654 me, you're gonna be my next love, life partner', and, er, so, I, I just, kind of,
 655 handled it on my broad shoulders, (.) luckily (B: Laughs) (Mmm). But, er, luckily
 656 I was seen with a bloke holding hands, walking down the street, so that quashed
 657 the rumour, an' it was, sort of, like one afternoon of real discomfort, a couple of
 658 niggly comments on the Monday but, an' after that, there was nothing.
 659 (=Mmm=) So, but it, it was, er, daunting at the time. (Yeah, yeah) So (.)

660 A And you mentioned that your mum had a, a friend who was gay?

661 B Oh yeah, um, he was around from me being about, er, thirteen to me being
 662 fifteen an' I came out to my mum when I was fourteen so he was still there. I
 663 never really spoke to him about it, um, but he was openly gay in front of me. My
 664 mum never disguised that fact, that I was, he was gay, an' so he, seeing him an'
 665 knowing it was alright an' knowing my mum thought it was alright, an' my dad
 666 thought it was alright, that's all that mattered. (Mmm) So, once I knew that they
 667 thought it was alright, I thought it was alright. So, but, you still, you still
 668 sometimes don't, although you know it's alright, you still don't want to accept it
 669 fully. (Yeah) Yeah, cos, I mean you just, your brain matures slower, or your
 670 hormones mature slower than a lot of other people's, so, it just depends on the
 671 individual. But I knew it was alright, I mean they made it obvious.

672 A When you say you brain mat', matures...?

673 B Well, my hormones were there, an' my brain wasn't going along with them, you
 674 know, my hormones were going 'woah woman!' An' my brain's going 'well,
 675 yeah, it is a woman, but,' (B: Laughs) kind of, thing, er, but, um...

676 A Why do you think that is, that your brain's, sort of, going a pace ahead of...?

677 B Because, because, I think there's still the, the stigma, although you know it's
 678 alright, an' your parents, your parents have said it's alright, an' 'blah, blah, this',
 679 but it, it's still, sort of, like, but society still says it's wrong. (Mmm) But, you
 680 know, parents say it's alright, but society still says it's wrong, an' you have to

681 really feel comfortable before you're moving that step, an' it probably took me,
682 probably about five years to move that one step.

683 A Yeah, yeah. (But) How do you think, how do you think you knew that, cos it
684 sounds like, you know, you've said that your, your, your family were very, sort
685 of, accepting, you know, an', um, how do you think you knew that, that, that it
686 was something that was not //accepted by society?

687 B Because it, // it was talked about, (.) um, between other friends an' family. I had
688 one friend and, er, we went up there, er, I went to stay over and, er, they were
689 talking about gay men an' how they had one working with them in the bus, cos
690 they were both bus drivers these two men, an' one of them, I was staying with
691 them cos I was friends with their daughter, and they were saying how it made
692 them feel really uncomfortable when they were in the canteen. An' So I'd got
693 mum saying 'it's alright' and I'd heard these two men feeling uncomfortable
694 about it you see. (Mmm) So, I mean, an' you do see things on television an'
695 things like that.

696 A Mmm, I was going to ask you about, about that...

697 B Yeah, you, you see things on television and, um, an' you hear things, you might
698 not know you see things or hear things but they just, kind of, sink in. (Mmm) You
699 might not remember about what you saw, or what it was that made you think it,
700 but you, they just, kind of, sink in, an' you think 'that's not right, but that's how I
701 feel'. (B: Laughs) (Yeah) An' then it's all going, an' something else is, it's, um,
702 when you're younger, it's never mentioned about women and women and men
703 and men, it's always women an' men that make babies an', women an' men that
704 get married, an' women an' men that do that, an' because it's always women an'
705 men, an' you have a feeling about women and women, you think, 'but it's
706 supposed to be women an' men, that's what I was told at school'. (B: Laughs)
707 (Yeah) That's another thing you see, so there's all those three factors that account
708 to say 'social', socially it's wrong' an' your parents saying 'well it's right, I don't
709 mind'. (Mmm) So, you've gotta just make that step an' it might be a year, it
710 might be, like, five years, like it took me, but it'll come, don't force it to come,
711 it'll just happen as far as I think cos, um...

712 A Yeah. Was it talked about at all, homosexuality, at school?

713 B No, we weren't allowed to do it. Um, I did, when I was feeling quite at ease (.)
714 with my sexuality, but not, er, at school I felt more comfortable, at home. At
715 school, um, because they didn't know, there was no way they could find out, um,
716 I actually did a piece on sex education in schools, and I, I did it in the form of a
717 radio programme, cos it was for my media, (Mmm) an' I kept, an' one of the
718 main points I wanted to bring up in this sex education study that I was
719 presentating, presenting as a radio programme was, why was gay and lesbian sex,
720 and why, if a teacher had actually mentioned gay, or thought you were gay or
721 lesbian, they were not allowed to counsel you on it. An' they were not allowed to
722 talk to you about it, an' how you felt. An' I think that's so wrong, I mean, you,
723 that's the time you need, as I say, if you've got a teacher, you can't trust your
724 parents, an' you've got a teacher that you think you can trust, I actually confided
725 in my teacher, um, at school and she said, um, she says 'I'm not supposed to be

- 726 talking to you about this, I can't, I'm not allowed, says in the rules, er, in, in this
727 clause', whatever it's called.
- 728 A Twenty eight.
- 729 B Yeah, an' she says 'but confidentially, I think you're fine, you're alright, be gay'.
730 She says, 'but I didn't tell you that'. (B: Laughs) Er, an' that, that was fine, but
731 she couldn't do any more for me in case anyone heard it, or it got out, cos I mean
732 she could of lost her job for just saying that. (Mmm) An', I, I think that's awful.
733 There should be more there for younger children, because you do, I've got a
734 friend who, um, knew he was gay at the age of thirteen and was having gay sex
735 by the age of fourteen. Joe out there, he's what, just turning sixteen, he's been
736 sexually active with gay men for the last year as I know. (Mmm) An' I think it's
737 so much needed in schools, or, if not in schools, they've gotta do something
738 outside of schools that they can go to. (Umhm) Not just like this, because not
739 many people know about this place. I didn't know about this place until Sharon
740 told me ten months ago. (Mmm) You know, not enough advertising is done about
741 this place, an' if there isn't something done about this place, they should do
742 something else.
- 743 A Yeah. What, cos you were, sort of, saying about how, it, it, kind of, there's a time
744 lag, (Yeah) between, kind of, when you're, sort of, thinking about it, an', an'
745 when you start to feel more comfortable, perhaps, about, about it. (Mmm) Okay.
746 What, what if you were, kind of, gonna give somebody who was, kind of, at the
747 beginning of that process some advice. How, what would you (.) say to them?
- 748 B I'd say that (.) never to force themselves. 'Know what your body's feeling, know
749 what your brain's thinking, an' wait till the, an', you know, just carry on with
750 your life, an', er, when the two click, that's when it's gonna be right for you to go
751 out onto the gay scene and be with gay people so you can see it. But, when you,
752 your brain and your hormones coincide, an' then you find someone, an' you kiss
753 them, an' you feel right about it mentally and physically, then it's right for you'.
754 (Mmm) Beca', I mean, cos some people are going out there an' they think they're
755 gay, an' then they have one bad experience because they kiss them an' the magic
756 wasn't there, even though they fancied them at first. Probably cos their brain's
757 still going 'no, no, no' an' their hormones are goin' 'yes, yes, yes' an' they all get
758 mingled up. So, 'don't, you know, wait until your brain's ready to accept that you
759 want to kiss a man if you're a bloke, or a woman if you're lesbian and, er, just
760 take it slowly, (Mmm) never rush yourself'. Cos I never rushed myself, an I was,
761 I was lucky enough not to have all these women bombarding me. (Mmm) So, I
762 was alright.
- 763 A Do you think that's something you did consciously, was, kind of, hold off until...?
- 764 B Yeah, I think, I think I held off until I found a, a mental connection. I, I don't
765 know what it was between me an' Sharon, but there was something there from the
766 very, very beginning. The first time I saw her I knew, the second time I saw her I
767 definitely knew, third time I saw her I just wanted to grab 'er and kiss 'er, an' the
768 fourth time I saw her that was it. An' the day after that we were talking about
769 getting married. (Mmm) An', an' that's, I think that's how you just know, you
770 just, you know, I didn't even speak to 'er until the fourth time I saw her but them

- 771 other times I'd seen her I knew that she was the right person for me. (Mmm) I
 772 don't know why, what it was but I, I just knew.
- 773 A Something, kind of, clicked?
- 774 B Yeah. An', she was the same. Every time she'd seen me, the feel, feeling about
 775 me had got stronger an' stronger, (Mmm) until we actually got to talk.
- 776 A So maybe it, um, for you it sounds like, you know, actually meeting somebody
 777 that you, you, you felt good about, (Mmm) was a, a quite significant moment?
- 778 B Oh yeah.
- 779 A Um, cos I'm wondering, how, how do you think, how do you think you go from
 780 that point of, of, sort of, being confused by, kind of, the things that are saying
 781 'no' and the things that are saying 'yes'?
- 782 B I have no idea. All I know that is I'd actually, once in [night club which has a
 783 LGB night], about two months beforehand, I'd been in [night club which has a
 784 LGB night], an' this girl had come up to me, an' she kissed me on the lips and
 785 snogged me, an' I just, woah! You know, (B: Laughs) I was sort of like 'oah!'
 786 Because I wasn't, I didn't fancy her for one, she wasn't my type, she, I knew she
 787 was younger than me, an' I wasn't, that was something else, I needed someone
 788 older than me. (Mmm) Cos I, although I'm only twenty, people say I'm like
 789 twenty five or something (B: Laughs), an' I think, 'cheers!' (B: Laughs) Er, I can
 790 still be a prat an' act immature when I wanna (B: Laughs). And, er, she, she just
 791 wasn't something that I wanted, she wasn't like, I wanted her from the first
 792 moment I saw her but, when I saw Sharon, she was something I wanted from the
 793 first minute I saw 'er and I think that's when your brain starts to click in. If you
 794 want something from the first minute you see it, that's when your brain clicks in,
 795 I think. (Mmm) You've got to find someone that you just click with. Otherwise
 796 you just end up going from relationship, relationship, relationship, an' you think
 797 you've clicked an' you haven't, you haven't, you know, you didn't click,
 798 basically, how I went with the men, from relationship to relationship, thinkin',
 799 'oh, this is the one, this is the one', an' then getting fed up with them. (Mmm) But
 800 it, it's there from the first minute you see them.
- 801 A Do you think that, um, what do you think about, um, an', I guess, I guess, I'm not
 802 quite sure, how, how you did this either, kind of, coming out, the timing of
 803 coming out. I'm thinking about the fact that, you know, you described that, sort
 804 of, process of, of going through a time when you weren't sure and you were
 805 struggling between, (=Mmm=) between things that were saying no, it, it's not
 806 right and things that were saying yeah, it feels right...
- 807 B But that's why I told the people that were closest to me at the time because I
 808 knew if I turned round and said, probably two or three years down the line, 'no,
 809 that was a mistake', they'd go 'oh, fine, yeah'.
- 810 A Mmm, so, for you it was okay to...

- 811 B It was, it was okay to say that because my mum made it quite obvious that, (.)
 812 'you may have these feelings but not be gay an' you may have the feelings and be
 813 gay'. (Yeah) She says, 'because I have a', she says, 'I had feelings for a woman
 814 and, um, felt like I wanted to be with them physically', she says, 'but that was
 815 just my friendship an' my hormones overwhelming'. An' she says, 'an' I never
 816 did anything, never wanted to do anything like that, but', she says, 'it might be
 817 that, that you've got confused, or you might actually be gay', so...
- 818 A Mmm. So it felt okay to, to, to, sort of, come out to someone close, (Yeah) even
 819 though you weren't...?
- 820 B Weren't quite sure, because that way, I mean, if I was having problems, I could
 821 talk to 'er about it. (Mmm) An' she'd help me make my mind up, she never made
 822 my mind up for me, an' say 'yes you are, yes, no, you're not', put a label on me,
 823 she'd say, 'whatever'. (Mmm) You know, 'I'm just here. I'm only your mum',
 824 kind of, thing. (B: Laughs)
- 825 A Do you, just, just thinking about now, who do you tend to socialise, do you, do
 826 you tend to socialised with, with kind of, predominantly gay and bisexual
 827 people...?
- 828 B I hate predominantly, I hate people who are in-your-face gay. I, I hate it, I mean, I
 829 don't mind the odd joke where I say to Sharon, 'I wanna fag' an' someone goes
 830 'I'm here!', kind of, thing. (Yeah) That, that doesn't bother me at all. Um, but it's
 831 people, I mean, Joe used to be great, but he, tonight he really got on my nerves
 832 cos he was so in-your-face gay as I call it, I just wanted to just slap him across the
 833 face an' tell him to calm down an' gather himself together because he was just
 834 being so over the top. It was probably him being a teenager, an' copin' with
 835 everything himself. But I prefer people with subtle, subtlety. I mean, I'm out an'
 836 I'm proud, I still prefer to be subtle. Because there are the people who do accept
 837 being gay but don't want to see it. You know, they know there are gay people out
 838 there an' that's fair enough 'as long as they don't hold hands in front of me, they
 839 don't kiss in front of me' an' things like that. (Mmm) I think that's, I mean, but I
 840 don't, I don't think that people kissing in public is one of the best things either, I
 841 hate kissing in public. Sharon loves it, I hate it (B: Laughs). I think even for
 842 straight people to kiss in public, I think it's wrong. (Mmm) Because, they, they
 843 don't want, you know, people feel uncomfortable, you're sit there thinking, 'oh
 844 god they're snogging, what do I do, where do I look', (B: Laughs) kind of thing.
 845 You know, holding hands is alright an' having a quick hug, but a quick kiss is
 846 alright, but in-your-face snogging in the middle of the street for, er, heterosexuals,
 847 homosexuals is wrong.
- 848 A Mmm. So do you, when you and Sharon, kind of, wanna go out together an', you
 849 know, to socialise...
- 850 B We normally go down to [LGB pub] but I 'ave asked, an' I've asked, an' I've
 851 asked 'can we go to a straight club?' 'No'. (B: Laughs) (Right) Unless we're
 852 going out with my mum an' David, we go down to [LGB pub] or [LGB pub], an'
 853 I'd love to back on the straight scene, cos I've been on the gay scene now for
 854 nearly, like, two, two an' a half years, maybe thre' (.) maybe three years, two, no
 855 it'd be year and a half, no three years this October (B: Laughs) I'll make my mind

856 up, yeah, it'll be three years this October that I've been on the scene and it is so
 857 depressing now, it's like a meatmarket. An' I hate it, an' I just wish I could go
 858 back, to go on the straight scene, to go clubbing at [straight club], where I used to
 859 go to go clubbing. [Straight club], when it's not just gay night, because it's a
 860 different atmosphere. (Mmm) The atmosphere's, an' I like a bit of both. Now
 861 Sharon, she just likes the gay scene because she likes to be able to grab 'old of
 862 me and kiss me, but I like to be on the straight scene, an' unless we're with my
 863 mum an' dad, er, my mum an' Dave, I don't get to go out on the straight scene.
 864 (Mmm) So (.)

865 A But that's k', that's, kind of, more to do with Sharon?

866 B Yeah, that's more, sort of, to do with, I mean she doesn't feel, I don't think she'd
 867 feel as comfortable in a straight pub as much as in a gay pub where she knows
 868 everybody. I mean, she goes in [LGB pub], she goes in [LGB pub], she can know
 869 about ten people as soon as she walks in, that's what she likes. (Mmm) I like to
 870 be going into a pub an' not know anybody so we can have a private conversation,
 871 kind of, thing.

872 A Mmm. So it's something about the, the, the, the, kind of, gay scene being quite (.)
 873 small?

874 B Yeah, I need a larger, a lot larger gay scene to, you know, to be able to go
 875 somewhere an' not know anyone, (Mmm) you know, it'd be great.

876 A An' you, you said it's a bit of a meatmarket?

877 B Oh, it is. It's, um, I mean, especially the blokes. All you see when you go in there
 878 is, you see men sitting on their own, an' they're lookin', an' then you see, an'
 879 then a couple of men lookin' back, an' it, it's, sort of, like, you know, are they
 880 aren't they, an' if you go out into a pub where, you know, a bloke walks into a
 881 pub an' he's on his own, he's, he's fair game, he's anybody's, you know.

882 A Mmm. What do you think, how do you think it, those, sort of, places are for, kind
 883 of, young, younger, //people?

884 B It, // it's, er, it gives them the wrong impression of the scene. I mean they start
 885 goin' out there on the scene when they're about sixteen, seventeen an' they see
 886 all these old queens living it up an' bein' so camp, an' then look what 'appens.
 887 You get them thinkin' 'that's how you've gotta be when you're gay, you gotta be
 888 camp, you gotta be, um, you got to talk high, you gotta walk with a mince'. No!
 889 (B: Laughs) I don't think you have to. You don't have to. If you're gay, you can
 890 look as straight, straight as the next person, all things like that. (Mmm) You don't
 891 have to dye your hair funny colours an' wear outrageous clothes to be gay.

892 A Mmm. Do you think that's the same for women? That there's those pressures on
 893 women, or...?

894 B Um, there's more pressures on women to be butch an' wear trousers, an' Sharon's
 895 always goin' on about 'oh I look butch, I look butch, I'm gay, I look butch'. I'm
 896 thinking, 'So? I'd li', I'd like you to look feminine now and again' (B: Laughs)

897 but, I'd like 'er to look feminine now and again, I'd like 'er to, um, grow her hair
 898 a bit longer. Not, I mean, I wouldn't want her to come out of trousers because
 899 she's comfortable in trousers, but maybe grow her hair a bit longer an' probably
 900 wear somethin' a little more feminine, er, like a blouse instead of a shirt with 'er
 901 trousers, I don't mind 'er wearing trousers, Bu', but, no, that's the way she, you
 902 know, that's the way she feels she 'as to be. (Mmm) I think, in a way, she feels
 903 like she has to be the big butch man, even though at home it tends to be me more
 904 in charge than her. (A & B: Laugh) You know, but she wants everybody to think
 905 she's butch cos that's the rep' she's got, she's got a reputation here an' over the
 906 road that she's nice as pie but you cross 'er, you know, an' you hurt her friends
 907 an' you hurt her girlfriend an' she'll go wacky, an' she has got a temper on 'er,
 908 I've only seen it once, but she's got a temper on 'er. (B: Laughs) (Mmm) So...

909 A Are there, are there places that aren't around on the sce', on, on, on, the gay
 910 scene, or, or, or elsewhere that you think that would be, kind of, that you'd like to
 911 see exist?

912 B I mean, I think, I mean when [LGB pub] opened, it was great, everybody went
 913 down there, an' I've been down a couple of times, but jus', to me it's just a bigger
 914 version of [LGB pub]. There are more people there but it, it's still doin' they're
 915 still havin', the same people are still goin' in and, just because it's a different
 916 venue now, they've got somewhere else to go, it's all 'great, great, great, we've
 917 got somewhere else to go', but it's still doin' the same thing still, same things
 918 goin' off, um, cottaging, um, the, the meat, it's still like a meatmarket an' things
 919 like that. It, it's still the same, no matter where you move it to, um, the same
 920 people are just gonna follow cos it's a new place to go to an' it's just gonna be
 921 the same there. You're never gonna change it.

922 A Er, is this place different? [meaning the LGB youth group], I guess, this is not a,
 923 sort of, commercial, kind of, place.

924 B [Talking about a LGB pub] No. it's, um, it's, er, bigger than, than a lot of the
 925 places we've got. It's the biggest place we've got. It only opens till twelve,
 926 instead of [LGB pub/club] opening till two, so everybody goes down there an'
 927 then goes to [LGB pub/club] a lot later on. It gets so cramped cos there's not
 928 enough room for everybody, an' you still can't get into [LGB pub] if you're not
 929 down there by, sort of, eleven o'clock, there's queues down the road, an', like,
 930 two-out, two-in, kind of, thing. (Mmm) So, it, it's just the same. It, it's never
 931 gonna change until they open a bigger variety of pubs an' clubs around here, it's
 932 never gonna change.

933 A Mmm. So would that be something that you'd welcome, sort of, more...?

934 B Yeah, more variety definitely. I mean, we've got [LGB pub] across the road, an' I
 935 think that's the best of all the pubs, because it's mainly women that go in there,
 936 an' it's not such a meatmarket. (Mmm) With the men it's, they've all got to be
 937 certain characters, certain way, an' they mince, the women aren't so much more,
 938 they still feel like they've gotta be a bit more butch, an' a lot of them are, but
 939 they're not all like that. (Mmm) There are the obvious exceptions with the men,
 940 like, I've got a friend of mine who's just gay an' he is just so not camp. He c', he

- 941 can be to wind people up, but he's not, he's just like great. But everybody else I
942 know is. Don't know one person who isn't slightly camp.
- 943 A What, what is it about that, that, sort of, an', I don't know, that you don't like?
- 944 B It's a stereotype, they've been stereotyped, an' so they think they've got to be it,
945 to be gay, you've got to be like that, an' they, they're stereotyping themselves,
946 because someone else has put a label on them, er, going back probably to the
947 sixties where 'campness is gay', an' now it's, 'if you're gay, you're camp' an'
948 they're putting themselves into that, um, stereotype, they're their own worst
949 enemy, if you see, if they stopped an' took a step back an' acted like men, er, in a
950 normal society, there wouldn't be so much, er, problem with the outside world I
951 don't think, because society stereotyped them, an' then they've gone an' they've
952 not rebelled against it, they've just slotted themselves right in to what society saw
953 them like. (Mmm) An' it's not helping them get out of that, like, rut.
- 954 A Right, an', an' you, you think that that's, sort of, that compounds the...?
- 955 B Yeah, especially, it, it, it's mainly the men more than the women, I don't, because
956 there isn't much coverage of women, well, because it's more socially acceptable,
957 women are more able to accept gay women, an' blokes can accept gay women,
958 because it's not their own, you know, it's a, well, two women in bed, that's quite
959 a nice thought for most men so, it's not, not like they, well, it's blokes that are the
960 problem, they see gay men stereotyped as camp, an' they view camp as gay.
- 961 A Mmm. Okay, this last question, which is, kind of, just to ask you about, well, first
962 of all was, was to ask you if there's stuff that we've haven't covered that you'd
963 like to talk about?
- 964 B I don't think so, I've talked a lot really. (B: Laughs)
- 965 A I guess the last question, then, I was going to ask you was, kind of, what, um,
966 what, what made you think about doing this interview, what made you interested,
967 or, or, decide to do...?
- 968 B Bein' able to put my point of views across about (.) the (.) gay scene, um, gay
969 and, relationships, to label difficulties and problems, and also the fact that I'm
970 actually a gay mother-to-be, an' that's not something you get a lot of. (Mmm)
971 An', so, it's not been a problem answering questions. I just wanted to put my own
972 views across because of the problems I've 'ad, now I really want to get my views
973 across an' if I can help in some way just make it a little bit easier for the next
974 person, then the next, an' the next, then I'll do it.
- 975 A Mmm, mmm. Would it, would it have made a difference to you if I were straight?
- 976 B No. Er, straight people don't worry me. I mean, I've, I've got loads of straight
977 friends, and loads of gay friends.
- 978 A Okay. Right that's it, thanks very much.

Interview 4
Robert
Interview Date
10/2/99

- 1 A Right, okay, first question is quite straight forward, and it's just, um, how do you
2 describe your sexuality?
- 3 B Um, I could simplify it, or say in a big off-handed [tape inaudible] just normal,
4 practical, plain gay.
- 5 A Right, okay and what would be the, the more complex answer (A: Laughs)?
- 6 B Um, G. W. M. Gay white male but it's, sort of like, not much more complex
7 really.
- 8 A Right, right.
- 9 B But I suppose it is in a way. Just describes yourself a bit more.
- 10 A Mmm, yeah, okay. Thinking about, um, (.) now, um, how do you feel about being
11 gay. Can you describe how you feel about being gay?
- 12 B Um, I s'pose it's, it's weird because you don't really think about, I'm gay and
13 how I feel about it because it just comes as a casual thing. Whereas I s'pose being
14 straight or being trans-gender it becomes casual to whoever they are, to the people
15 that are straight or trans-gender or whatever, but I s'pose it, it does feel different
16 an' I s'pose it feels empowering as well. A lot of people say you feel really weak
17 and no power because the majority are stood over you pushing you down but I
18 feel quite powerful because I can communicate better with women and that's the
19 envy of most other men in college and stuff. (Mmm) And I'm like really proud of
20 that, because I can all, I can kick up and back loads of paces but I can always be
21 there in with the women talking about it an' say, 'oh yeah, well I know how you
22 feel with PMS darling cos I suffer from it as well', or and when they say 'what's
23 that mean?' It's like pre-millennium stress. (Yeah) (A: Laughs). And things like
24 that but.
- 25 A Okay, so it, does it, it feels like it's something that's part of you?
- 26 B //Yeah.
- 27 A An'// therefore feels quite, kind of...?
- 28 B It feels like it's me. (Yeah) I've oft', I mean, just last night I sat and thought to
29 myself, 'what would it be like if I was straight? Would I be butcho? Would I look
30 different?' An' I just thought 'no' cos it is impossible I can't be what I'm not, I
31 am what I am an', (Mmm) there's no changing it, (Mmm) and it feels good.
- 32 A Okay, thinking back now to when you, when you first were wondering whether
33 you might be gay or realised that you were gay. Um, first of all how old were you
34 when, when you first...?
- 35 B Um, I first knew when I was six but I can't recall that far back. (Mmm) Um, I can
36 recall when I was about nine, ten and I used to walk down the street and fancy
37 these blokes an' I used to force myself in to saying, um, things like, 'you don't
38 fancy the next bloke cos you're good looking, you're not gay, you're not gay, you

- 39 can't be, you can't be.' An' it was just, just, like there was somebody said last
 40 week, you just get it banged into you when you're a kid that you're gonna grow
 41 up, you're gonna have a wife, you're gonna have kids. (Mmm) And I just had to
 42 go along with that, (Yeah) an' now I don't. Well then, then I started to realise I
 43 don't and now I know I definitely don't.
- 44 A Mmm. So can you, can you remember how you actually, what you felt at that time
 45 when you were nine.
- 46 B I felt disgusted (.) with myself, I hated myself. (Right) I used to punish myself by
 47 starving myself, um, I used to (.) slash my wrists, overdose and take tablets, um, I
 48 used to take it out on my little brother and my mum. I used to like really get nasty
 49 with people, and the doctors all said it was because I was depressed and stuff but I
 50 knew it wasn't but I couldn't say why an' I couldn't say what it was because I
 51 didn't know what was legal and what was legal then.
- 52 A Mmm. So you were quite frightened that you, you might be doing something that
 53 was illegal or...?
- 54 B Very frightened, I mean, I didn't even really know what the term gay meant but I
 55 knew that I fancied men which was different from other people. (Mmm) I mean,
 56 my grandma used to have a guest house and I used to go out with the girls that
 57 used to come and stay. I kidded the parents and used to like pretend that I really
 58 fancied them and everything, and I was just like, 'you're a dog get out my face, I
 59 don't want nothing to do with you'. (Mmm) But I had to ss', be really airy fairy
 60 and nice and everything, (Right) just to keep the family quiet.
- 61 A So you, you spent time, sort of, go', going out with girls, (Yeah=) as a way of,
 62 kind of, was that for yourself do you think or was that to, sort of, for other peoples
 63 benefit, (Um=) that you were doing that?
- 64 B I think it's the same as like when I was punishing myself, I wasn't doin' it for me,
 65 I was, although I was doing it to me, it was for the family. Although at the time I
 66 didn't realise that, I thought it was for me but, (Mmm) now I realise looking back
 67 the classic symptoms why I did it. (Mmm) I don't know if you could describe
 68 them as classic symptoms, but I understand now why I did it, an' what made me
 69 do it.
- 70 A Mmm. Which was?
- 71 B The fact that I really didn't want to be gay. (Mmm) Because as I said it was
 72 plastered into me I'm gonna grow up, I'm gonna have a wife an' kids an' two
 73 dogs, no a dog an' a cat, an' two children, one boy an' girl, an' live in a big house
 74 in the country with a city near by. (A: Laughs) the typical nuclear family and I
 75 wanted that to happen, (Mmm) and, I know it can't.
- 76 A Yeah, okay. What, what do you think then has changed, cos you, from what you
 77 were describing when you went, when you were nine, the way, you felt, felt
 78 frightened and bad about, about being gay and that you didn't want to be gay. And
 79 from what you say about now you feel quite comfortable with being gay and it

- 80 feels like, you know, it's you. Um, how, what do think's changed from, you
81 know, between being nine and between being sixteen to make that happen?
- 82 B The fact that I've had support off my family and [the LGB youth group] and the
83 [gay men's advice centre] and other places, and friends as well, I mean, my peer
84 groups and everything they're all really cool about it. Because I've always had
85 female friends and they do say that a woman's best friend is a gay man or a
86 straight women anyway. (Mmm) And it's all made it easier because now I know
87 that everyone is on my side and they're not against me and they're not going to
88 begrudge me for it. (Mmm) I don't feel so (.) frightened an' alone.
- 89 A Yeah. When did you first tell someone, cos it, it sounded like you were, when you
90 were nine you were, sort of, frightened about, about being open about it?
- 91 B Um, I didn't tell anyone as such, I got caught out. Um, I was on the internet and I
92 was talking to some guy and I didn't know that the person I call my dad, who's
93 just a friend of the family, was keeping a record of all the rooms that I was going
94 into, the chat rooms. (Right) And that was just to make sure that I didn't go
95 anywhere that I shouldn't, an' then confronted me afterwards, 'you're gay',
96 (Right) or, 'are you gay?' And (.) I didn't answer 'im, but 'e put me, he took to,
97 took me to [the LGB youth group] and [gay men's advice centre] an' arranged
98 some stuff and everything. (Right) And he was really good about it. Now I re', I
99 realise now that that's because he's gay as well, that he understands it but, (Right)
100 it made it easier and eventually I told my mum and the rest of my family, who
101 I've only just told a week ago, (Right) and they're in their denial stage at the
102 moment, 'you can't be, you can't be, you're gonna have a wife and children'. 'No
103 I'm not'. (Right) An' if I do have children they'll be adopted. (Mmm) If that's
104 made legal because, well it is legal at the moment but just not very commonly
105 done.
- 106 A Yeah, yeah. So what, so you've, you, you, you were confronted in a way by, by
107 your dad. (Yep) And it sounds like he was quite supportive an', an' positive,
108 actually helped you seek other sources of support.
- 109 B Yeah, um, at first he said to me he wanted, well afterwards he said that 'e really
110 wanted me to go to counselling an' put, be put on these tablets and everything
111 else because he was in denial as well. But he never actually did that. He went
112 against his better judgement an' supported me in it, in case it was just a phase.
113 (Right) An' I was always told by him, 'it's just a phase, all teenagers go through
114 it', but, I dunno, something I felt inside me said it wasn't. (Mmm) The fact that it
115 'ad been happening from the age of about six, although I can't remember that, as I
116 said. (Mmm) Although I can remember from about nine, from about nine an' until
117 now. I don't think a phase could actually last that long, especially in a child's life.
118 (Mmm=) Maybe in an adult's, but in a child's life, I don't think that's possible.
119 (No=) Which is what made me realise that it's not a phase.
- 120 A And so what, did that feel (.) okay to you, the way he re', reacted an', an' the help
121 that he offered you an' all the, the fact that he...? =

- 122 B =It felt frightening (Yeah) because I felt that I was the only person that was like
 123 that and other than speaking on the internet, but I never knew at the time that the
 124 people on the internet were actually real people I just thought it was other
 125 computers. (B: Laughs) (Right) And I didn't know how but it just worked an' I
 126 felt really frightened an' scared by the support. (Mmm) But now I look back an', I
 127 don't know, I'm just glad it was there cos otherwise I'd still be in denial about it
 128 now.
- 129 A Mmm, so was the internet the first, first, sort of, way that you started to try an'
 130 find out a bit more about it or explore it?
- 131 B Um, yeah it was really because I've never actually 'ad any contact with any gay
 132 people before. (Right) Um, I'd just been kept away from it and living in [a small
 133 seaside town] and places like that, there's hardly any gay people in an' if there are
 134 they get ushered out of the place (Mmm) by the local council and the community,
 135 cos they are seen as the scum of the earth. (Right) Which is a bit back-dated
 136 really, (Mmm) like it's, you don't get any mixed-race people or other races living
 137 there or ethnic ba', backgrounds living there, it's purely English and white.
 138 (Mmm) I mean, there was an Italian women who was white an' to look at her she
 139 looked English but as soon as she opened 'er mouth they just petitioned for her to
 140 be kicked out, (Right) an' that's how bad it is.
- 141 A So not very tolerant of, sort of, (No) difference?
- 142 B No they really hate it. (Mmm) They like to stick to what they know and they're
 143 scared of what they don't know. (Mmm) Which is why they feared my mum as
 144 well, I think, cos she's deaf. (Right) And I think that's made it harder on me as
 145 well because she can't really understand it.
- 146 A She can't understand...?
- 147 B Being gay, she's always been told it's disgusting an' filthy and shouldn't be
 148 allowed and I think with her having that mind, to actually turn round and me to
 149 say, 'I'm gay', makes it hard for her.
- 150 A Mmm, what...? =
- 151 B =Although, I s'pose it's not her that's at issue really, it's me.
- 152 A Yeah. How did she react when you, when you told her?
- 153 B She went to social services and told them that I was a, I was gay and I was a
 154 pervert. Um, I'd grow up to be a paedophile and every other thing that's
 155 commonly said about gay people she said and accused me of having sex with all
 156 and sundry and everything. (Mmm) But that wasn't the case and luckily we didn't
 157 actually, it didn't actually get very far because there wasn't enough evidence to
 158 say that I had had sex, which at the time I hadn't, and I hadn't done this that and
 159 the other that she was saying. (Mmm) And I wouldn't do this that and the other
 160 she said I would, so they couldn't do anything about it which was a bit good, or
 161 lucky should I say.

- 162 A Yeah, how did that make you feel?
- 163 B It knocked me back a peg or two. I felt (.) scared again. I clammed up. I started
164 doing things that I was doing before, punishing myself an' started slishing, put my
165 teeth in, (A: Laughs) slashing my wrists, I started overdosing again an' I felt on
166 the verge of suicide. (Right) But I never actually took enough tablets or slashed
167 my wrists far enough, I just scored them. (Yeah) With the intent to draw blood
168 not to kill myself but just to hurt myself. (Yeah) An' taking tablets, I only took
169 enough to make me sick.
- 170 A An', an' is your understanding of, of those things that, that it was about punishing
171 yourself?
- 172 B Yeah.
- 173 A Yeah. So it //wasn't so much about...
- 174 B I wanted...//
- 175 A About suicide attempt //necessarily.
- 176 B No, because// I, I'm not religious or anything but I don't believe in suicide.
177 (Mmm) I don't think suicide is (.) really a good idea, I mean it's a stupid idea and
178 everybody knows that. I s'pose in some cases it, it's the only way out, I suppose.
179 But (.) I never actually intended to do anything other than to punish myself, an' (.)
180 really make, (.) make me suffer the consequences. (Mmm) Whereas it should've
181 been my mum or my grandma my dad or my own uncles suffering and me living
182 the way I wanted to.
- 183 A Yeah, yeah, (.) okay, an' how, how, has your mum changed in her opinions since
184 then?
- 185 B 'er opinions are a bit different, um, she's met alot of my friends who are gay an'
186 she's alright about it but still hushed up, she doesn't talk about it. (Mmm) An' I
187 think that's probably just because of the way she's been brought up. Just sweep it
188 under the carpet an' keep it out of the conversation, I think it'd be easy for her as
189 well, as well as what she does. (Mmm) I mean, because she does it anyway, it'd
190 be easier for 'er to keep doing it, (Yeah) because it saves arguments, (Right) and
191 fights and stuff.
- 192 A Okay, an', who was around, did anyone know that you were, um, hurting yourself,
193 taking overdoses, //cutting yourself?
- 194 B Um, no not// really because I used to do them at night. (Right) And I never
195 actually slashed my wrist in the normal place, there, I used to do it a bit further
196 up. (Mmm) So that I could still wear shirts and stuff and nobody'd be able to see
197 'em. (Right) With mum being deaf, I could take tablets before I went to bed and
198 I'd be chucking them up while mum was asleep and she wouldn't hear me.
199 (Right) An' if she did get up and the door was locked, I quickly try an' stop

- 200 myself from being sick, (Mmm) by, probably by drinking water or somethin', an'
201 then open the door and say I'd been on the toilet.
- 202 A Yeah, so you kept that, kept that, (Yeah) sort of, hidden.
- 203 B An' at the time my family didn't really know because they never lived with us, it
204 was always kept in the house an' away from everybody.
- 205 A Okay, so, (.) right. Are there any positive ways that you think that, that being gay
206 affects your life?
- 207 B Yeah, I think there's loads, um, I can communicate better with (.) women, um, er,
208 that could just be the way I am, but a lot of people 'ud say it's because I am a gay
209 man or a gay male that (=Mmm=) I can communicate better with women. I mean,
210 it's probably six of one and half a dozen of the other but, and things like fashion
211 sense. (A & B: Laugh). The typical or sterotypical things of fashion sense and
212 campness and everything. (Mmm) But I suppose with everything there's an
213 upside and a downside.
- 214 A Yes, so what, what's the downside?
- 215 B The downside's I don't really talk to men much. And the downside with fashion
216 sense, you get caught out in places like, um, let's see, Anne Summers and, um,
217 Miss Selfridges and they're not places you really want to go into unless your with
218 another woman, an' then you just give her the goods and get her to buy them an'
219 then you give her the money back or you give 'er the money for 'em and stuff.
220 (Right) It's not somewhere you want to go in on your own because you don't
221 want to get labelled out while your on your own, (Mmm) for reasons of people
222 verbally abusing ya or getting beat up by the people because of it.
- 223 A Has that happened to you?
- 224 B No. I'm lucky in that. (Mmm) I don't go out clubbin' at all really and when I do
225 go out I'm always leaving quite early before people get too drunk to start fights.
226 (Mmm=) I mean straight people like. I've been told that it usually happens when
227 they've had loads of pints and they're really drunk and can't think of nothing
228 better to do other than go in a night club or go and beat somebody up. (Mmm) So
229 I always leave about nine, ten before, while it's safe to actually get home.
- 230 A Right, so it sounds like that's one of the negative things about being gay, is that
231 there is a need to be careful about, about what you're doin' and to be conscious
232 of, of // other people's...
- 233 B Well, yeah// but I think it can happen with everybody. Like, (Yeah) somebody in
234 a wheelchair or somebody who's blind. They've got to be careful what they do,
235 um, (.) a black person in a white neighbourhood or a white person in a black
236 neighbourhood, it's, I think everythin', you've got to be careful with. (Mmm)
237 Walking down the streets at night for anybody's dangerous. (Yeah, yeah) I think
238 it, it's just highlighted a bit if you're walking down, mincing down the street,
239 should I say, wearing wh', your high heels and loads of makeup but still in

- 240 blokes' clothin'. (Mmm) Just highlights it a bit and gives them more of a reason
241 to beat you up.
- 242 A Yeah, yeah, yeah I think that's a good point. If you could choose your sexual
243 identity, would you choose to be gay or bisexual or straight or...?
- 244 B If I could choose, um, I'd rather be straight. (Right) Not for the fact that it'd be
245 something I'd feel better with, cos I wouldn't. But it'd make it easier on the
246 family, (Right) and my mum, and it would make my relationship with the family
247 better.
- 248 A Right, mmm. Yeah.
- 249 B I think that's what's important, your family.
- 250 A Okay, I'm going to ask you some questions in a minute about, about family and
251 family and relationships so I'll come back to that.
- 252 B Okay.
- 253 A What ways do you think you being gay has affected who you are as a person if at
254 all?
- 255 B I don't really think it has. (Right) Other than the fact that I've got gay friends who
256 are my peer group, but I don't really think it's affected me.
- 257 A Mmm. I was wondering do you think that sort of the experiences that you went
258 through during the process that you, sort of, described from, from say the age of
259 nine up until now, where by you...?
- 260 B Punish myself and stuff //well I think, yeah?
- 261 A You punish yourself, // an' you, you, you, you also had the, to, sort of, tell people
262 an' cope with, cope with coming to terms yourself with it. (Yeah) Do you think
263 that's had a impact on, on you, who you are as a person?
- 264 B Yeah I think it has probably made me a bit tougher, er, mentally not physically.
265 (Mmm) But, I mean, because of the situation I'm in, not only am I gay, um, my
266 mum's deaf an' that's had to make me tougher mentally as well because I've had
267 to grow up quicker. (Mmm) So, they've both in a way made me grow up quicker.
268 (Right) Which is something that I would have done whether I was gay or not.
- 269 A Right, is that a good, good thing, a bad thing or neither or?
- 270 B It's a bit of both. (Mmm) It's good in the fact that I've grown up quicker, bad in
271 the fact that I've lost out in my childhood. (Yeah, yeah) I mean, I'm really
272 childish now and people saying 'act your age and everythin'', but it's because I
273 want to get back them five, six, seven, eight plus years that I've missed out on.
274 (Mmm) But for filling in forms when I was young, an' sorting out my mum's
275 money, an' paying the bills, making sure that were paid up, not necessarily paying
276 them, making sure they were paid. (Mmm) Making sure that there's always food

277 in the fridge because otherwise it ud get spent on cider, the local video shop an'
 278 fags. (Right) And, I'm not saying that mum's a bad mum or anythin', it's just
 279 she's got no money sense. She's got no sense about money. (Right) An' I think
 280 that's because she's deaf. (Right=) No idea of what money is. Thinks it grows on
 281 trees (B: Laughs).

282 A Right, so you've had to take quite a lot of responsibility for d', for doing certain
 283 things for your mum.

284 B Yeah. (Yeah) So I don't really think being gay has made me any different,
 285 (Mmm) in anyway cos it would have been the same anyway. It's made me, made
 286 me, maybe made a little bit of an impact but I s'pose that little bit of an impact
 287 wouldn't have been much different than what it would have if I wasn't gay.

288 A Mmm, okay, right, as I said there's, the next lot of questions are about
 289 relationships, not just family relationships, but, but, but first of all family
 290 relationships. I was gonna, I guess, I'm mainly interested in thinking about how
 291 gay, being gay has affected those relationships. (Mmm) An', an' both when,
 292 when, um, you have, er, been open about your sexuality with that person and if
 293 there are people that, that don't know that you're gay, also then just thinking
 294 about how that, either them knowing or not knowing has, has affected your
 295 relationships with them. (Mmm) So I guess, I mean, starting off with family,
 296 maybe starting off with your mum. (Yeah) How, I mean, we've talked a bit
 297 already about your mum an', an' your mum's reaction. (Yeah=) Haven't we, do
 298 you think that your relationship with her has changed in anyway, sort of, since,
 299 since you //told her?

300 B Yeah.// I think it's probably changed for the better. (Right) Because (.) now she
 301 knows, it's not as if I'm lying to her any more or hiding things from her. (Mmm)
 302 Which is what she always wanted in the first place, me to tell the truth. (Yeah)
 303 An' because it's not spoke about, as I said before, it's I s'pose I could say just the
 304 same as a normal family but there's no such thing, but what society sees as
 305 normal where we just get along and do our own thing. I sit in my room listen to
 306 music, she watches all the soaps and I come down for Jerry Springer. (Right) (A:
 307 Laughs). That's, that's the typical thing we do, which I think most kids do
 308 anyway. They'd rather be out the house at, in their teenager years than sat inside.
 309 (Yeah) Or, if they were gonna be sat inside, they'd rather be in their rooms, an'
 310 that's just what I do. I try to see as little of 'er as possible, but I still see quite a bit
 311 of 'er. Like I have to go down and stuff, cos I don't want my brother to go
 312 through what I've had to. Fillin' in forms, sortin' out the finances. (Mmm=) Cos
 313 I'm more experienced in doin' it, I don't want him to 'ave to go through it,
 314 because I've lived a life of shit and hell, sorry of swearing.

315 A No.

316 B Beep that (B: Laughs).

317 A (A: Laughs) No, feel free.

318 B Because I don't want him to go through it like I've had to.

- 319 A Yeah. What about your brother, does, y', does your brother know you're gay?
- 320 B Yeah. Um, I went to a fancy dress competition which was 'Miss [name of a LGB
321 pub]' and I won but as I was getting ready, my, my brother says, 'oh, so you're
322 gay are you?' And I went, 'yeah, I am Mike', and I explained it to 'im and
323 everythin'. An' then I went to [the city's Pride celebration] an' I got dragged up
324 again for that, an' he says, 'oh no, not again!', (A: Laughs) 'Not gettin' dressed up
325 again are you in women's clothin'?' (A: Laughs) An' it's just the way he said it,
326 made me laugh, but I think 'e's okay about it, 'e's not really bothered. (Mmm) I
327 think it's good as well for him to be influenced with it. Not for the fact that
328 people say, 'oh being influenced with it makes you gay', but for the fact, cos I
329 don't believe that, I believe it's in the genes in the body, (Right, yeah) from birth,
330 but the fact that he's not gonna grow up to be homophobic. (Yeah) Or grow up
331 being told that gay people are horrible and everythin' an' then find out that I'm
332 gay and hate me for it. (Yeah) Whereas if 'e knows now and doesn't give a damn
333 basically, he's not gonna bother in the future regardless of what people say about
334 it.
- 335 A Yeah, yeah, okay. What about, what about your, your dad, and you mentioned
336 there's a, (Yeah) there's a bloke you call your dad.
- 337 B Yeah, I, I, I'll just explain that so you don't get mixed up or anythin'. Um, I've
338 got a real dad who I see, should I say I don't see very often, and a friend of the
339 family who I call my dad, (Right) because 'e's been more of a father to me.
340 (Right, yeah) I s'pose it's like, you're good friends, you call each other sisters or
341 stuff, (Yeah) or brothers, things like that. Um, my real dad, I told him I was gay
342 and he said to me, 'well don't wear the lipstick, don't wear the eye shadow, stick
343 to your jeans and your, um, T-shirts', and stuff like that, 'and your track, trainers'.
344 And he saying, 'don't rub it in my face' and everythin' but he never, never really
345 dogged me for it or anythin'. Whereas, the other person, who I found is gay
346 anyway, supported me. (Mmm) But I s'pose I've already said this, there's not
347 much real reason to say it all over again.
- 348 A Mmm. So how long, how long have you, you been, sort of, closer to your, the, the
349 person your call your dad?
- 350 B All my life.
- 351 A Right so he's been around.
- 352 B Yeah. From the moment my dad, social services put an injunction out against my
353 dad to keep him away from me, he promised to be there for me, to help me.
- 354 A Right, okay, so he's been, he's been...
- 355 B My dad basically.
- 356 A Yeah, okay.

- 357 B An' it's a lot easier than saying to people the friend of the family (Yeah=) all the
 358 time so it's just 'dad', (Yeah) an' if they want to know who 'e is, then I'll explain
 359 it but I say, 'I'm only gonna explain this once because it's such a long procedure
 360 an' all rigmarole to go through.
- 361 A Yeah. So do you, [coughs] he, he doesn't live with you this, this guy?
- 362 B No although I did live with him for a while and my mum did and my brother did.
 363 (Right) When we first moved to [name of city]. It was a ploy to get us into a
 364 house. An' we moved over here, all moved into a two bedroomed flat, got me and
 365 my little brother enrolled in schools an' then said to the council they're here,
 366 they're in school, can't do nothing about it, you need to get them a house (B:
 367 Laughs). (Right) And that's how we got a house in [name of a city], other than
 368 that we'd still be in [a small seaside town]. (Right) It was a good ploy I think, (A:
 369 Laughs) otherwise we'd have been waiting years.
- 370 A So did, did, um, did your, the guy you call your dad did, did he, um, come out
 371 after you'd, after he'd asked you?
- 372 B Um, no I had to find out myself. (Right) Um, the way I found out was I was
 373 dragged into [name of a club that has an LGB night], um, not [name of a club that
 374 has an LGB night], um, cos I've never been there, I want to go but. (A: Laughs).
 375 I'd never get in (B: Laughs). Um, I went to the [name of a LGB pub], (Right) and
 376 I was dragged there by mostly my friends or so called friends and I saw him in
 377 there. (Right=) And that's how, I k', kept saying, 'why was you in a gay pub an'
 378 you're not gay?' An' the other thing is he's so camp it's unbelievable, he's
 379 camper than me. (Right) So you could just like see it, an' I always says, 'well me
 380 and my, some friends of mine who knew 'im always says, 'oh 'e's got to be bi',
 381 'e's got to be bi''. An' then he came out to me after he was completely k-oed
 382 [drunk] an' couldn't really remember what 'e was saying the next day an' I told
 383 him, 'you confessed to me and everythin'. He was like hell (B: Laughs).
- 384 A Right. And how did that feel for you when, sort of, wondering whether he was
 385 gay and the fact that he, he'd, sort of, not been open about his sexuality? (Um) I
 386 mean, earlier on you said he was, sort of, in denial still.
- 387 B Yeah, I wasn't really bothered because the reason why he was keepin' it from me,
 388 or the reason I believe he was, is because, um, my family would have says well I
 389 moved to [name of a city] with my mum and everyone here, and it's him that's
 390 made me gay. (Right) Whereas if they'd 'ave said that, it wouldn't 'ave been true.
 391 (No) Because it was me that personally felt it, not him. (Yeah, yeah) So, I think
 392 that's why he kept it from me, an' I s'pose that is a good reason really. For his an'
 393 my safety, an' the rest of the family's, familyness kind of thing. (Yeah) Just to
 394 keep us from arguing.
- 395 A Yeah. And how, how, are you still as close as it, it, you were before?
- 396 B To him or to the family?
- 397 A To him.

- 398 B Not really. (Right) Not since we moved out of 'is flat.
- 399 A Okay.
- 400 B I don't, I can't afford to phone up or afford to go down there on the bus an' he
401 can't really afford to give me money for the buses, so I just phone 'im up the odd
402 occasion an' 'e phones me up the odd occasion. (Right) So we just keep in
403 contact.
- 404 A So that, an' those are, sort of, more practical, for more practical reasons not,
405 (Yeah) kind of, because of, because either of you are gay, or...?
- 406 B Oh no, I mean, we don't really 'ave anything to do with each other about the fact
407 that we're gay, we just keep it to ourselves. (Mmm) It's what, same again, it's just
408 hushed up, um. Whenever I go round to see 'im it's always for money. (Right)
409 An' he always says, um, 'you only come round and see me for money', and I
410 answer 'im with,' well that's what fathers are for', (Yeah) 'to give you money'.
411 And he says, 'well I'm not your father', (B: Laughs) An' I'm like, 'but you
412 brought me up like it so', (Yeah) 'you owe me this an' that an' the other', an' then
413 he gives me, 'well if I owe you then how much do you owe me for all the', (A:
414 Laughs) 'hundreds and thousands I've spent on you'.
- 415 A Right, okay. What about other family members, you said you'd just recently come
416 out to them.
- 417 B Yeah. I'm, the other family members are my granma and one of my uncles. The
418 other people that m', I mean, I think the entire family knows but they don't say
419 anythin', they're waitin' for me to tell them. (Mmm) Which I'm not gonna do for
420 a long while because I don't want to cause an uproar. (Right) Um, I've got an
421 uncle who's so homophobic he used to call me names an' chase me round the
422 kitchen, an' call me li', petal and little darling and things like that. Little things,
423 but when I was six an' seven an' eight an' such, an' such, they had an impact on
424 me, an'...
- 425 A In, in a, sort of, teasing way //in a sense?
- 426 B Yeah, // but it was a teasin', constant teasin'. (Right) An' I was always told by my
427 granma, it's because we're so alike, that he can't bear the thought of me being gay
428 an' being so alike to him. (Right) In case he gets the idea that they're gonna call
429 him gay cos I am. (Right) So I haven't really told 'im, and I'm not going to, I'm
430 quite reluctant an' I've got an auntie who I don't talk to, who I hate. (Right) And I
431 think she already knows anyway but I'd never contemplate telling her because I
432 wouldn't waste my breath on 'er.
- 433 A Right, okay. So who have you recently come out to? Your gran.
- 434 B My granma and one of my uncles.
- 435 A Right. And how, how, how, have, (Um) have they responded? //You said they
436 were still in shock?

437 B Well I didn't come out to my// granma, um, I took her to [name of a LGB pub],
 438 um, we went, a friend of mums came round who's deaf as well an' my granma
 439 an' I hate him so we just went, she said, um, 'come on, let's go for a walk to the
 440 Halifax to get some money out of the bank'. And then I dragged 'er in [name of a
 441 LGB pub] an' we sat and had a couple of drinks and she says, she saw two blokes
 442 getting off with each another and goes, 'hhh [gasps], I didn't know this was a gay
 443 pub. Are you gay?' An' I was like, 'don't ask me this, not here Granma, please
 444 just drop it'. (A & B: Laugh) An' then she saw me, a photo of me on the wall as
 445 'Miss [name of an LGB pub]' an' she recognised me, cos she says nobody else
 446 has got a nose like me and I'm like, 'thanks, I really wanted to know that!'

447 A (A: Laughs). And how did she (.) react?

448 B She was alright right about it. Um, she says, 'no matter what, she loves me, who I
 449 am an' not what I am' and then she also says 'you can't knock somethin' 'til
 450 you've tried it', and didn't say any more than that, an' I was like, 'you what?' (B:
 451 Laughs). An' she says, 'you can't knock it 'til you've tried it'. An' I think, in
 452 saying that, she's, sort of, semi saying to me she's been a lesbian for a bit of 'er
 453 life or visited the isle of Lesbos, as I call it. (A & B: Laugh) I mean, that would
 454 probably be in the sixties an' seventies when it was cool to be bisexual or
 455 (Mmm=) having same-sex relationships. I couldn't really call it lesbianism or
 456 gayism, (Yeah) if there's such a word, because it wasn't really like that it was just
 457 somethin' you did to be with the crowds. (Mmm) So...

458 A So, so that was, how did that feel the way, the way your gran reacted, was that (.)
 459 quite positive?

460 B Yeah. I was quite happy I was not really bothered. (Yeah) Um, I was just glad to
 461 get it off my chest, another thing out of the way. (Yeah) One less family member
 462 to worry about. (Yeah) And the only thing she did say to me was, 'don't throw all
 463 your eggs in one basket. If it is a phase and you don't know it just don't make it
 464 so that you've got no way of gettin' back an' any chance of going out with
 465 another woman'. (Yeah) So I says, 'well, there's no chance of doin' that cos
 466 there's always someone, always, no matter what you say you are there's always
 467 someone who's there and wants ya. (Mmm) Maybe not now but sooner or later
 468 there will be'. (Mmm) Probably later! (A & B Laugh)

469 A Okay. Would you give anybody, I'm thinking about what advice you might give
 470 to, to somebody who was young an' either lesbian, gay or bisexual. About, kind
 471 of, coming out to either their parents or family members. Is there anything that
 472 you would...?

473 B Advise them on?

474 A Yeah.=

475 B =Um, be tactful, be very tactful. It depends on the parents, what type of parents
 476 they are. (Mmm) If they're the type that will fly off the handle at slightest thing
 477 then I'd say wait, just wait until you're legal, if you're not legal already. (Mmm)
 478 And, (.) then (.) tell them, but not necessarily tell them, just hint at things. (Mmm)

479 It's sounds silly but to say to somebody straight off who's gonna fly off the
 480 handle, (Mmm) would practically kill them. (Mmm) Or kill their emotions
 481 anyway. It'd just shoot them straight through the heart. (Mmm) But for somebody
 482 who's in a relaxed family, I'd say just come out. (Yeah) Don't sit 'em down or
 483 nothing, just say it, I would. (Yeah) Cos I don't think there's any real point in
 484 sittin' somebody down an' askin' them all questions and then laying it on them
 485 because they know it was coming anyway. If you just lay it on them and, if they're
 486 as relaxed as they say they are, then they'd be alright. Although, I s'pose maybe
 487 leading on a little bit an' then telling 'em would be a good idea but it depends on
 488 the parents.

489 A Mmm. Yeah, yeah. What about your a', your friends. Er, an', I guess, I'm
 490 thinking about friends from college or, or from earlier on when you were at
 491 school. How did, has been, do you think that being gay has affected your
 492 relationship with those, (Um) things?

493 B I never had any friends in school, not really, I mean, I was always hated. Um, I
 494 wouldn't say it was because I was gay, but I was just one of them people that
 495 never fitted in. (Right) An' I was never ever in the in-crowd. Although, since I've
 496 come out, I've been mergin' with the women that are in the in-crowd, because I, I
 497 planned it in a way. I, sort of, like used it to my advantage, it sounds really, really
 498 pathetic but I made sure that I told the women who are at the top of the chain,
 499 kind of thing, (Mmm) an' then wormed my way into the group. An' that's what
 500 I've done in college. (Right) I've randomly selected people that I've told and then
 501 I'm like working my way up at the moment 'til I'm at the top an' the people way
 502 down below can't do nothing because I'm one of the top people there. (Mmm) I
 503 s'pose it's just like Evita or Eva Peron, she slept her way to the top. (A: Laughs)
 504 (Yeah) An' you can do that with your friends. (Right) An' if you've got somethin'
 505 behind ya an' there's always a lot of female friends or females at the top of the
 506 friendship chain, an' if you can work your way up that, go for it I'd say.

507 A So in college are there people, I mean, are you openly gay, sort of, to everyone, or
 508 have you selectively told people?

509 B I'm selective. If they tell other people, I do tell them not to, but (.) if they feel they
 510 want to, would they come and let me know first, because if it's someone that's
 511 just gonna tell everybody. (Mmm) Like, (.) I say it's my place to tell people, it's
 512 not really their place to tell people. (Yeah) But I s'pose if it's their friends who
 513 are involved in the group then I s'pose that wouldn't be so bad. (Mmm) But
 514 nobody's really said anything anyway. It's just like you tell one person and that
 515 one person keeps it to theirselves because college has got a different atmosphere to
 516 school. (Mmm) It's not like one big (.) chain of gossip. Whereas in college, I
 517 s'pose it is, but they go for hot and juicier things other than people's sexual
 518 orientation, (Mmm) they go for things like well such and such is getting engaged
 519 and, (A: Laughs) did you watch Jerry Springer last night, and what about Sunset
 520 Beach. (Okay) That's more your college goss.

521 A So, so people have, have they reacted okay to, to you //coming out to them?

- 522 B Yeah, I mean, I've not// had any problems really. I've had other people calling me
 523 names an' I've just turned round and kicked 'em to the curb, kind of thing. I
 524 mean, I do everything verbally, if I'm gonna annoy somebody or really hurt them,
 525 I do it verbally. (Mmm) Because I've got such a knack for it (A & B: Laugh).
 526 (Right) Um, but that's only happened a couple of times an' after I've 'ad a go at
 527 people they've not really said anythin' afterwards. (Mmm) I've always been held
 528 back by security for doin' it. They've oft', they've always got security on me and
 529 said, 'he's picking on me', but I can always turn round tell the security, 'listen,
 530 this is what they've done to me. Would you accept it if it was your kids?' (Yeah)
 531 'Or if it was you?'
- 532 A So what sort of things have, have they said to you?
- 533 B The usual things I've had to go through, 'you poof, you shirt lifter, fruit cake, (.)
 534 backside bandit', typical stuff.
- 535 A All the old ones then?
- 536 B Yeah. They've not really come up with anything decent and new yet. I mean, if
 537 they come up with something that I might like I'd probably let 'em call it me but
 538 it's like things, I don't know it's like, you've got black people and I'm not just
 539 saying this cos it's like only black people, but you get a lot of black people going
 540 round calling each other niggers. (Mmm) And they're okay about it but if I turn
 541 round to a black bloke and says, 'oh you nigger', they'd take it as racist. (Yeah)
 542 An' it's, I s'pose it's the same within the gay society. Like I can go out there now
 543 and call Mike, I don't know, 'you bitch', (Mmm) an' he'll just turn round, 'you
 544 slut, you cow, you whore' and everythin', an' just keep slagging each other off.
 545 (Yeah) But if anybody else did it, it wouldn't be acceptable. (Mmm) Because it's
 546 not their place to say anythin'.
- 547 A Yeah, yeah. How does it, how did it feel when those, you were getting that, sort
 548 of, verbal abuse from people?
- 549 B I felt good, actually. I enjoyed it. (Right) Cos I thrived on the attention. (Mmm) I
 550 love attention, I'm so attention seeking it's (.) not even worth thinking about.
 551 (A:Laughs) Like, the only reason I wear makeup and walk through [a shopping
 552 centre] is because I want people to know I'm there. (Mmm) And it's stupid
 553 because it's going to get me beat up one day, but until that day 'appens, I'm still
 554 gonna keep doin' it. (Mmm) Because I want the attention. And when people call
 555 me stuff I can just keep walkin' an' smilin', because I've had it that often it
 556 doesn't hurt me no more I can just smile and laugh about it. (Right) And it's so
 557 good.
- 558 A Er, do you think you've developed a, sort of, a way of...?
- 559 B Immunisation, I'd say. (Right) I'm immune to it. It's like I talk a lot, I've been
 560 told an' the people that are really close to me can just blank me an' they don't
 561 listen to me at all an' I 'ave to shout at 'em and say, 'YOU WEREN'T
 562 LISTENING TO ME', an' they're just immune to ya. An' you get that with a lot

- 563 of things I suppose. (Yeah) An' that's just one of things I've developed I s'pose or
564 learned how to do. (Mmm) No learned is the wrong word, learnt.
- 565 A So how, how, what, how do you think you do that? Do you think you just...?
- 566 B Rise above it. (Yeah) You get called by people all the time like I 'ave for
567 everythin', you just learn not to listen to it. (Mmm) An' if you do 'ave to listen to
568 it, turn round and bitch back and then run (B: Laughs), cos otherwise you'll get
569 your 'ead kicked in. (Mmm=) Especially if it's someone bigger than you.
- 570 A Okay, just, just, just check out that before you went to college you were saying
571 that you, you, sort of, didn't have any, have any friends. Did y', was, was there
572 anybody who knew, who you'd, sort of, told that you were gay at school?
- 573 B Um, I told people, but with bein' in school it was the typical gossip, gossip,
574 gossip, it went from one person to the next, to the next, to the next. I mean, I only
575 told one person an' then the very next day, well actually no, it was the same day,
576 um, after two more lessons which was home-time, they were all going, 'errr, you
577 poof, you poof, you poof', an' they were all like, 'errr', an' everyone knew.
578 (Mmm) Because it was such a big thing in school. (Mmm=) It's, an' I even got
579 slack off some of the teachers. Which is why I'm actually in college because of
580 pupils an' teachers an' homophobic abuse an', (Mmm=) all sorts of different
581 things.
- 582 A Mmm, (.) so some of the teachers were, were verbally abusive to you?
- 583 B They have been in the past. (Yeah) They've said things like, um. I've put my hand
584 up in the past to answer a question, like you usually do in schools, an' they've
585 turned round an' asked everybody and left me 'til the very end if nobody can get it
586 right, an' even in some cases they've not even answered, asked me at all what I
587 think the answer is to this that and the other. An' they've gone and wrote it on the
588 blackboard and says, 'how come none of you knew it?' Or something like that.
589 (Right) Which is a bit hurtful but, (Mmm) I wa'n't really bothered.
- 590 A Were there any teachers that were supportive?
- 591 B No because I didn't really tell any of them. (Right) It was just in the gossip. Not
592 all teachers knew and the ones that did never actually said anythin', apart from the
593 odd few which you would get anyway. (Yeah) There's always the odd few in no
594 matter what, an' I think the odd few just didn't take it like everybody else did, or
595 most people did. Which is a bit, bit hard. (Mmm) But I, I carried on.
- 596 A An' you managed to do somethin' about that, sounds like somehow something,
597 (Yeah) was done about that.
- 598 B I went on strike in a way. I never actually picketed outside school or anythin', I
599 just said to them I wasn't going and I want to go to college and they refused and
600 refused and refused and in the end they just couldn't refuse no more because I
601 wasn't going to let, go back. I went back for two days and it was about after six or

- 602 seven months of being off. Probably not that long but it was a really long period
603 of being off an' come the second day, I never went back. (Right) I didn't like it.
- 604 A An' who, were there other people other than school involved at that, by that
605 point? //I'm just imagining...
- 606 B Yeah. Education welfare// officers. (Yeah) Social Services weren't really
607 involved because they're not so much involved in me now, (Right) although I'm
608 still on the at risk register. (Right) I'm not really involved in anythin' they do. I
609 'aven't got a social worker and if I 'ave I don't know it's name. (Yeah) I say 'it's'
610 because I don't know whether it's a man or a woman.
- 611 A Yeah. So w', were they, were you able to talk to the education welfare officers
612 about, kind of, why you didn't wanna be in school an'...?
- 613 B Oh yeah.
- 614 A What had happened?
- 615 B Yeah, definitely. Um, I 'ad one meetin' when the education welfare officer's
616 there, the deputy headmistress was there, this interpreter for my mum an' my
617 mum. An' my mum already knew I was gay, an' I turned round an' says, 'well I
618 don't care what your gonna say about this but, you probably don't know because
619 you've not done nothing about it, but I'm suffering homophobic abuse an' she
620 says, 'but how can you be, you're not gay', an' I says, 'but yes I am'. An' then,
621 um, I've kept a record of this an' I've got the interpreter an' my mum an' the
622 education welfare officer will back me up. She took, the deputy head turned round
623 and says, 'well I always suspected you were anyway', which is, I, I'd say that's
624 probably illegal, illegal because she's not allowed to make any speculations, is
625 she? Any teacher. (Don't know) So if it is, I really want to get 'er done for it. I
626 want some compensation for 'er saying that, cos it was, I could say it scarred me
627 although it probably didn't, but anything to get a bit of money these days.
- 628 A So the education welfare officer was supportive?
- 629 B They were and they weren't, um, she was really happy that I got into college but,
630 (.) well, they were supportive, yeah, but at first they weren't, they didn't want me
631 to go to college they were saying I couldn't, it wasn't allowed and they says it
632 couldn't ever be done although I knew it could, because it's happened in the past
633 with other fifteen year olds or year eleven students. So, (Mmm) I'm now in
634 college an' livin' each day as it comes.
- 635 A Good, good, an' have you worked anywhere, where you've ever experienced any
636 difficulties through being gay?
- 637 B I've worked but I've not worked anywhere were there's been difficulty, um, I've
638 had (.) nicknames because I'm gay, things like 'gay lord' and stuff but I knew that
639 was just jokes within the staff, kind of thing. It wasn't nothing harassin' or
640 anythin', it was, kind of, like, 'oh come 'ere gay lord, get this done that an' the
641 other'. (Right) And it wa'n't by the boss it was by the other staff joking around

- 642 an' everyone 'ad a nickname an' that was just what mine was. (Right) An' I even
 643 answered to it, so I wasn't really bothered about it. (Yeah) And the other thing
 644 was there was two members of staff there who were both straight but they were
 645 always having a prat about, when I was sat on one of the chairs after I'd finished
 646 work an' everythin', they'd always come up, sit next to me and start rubbing my
 647 leg an' saying, 'oh you're good lookin', an' this, that and the other. It was just a
 648 laugh but I've never had any problems as such.
- 649 B Okay, I s'pose, I s'pose before we move on to the next one, how, would, have you
 650 got any advice that you'd give to, sort of, a young gay, gay or bisexual person
 651 about, about coming out in school or college?
- 652 B Coming out in school or college?
- 653 A Mmm
- 654 B Um, in school, (.) I'd say make sure you know who your friends are first. (Mmm)
 655 Really make sure because you've got a lot of acquaintances but you can never
 656 have that many friends. I don't know anybody, even myself that can name five
 657 true friends on one, jus', on one hand name true friends. (Mmm) It's impossible.
 658 Or I say it is, it's probably not but I don't think it's (.) that common. So you've
 659 got to really make sure who you tell will not tell anybody else if that's what you
 660 want, but if you want everybody to know then tell them, but you've got to take
 661 into consid', consideration the risks, (Mmm) with your age an' if you've had a
 662 relationship or you're in a relationship an' if you're under eighteen then you've
 663 got to make sure that doesn't get out. (Mmm) Other than at home an', if it's
 664 gonna be safe at home, but you've gotta make sure that it dun't get out because all
 665 it takes is one person to say somethin' to someone like the headmaster who will,
 666 or even a member of staff who'll report it on. You've just got to be really careful.
 667 (Mmm) Saying somethin' to the wrong person can end up with, probably putting
 668 you in a foster home or somethin' like they wanted to do with me. (Right) You've
 669 just really gotta be careful of what you say and who you say it to.
- 670 A So what was that about, who, who wanted...?
- 671 B Um, social services wanted to put me in a foster home. An' if it wasn't for the
 672 person that I call my dad then I'd be in a foster home (Right) or I'd be with foster
 673 parents now.
- 674 A Was that to do with you being gay?
- 675 B Um, no that was for the fact that I was on the at risk register. Because social
 676 services didn't know I was gay an' they still don't now. I haven't told them, but
 677 that's because I've had no influence with them [involvement / input from them /
 678 contact?] recently. (Mmm) But if I did, I would tell them. (Yeah) But if they
 679 asked me if I'd ever had a relationship I'd say no. (Yeah) Just because even things
 680 that happen in the past can still get you into a lot of shit with social services.
 681 (Yeah) Whereas with, in a more relaxed environment between your friends an'
 682 acquaintances an' family, it's more a case of what's happenin' now and not

- 683 what's happened in the past. (Mmm) Well I s'pose there's grudges, but you can't
684 really do anythin' about the past, so.
- 685 A So do you think, I mean, it sounds like the age of consent is, any sort of legal
686 issues around the age of consent have got, have had quite a big effect on, on you
687 in a way. (Yeah) An' who you've been able to be open with and what you've been
688 able to say.
- 689 B Yeah I'd, I'd agree with that but I also think section twenty eight's had a big part
690 in it as well. (Mmm) They've, ever since that was enforced, schools can't help ya,
691 they can only hinder ya. (Mmm) I say that, maybe it wouldn't be hinderi', some
692 people it'd be a godsend for social services to be involved, it depends on the
693 situation and the person, but for me it was sheer hell. (Mmm) And things like
694 section twenty eight can really (.) set you back a peg or two an' they can make
695 you clam up an' if you thought, well basically for every step forward you took,
696 you'd be taking two steps back. (Mmm) So you'd never get anywhere. You'd end
697 up walkin' backwards everywhere, kind of thing.
- 698 A Because
- 699 B JOKE THERE! (B: Laughs)
- 700 A Yeah (A: Laughs). Because, er, (.) because teachers can't, or are not able to, to
701 talk to you about it or...?
- 702 B Not able, most of it. (Yeah) They can tell you about it an', well I'd say they could,
703 I don't know whether they can cos I don't know about it fully. All I know is what
704 I've gone through. Teachers couldn't tell me anything about it. They could only
705 (.) say (.) the facts, they couldn't promote it an' say, 'well, you're gay, good for
706 you', because they'd end up getting fired. (Mmm) All they could say I suppose
707 was, um, 'you're gay, do you know safe sex, do you know what safe sex is? an'
708 stuff like that. I think that's all they could say. (Right) I mean, you can't put
709 posters up in school sayin', 'come to our workshop if you think you're gay or
710 have queries about your sexuality', (Yeah) because it's just illegal. (Yeah, yeah)
711 So there's no way of gettin' help really. If you can't speak to your friends, an' you
712 can't speak to your family, (Mmm) you can't speak to school an' you don't know
713 about where all the youth groups is, you've got no other options. (Mmm)
714 Literally. (Mmm) Without gettin' yourself into trouble, (Yeah) or splitting the
715 family like up, or anythin' like, you can't do anythin' about it, you're stuck.
- 716 A What do you mean when you say get, without getting yourself into trouble?
- 717 B Well you'd 'ave to do something or tell, not do something you'd 'ave to tell
718 somebody that, like social services, I mean, I'm really pointing at social services
719 as bad, I mean, I know they're not because it's just the person, the social worker
720 but you'd have to tell somebody and (.) if you had to tell your parents and you
721 knew they weren't gonna like it then you'd be in trouble, if you had to tell school
722 they'd have to tell your parents an' bring in social services an' your parents 'll
723 still not like it so no matter what, your parents, (Mmm) really fall back into it.

- 724 (Yeah) An' if you can't tell them, you can't tell nobody because it's always gonna
725 get back to them.
- 726 A Do you think that that's, it's important that you've got the option of someone to
727 talk to about it?
- 728 B Definitely. (Mmm) Even a counsellor I'd say. (Yeah) If you've got somebody to
729 talk to it's gonna make it a hell of a lot easier for you. (Yeah) I mean, for me, I
730 was lucky in the fact that I never went through the problems most people go
731 through, of who to talk to an' when to talk to them, it was like jus', I don't know,
732 cos I couldn't really say what it'd be like for other people cos I never went
733 through it. So I couldn't really give out all this information, 'yes, you can do this,
734 you should do that, you can't do this, (Mmm) you shouldn't do that', because I've
735 never experienced it so, I (.) really don't know about it. (Yeah) I don't know what
736 the right thing to say would be. I can just assume and speculate that the right thing
737 to do would be to find a local group that you can go to, (Mmm) an' talk to them,
738 cos there always willing to help like [the LGB youth group] are for me.
- 739 A Yeah. Do you think it's, so do you think it's something that (.) was a good thing
740 for you that you did have someone to talk to?
- 741 B Definitely. (Mmm) Um, //if I didn't...
- 742 A How did it// help you?
- 743 B Well, if I didn't have no one to talk to, (.) I'd still be confused about many things,
744 um, (.) I s'pose it's just like if you don't, if you learn a new word. (Mmm) If
745 you've got no reference to a dictionary or another person that knows what the
746 word is, you're confused about it, you don't know what it means, you're never
747 gonna find out 'til you can tell, see somebody or find out somewhere.
- 748 A Mmm. So, partly about gettin', sort of, information an' learnin' about, (Yeah)
749 about it.
- 750 B I was just using the fact of a word as a example. (Yeah) I mean, it's totally
751 different but there are similarities there which are very great. (Mmm) I mean, you
752 can always work it out yourself what the word means but that could take ages, it
753 could take years if you didn't 'ave anything there to help ya. (Mmm) And that's,
754 it's the same with being gay, you've got to have somebody there to help you
755 through it because you've always been bar', well I say you, I mean anybody. But
756 people have always been bartered into the fact that they're gonna be straight.
757 (Mmm) Which I've said quite a lot but it's something I believe.
- 758 A Yeah, yeah, okay.
- 759 B Moving swiftly on (B: Laughs).
- 760 A Um, the next lot of questions are about sexual relationships or dating
761 relationships, (Mmm) or whatever. Have you ever had any relationships with
762 women?

- 763 B Yes I have but they weren't really what I'd class as relationships, um, other
 764 people would but I class them as intimate friendships. (Mmm) Because I never
 765 really fancied the person or the persons. I just went out with them for the sake of
 766 going out with them and to keep peace between everyone.
- 767 A Mmm, okay, and how did, how did that, kind of, make you feel?
- 768 B Um, I felt weird (.) about it in my head but, (.) an' I felt it wasn't right for me but
 769 I also felt that it was right. I don't think I could really say much more than that, I
 770 just felt it was right an' it was what I should do.
- 771 A Mmm, at the time?
- 772 B Yeah, at the time. Because I didn't have any other options open to me.
- 773 A An', an' were they, were they, those any of those relationships, sexual
 774 relationships or...?
- 775 B No.
- 776 A Right and, are you talkin', sort of, how old were you when you were...?
- 777 B Um, very young. (Mmm) Um, up to the age of, the last women that I went out
 778 with was, or girl was when I was, (.) I think I was twelve. (Right) An' that lasted
 779 for a year an' I only saw 'er three weeks within that year because she was a visit',
 780 no two years, sorry, but I only saw her for six weeks. For a year, I saw 'er three
 781 weeks a year. (Yeah) That was only because she was coming down to visit us in
 782 [a small seaside town] from [a city]. (Right) So I saw 'er six weeks in total over a
 783 period of two years but I sti', still classed it as going out with 'er in a way.
- 784 A Yeah, yeah, okay, an' can you tell me about any same-sex relationships you've
 785 had?
- 786 B Um, yeah I've had quite a few, um, (.) a lot of them have been hard on me
 787 because (.) I've, they've turned round and ended up going out with women. I've
 788 been out with three people in total, two of the three have turned round and
 789 dumped me for another person or a woman. (Right) And they've always, an' then
 790 two 'ave gone to another woman even if they didn't dump me for a woman in the
 791 first place. They've still gone to a woman, (Right) afterwards which has made it
 792 hard because it makes me think, 'well, how can they say they're gay?' Cos I don't
 793 really believe in bisexuality, not very much anyway. (Right) Because you can't, I
 794 s'pose it is possible, but you can't really (.) have (.) both. (Mmm) It's like, I
 795 s'pose, um, (.) I don't, well I don't think there's anything to compare it to really.
 796 You just can't have both I don't think.
- 797 A So, sort of, what were those relationships like whi', whilst they were, (.) were
 798 going on?
- 799 B Um, fun and happy, I'm, (Mmm) one was very expensive cos it was constant
 800 phone calls to Switzerland. (Right) (A: Laughs) And plane fares to Switzerland.

801 A Oh right.

802 B Things like that, which was very good, I mean. Um, they were really good, um, I
803 s'pose you could call 'em (.) the best times of your life. (Mmm) Um, because
804 while they're goin' on, you're enjoying yourself. You're with someone that you
805 want to be with, not someone that you've got to be with, like your parents, you've
806 got to be with them when you're young because it's what you've got to do.
807 (Yeah) Cos the law says so but, when you're in a relationship it's because you
808 want to be with the person that you're with 'em. (Mmm) And that's what makes it
809 interestin'.

810 A Did it make, being in a relationship with a man, did it, did it change any of your
811 feelings about being gay?

812 B No not really, um, (.) it was weird at first because like, (.) I was still trying to
813 force myself into being straight. (Mmm) An' saying to myself things like, 'oh this
814 is weird, this is another man here, this isn't just (.) a woman or another person,
815 this is man an' I'm going out with this person'. An' that felt really weird but, (.) I
816 think anythin' that you do for the first time feels weird. (Mmm) I s'pose it'd be
817 like people, er, an example that comes to mind is, my granma used to run a guest
818 house an' she 'ad this woman come over from Russia, um, she was, an' I don't
819 whether the word's immigrant, or no, emigrate is where you, yeah, she was
820 immi', she immigrated from Russia and, um, she stayed in one of my granma's
821 rooms and my granma came in in the morning to make the bed an' everythin', like
822 you do with all guest houses, an' realised that the bed hadn't been slept in. It was
823 cos this woman had never slept in a bed before, she didn't know what to do.
824 (Mmm) She didn't know that you got under the covers and in it, she just sat in a
825 chair or on the floor, I don't know what, we don't know what she did but, (Mmm)
826 we know she didn't sleep in or on the bed an' we had to explain to 'er, an' it was
827 just weird for her. (Mmm) Which, anything new is weird I s'pose.

828 A Yeah, yeah, okay. (.) What about, I, the other, sort of, set of questions are, are,
829 kind of, about whether you've had any, kind of, sexual, casual sexual
830 relationships or one night stands so, sort of, different from the relationships
831 you've been in?

832 B Um, I've never had any one night stands, actually, tell a lie, I have, but they've
833 been with friends who I speak to anyway an' it's always been consentin' anyway.
834 (Mmm) It's never been forced on me or anythin'. (Mmm) Um, sexual
835 relationships, um, I've had (.) two an' that was the first two that both left me for a
836 woman. (Right) And, (.) since then, (.) I've just, sort of, like turned round an'
837 thought sex isn't worth the hassle. (Right) It's not really worth it because you
838 either have sex on the very first night you meet them an' then what 'ave you got
839 left to look forward to? (Mmm) Nothing, because you get bored with people quite
840 easily, everyone does I suppose. (Mmm) Or, (.) you don't have sex with them at
841 all until after ages, like a month or so maybe two, three months, as long as you
842 like, the longer the better I'd say, cos it gives you somethin' to keep together for.
843 (Mmm) Which I think's a lot better for people. (Right) An' I think sex is over-
844 rated anyway. There's nothing good about it really. (A & B: Laugh) I mean, you

- 845 can do just the same with a hand as what you can with somebody else. (A & B:
846 Laugh) (Right) WELL IT'S TRUE!
- 847 A Okay, (.) okay, (.) right. Next lot of questions are, are, sort of, around coping an'
848 support an', an' with, I mean, you've mentioned that, bits and pieces about, about
849 this already so, I mean, we can cons'...
- 850 B Flick through.
- 851 A Flick through bits we've already covered. .But, um, I guess, thinking about, um,
852 in general, some people experience difficulties coming to terms with being gay,
853 an' some people experience all sorts of things that are to do with how other
854 people react to them being gay, so that might be, kind of, prejudice or, you know,
855 verbal or physical abuse or (.) feeling frightened or worried or whatever, yeah?
856 Um, (.) .thinking about yourself, um, how do you think you, you've coped with
857 any of those sorts of things if you've experienced them?
- 858 B Um, I've experienced, um, quite a few things, and to cope with them I usually
859 bottle things up, to cope with anythin'. (Mmm) I bottle things up, an' then, when
860 I'm at breaking point, I lash out at anybody for the slightest thing. (Right) But
861 that's just my way of coping. Rather than talking every little thing through with
862 somebody. (Right) Just keep it to meself an' then when I'm at complete bursting
863 point, I talk it through with somebody that I know I can shout at and they'll not be
864 bothered. (Yeah) Like my mum or a counsellor, preferably a counsellor to your
865 mum because your mum wouldn't necessarily like being shouted at by ya. (Yeah)
866 An' then knowing I can completely explode in front of them, an' then knowing
867 I'll not 'ave to do that, not 'ave to do that for another three or four months
868 because I'll not be at breaking point 'til then.
- 869 A Mmm, okay.
- 870 B It makes it a lot easier on ya.
- 871 A You mentioned before that, that, that being able to talk at some point, or having
872 the opportunity to talk to people is, has been help for you?
- 873 B Yeah it has, um, but talking to people I don't, (.) I don't really like talkin' to
874 people as such because I was always forced to do it by my mum becuae she used
875 to get bored an' stuff. So used to 'ave to sit an' talk to 'er. (Mmm) And because
876 of that, I hate talkin' now. (Right) The less I can talk about anythin', the better for
877 me. (Okay) So talkin's not really an influence in my life unfortunately.
- 878 A Mmm. The other thing that I think you mentioned earlier was, sort of, when you
879 had, in the past, had, sort of, people making comments or whatever, that you were
880 able to, sort of, rise above it an', an' think, 'well I don't care what you say, kind
881 of thing. Is that something that you think that you, that you use to, sort of, cope in
882 a way?
- 883 B Yeah, um, (.) I've completely lost the question, sorry (A & B: Laugh).

- 884 A No, I was just picking up on something you said earlier (Mmm=) about, walking
 885 through a shopping centre or somethin', an', an' people making, makin' abusive
 886 comments (Yeah=) towards you, um, that you, you were able to just, just to, sort
 887 of, smile an' walk off an', (Yeah) ignore it in a way, not let it get to you. Is that
 888 somethin' that you, you've, sort of, developed in a way as a way of copin', or
 889 have you always been able to do that or...?
- 890 B I think I've developed it. (Yeah) Because, um, I wouldn't even say I've developed
 891 it at all, because I wouldn't even say I've got it, it's just the fact that it's the
 892 attention. (Mmm) The fact that I'm there and people are noticin' me. (Mmm)
 893 Whereas if I was to walk through the street in just normal clothes, normal I say,
 894 jeans an' T-shirt or somethin', (Mmm) nobody's gonna take a second look at ya.
 895 (Right) An' if they do, it'll only be to make sure that you probably wasn't
 896 somebody they already knew or some, some little thing but, if you're done up an'
 897 completely glamorous an' you walk through the streets, people 'ave to take more
 898 than just a second look, they look back an' like, an' then look back again an' they
 899 keep lookin' back an' it (.) enhances the fact that you're there. (Mmm) Which is
 900 what I like an', I wouldn't say I like that in college, there's a time an' a place for
 901 it. I mean, walking down the street isn't necessarily the place for it at all but, it's
 902 better than doin' it in somewhere like college or home. (Mmm) [coughs] And, I
 903 mean, it's good because it's the attention I like but then there's also the down side
 904 of, um, the chance that somebody will beat me up or abusive comments. If I get
 905 abusive comments that's when I ignore them or (.) turn round an' say nasty things
 906 but I don't necessarily turn round and say it to them, I say it to myself about them.
 907 (Mmm) Like in my head an' like, (B: Laughs) 'like you'd really know what I am,
 908 as if you know me'. (Mmm) An' like I do things, other things like I used dye my
 909 hair every colour under the sun, an' I used to sit at a bus stop an' talk to all the
 910 babies. Even if I wasn't gonna get a bus, I'd just do it. Just to prove that no matter
 911 what I look like, (Mmm) I can, I'm still the same person. (Yeah) I can have bright
 912 pink hair, but I'm still the same person that I am with mouse brown hair which is
 913 my normal, natural colour. (Mmm) An' that's just somethin', like a statement that
 914 I 'ave to make, even though I've not said, 'oh this is a statement that I'm makin''.
 915 (Yeah) It's just somethin' that I believe in, no matter what I look like or what I
 916 do, I'm still the same person, an' people can't comment or criticise me until they
 917 know me.
- 918 A Mmm. What, can you tell me about any, sort of, (.) support that you've had in,
 919 um, from (.) people other than, I guess, your, your family an' friends? (Um) You
 920 mentioned here, //or...?
- 921 B Yeah, // here, books (Yeah) an' computers, the internet. I've had a lot of support
 922 but I think the main places a:re places like here. (Mmm) Um, where the, where
 923 you're surrounded by gay people, even a pub I s'pose but pubs are a bit tacky.
 924 (Mmm) An', they're more, people goin' pull, trying to pull an' you can't really sit
 925 an' talk with people there really. I s'pose a pub is a, is a place in a way because
 926 you're still being around other gay people. (Mmm) An' if you're with friends it's
 927 even better. (Yeah, yeah=) So I think all places really where there are, um, other
 928 gay people an' lesbians an' bisexuals an' everythin', so long as you're with (.) the

- 929 crowd that you feel right with, I think that's support enough in its', that's support
930 in itself.
- 931 A Mmm. So the commun', the gay, I mean it's quite a broad term isn't it, (Mmm)
932 but the gay community, the pubs and clubs, (Yeah) have, have been a source of
933 support, in a sense that they've enabled you to, sort of, just mix with, (Yeah)
934 people like yourself?
- 935 B It's like, you've got to. It's like a puppy, my puppy I can't, if I didn't introduce,
936 I'm always referring to things, (B: Laughs) I'm sorry.
- 937 A (A: Laughs) No that's okay.
- 938 B But, if I didn't introduce my puppy to other dogs an', before it was such an' such
939 year old, years old, then when it comes into contact with dogs it'll get nasty an'
940 violent, (Yeah) because it's never seen 'em before. Or if it hasn't seen loads of
941 people or cars, like when we got the one we've got now, um, I took it for a walk
942 on [name] Road which is a busy road, and it used to run behind my legs and try
943 and go into the wall, because I used to walk on the left hand side of the, right
944 hand side of the road and you're supposed to hold the dog on your left side so it
945 was next to the road. (Mmm) An' it used to get really scared and try and run on
946 the inside of me because it was scared of the cars an' well it was mainly the
947 buses, but still scared of plenty of cars an', it was cos it had never experienced
948 'em. (Mmm) You've got to experience it an' socialise with your own peer group
949 an' your own things, (Mmm) an' stop yourself bein' afraid.
- 950 A An' what, what about this place cos, what sort of support has it provided you.
951 Has, has that been the same thing about being able to meet young //gay people?
- 952 B Yeah// and the workers, Sarah and Claire, I can talk to them about anythin', even
953 if it's nothing to do with me being gay I can sit and talk about it, an' they're jus'
954 willing to be there and talk to ya regardless of whatever it is, or, (Mmm) whatever
955 time it is, so long as it's within openin' hours, they're there to talk to you. (Yeah)
956 Which makes it easier for you because they're not biased with them both being
957 gay themselves.
- 958 A Yeah. Did you, you, I think you mentioned earlier that your, your dad, sort of,
959 introduced you to here. Is that how you find, found out about it?
- 960 B Yeah, I'd 'ave never 'ave known this place was here. (Mmm) Well I would 'ave
961 because somebody in school used to come here. (Right) Who was straight but
962 they used to come to an open access group. But I'd never contemplated comin'.
963 (Right) But if it wasn't for my dad I wouldn't 'ave actually come, I don't think. I
964 would 'ave known about the place an' known what it was but, (Yeah) I would
965 never 'ave come.
- 966 A Right. Why do you think that is?
- 967 B Well I, I didn't know that it was, they did, er, an LGB group. I just thought it was
968 open access an', (Mmm) things like that. I never knew, I mean.

- 969 A Was it hard comin' for the first time, even, I mean when you knew there was a
970 lesbian, gay bisexual group here?
- 971 B No not really, um, I tried to fit in. (Yeah) And I embarrassed myself (.) by makin'
972 myself look (.) funny or sound funny or just makin' things out to be comical. Just
973 to make myself fit in with people but now I don't have to but at first it was weird
974 an' I had to do things like that, or I feel I did. (Mmm) Just so that I was in the
975 crowd an' talking to people, I didn't want to be sat all alone bored an' not talking
976 to anybody an' then never comin' again because nobody 'ud speak to me an'
977 wallowin' in me own grief an' stuff. (Yeah) I didn't believe in that, I thought,
978 'I've come here to meet people, I might as well do that'.
- 979 A Yeah. You mentioned just a bit earlier, you were talking about Sarah an', and,
980 um, Claire that they were able to, sort of, or you felt comfortable talking to them
981 because, partly because they were gay themselves. (Yeah) Do you think it's
982 important that people who run these sorts of groups are gay or //lesbians, gay...?
- 983 B Um,// no I don't, it's not crucial but it would help. (Mmm) It'd make it easier for
984 you to understand, //um
- 985 A For// them to understand your needs?
- 986 B Yeah. (Yeah) But I suppose, um, if they've got experience of things like that, not
987 necessarily experience in the fact that they've done it before, but experience in the
988 fact that they've probably socialised with a lot of gay people. (Yeah) Then that'd
989 help. I think it'd be good if somebody who was straight worked here. Because
990 you'd get a full view on what the options are and everythin'. (Yeah) Although I
991 don't think it'd be agreed to by a lot of other people. A lot of other people 'ud
992 really beg to differ about it but, //that's just my own personal opinion.
- 993 A Right, right, yeah. Have you ever, have you ever, sort of, been offered or forced in
994 any way to seek support or to have support that, that you didn't want to?
- 995 B Yeah. Um, I had to go see a counsellor when I was younger and I had to do that
996 and I hated it. I, it used to make me wet the bed, I used to wee the bed whenever, I
997 was a lot younger then. (A & B: Laugh) (Yeah) Um, whenever I was like really
998 scared or excited or very frightened, I'd wet the bed. And it was always a couple
999 of nights before the session, I'd wet the bed an' then they changed it to, from
1000 monthly to fortnightly then to weekly an' it used to be like every night I was
1001 wettin' the bed again, after I'd stopped for a couple of years. (Right) So I was
1002 really SCARED about goin' there. (Right) An' I hated it.
- 1003 A And who, who sort of made you go?
- 1004 B Social services, again. (B: Laughs) (Right) Again.
- 1005 A And what, why were you, why did they feel that you needed to go?
- 1006 B Um, they said it was beca', well, it was because when I was younger, I was about
1007 six, I was abused sexually by one of my mum's husbands and it all came to light

1008 when I was (.) ten, eleven. (Right) And they all said you've got to do this, that an'
 1009 the other an' you've got to go into it, an' socia', you've got to go see a shrink,
 1010 who they called a counsellor, I still say shrink. (B: Laughs) (Right) And things
 1011 like that, and they made me do it, an' I didn't want to. I used to (.) enjoy it
 1012 actually because if I missed the bus for school, um, [coughs] what I used to do is,
 1013 they used to pick me up from home take me to his place where he used to work
 1014 then take me to school, an' if I did, if I hid behind the door or anything, cos mum
 1015 would still be asleep in bed, an' if I didn't get the bus and he went to come an'
 1016 pick me up and I didn't answer the door to him then he'd drive off and I'd get the
 1017 day off school and say he never came (A & B: Laugh) (Right) It was really good,
 1018 crafty though.

1019 A (A: Laughs) Okay, (.) we're gettin' there.

1020 B Hoorrah!

1021 A Last section. Um, it's just, um, just a set of questions that are about, kind of, how
 1022 much contact you, you have had in the past with gay men, lesbians, bisexuals. An'
 1023 also, sort of, how much lesbianism, homosexuality or whatever has been talked
 1024 about, I guess, as well. Um, so (.) have you known anyone who was gay while,
 1025 when you were growing up? Did you //know...?

1026 B No, // not until I came to [name of a city]. (Right) Before that, well actually yes, I
 1027 have. Um, I was about five an' mum had this friend who was a transsexual who
 1028 was born a man an' fancied men but always dressed up as women but hadn't had
 1029 the sex change because it was, she couldn't afford it. (Yeah) So, I suppose that is,
 1030 but I never saw 'er as a man, I saw her as a woman. (Right) So I never class it as
 1031 gay or lesbian. (Right, yeah) But I s'pose that does come under the criteria, in a
 1032 way.

1033 A I mean, do you think that, do you think that, I mean, if you never, sort of, thought
 1034 of that person as, as being gay...?

1035 B No. (Um) I always thought of the person as being straight. (Yeah) Because they
 1036 want to be a woman, they can't afford to be a woman physically. (Mmm) But they
 1037 are mentally, an' it's mentally what matters I think.

1038 A Yeah. So not knowing anyone who was gay when you were growing up. Do you
 1039 think that had any affect on you?

1040 B Um, no not really.

1041 A An' I, I mean in terms of, kind of, I s'pose then when you started to wonder if you
 1042 might be gay?

1043 B Oh right, um, (.) yeah, in a way because I never had anyone who was gay that I
 1044 could talk to about it. (Mmm) Um, but when I was younger, considering I'm not
 1045 very old at the moment. (Yeah) Um, I didn't actually know what the word gay
 1046 meant anyway. It was one of the things, you always got called it in school.
 1047 (Mmm) 'You're a lesbian, you're gay', but nobody really knew what it meant.

- 1048 (Yeah) It, everyone said it, I mean, I always had it said to me, 'you're gay', but
1049 nobody knew what it meant, even I didn't.
- 1050 A Yeah. So do you think, I mean, do you think that if you had known someone who
1051 was gay you might have had more of an idea about, (Yeah) wha', what it meant to
1052 be gay?
- 1053 B Yeah, I think it would (Yeah) have been easier.
- 1054 A An' that, that would've made it easier for you?
- 1055 B Yeah, a lot easier.
- 1056 A Mmm. Were you aware, or are you aware, I s'pose as well, um, of, of gay people
1057 in the media, you know music, films, T.V., (Um) etc.? Papers?
- 1058 B Yeah, I am but not the political aspect of it like, more the music, David Bowie's
1059 bisexual I think. (Yeah) Um, Boy George, Lily Savage, things like that. (Yeah)
1060 Your comedians and stuff, but your political side I'm know, I know nothin' about.
- 1061 A No. Do, do, were you aware of those, of, of gay people in the media when you
1062 were younger?
- 1063 B Yeah, it was religion to sit and watch Lily Savage when it was on a weekly show,
1064 cos it was on weekly every night at night time wa'n't it, really late. (Yeah) An'
1065 she was doin' the Blackpool thing. (Yeah) An' we used to video it an' sit an'
1066 watch it after the cartoons had finished when I'd come home from school. It was
1067 religion to do that.
- 1068 A Right. So that was quite important. Whe', (Yeah) do you think that was a, a
1069 positive (.) thing then?
- 1070 B Yeah it was because mum never saw Lily as gay because she's not really, or, I
1071 don't know the bloke who plays 'er, (Mmm) um, but it is a man dressed as a
1072 woman that is, in a way, some way of, a sort of gay kind of thing. (Mmm) It's
1073 nothing to do with being gay really, but it's associated with gay people, (Mmm)
1074 an' lesbians, an' bisexuals, an' transgender, an' transsexuals, AN' the list goes on.
- 1075 A (A: Laughs) Yeah, okay. Was homosexuality talked about at home at all. I, I
1076 guess, I'm thinking before, before you came //out?
- 1077 B No.// (No?) Never. It was always (.) my mum who was talked about. She liked to
1078 talk about 'erself. (Right) An' talkin' about me just never came into the equation.
- 1079 A What, what about, kind of, generally, was, was it ever, kind of, mentioned, I
1080 dunno, if something was in the papers or...?
- 1081 B No because it was never ever spoke about. (Alright) If it was in the papers, the
1082 page was turned over an' ignored. (Right) Um, //um.
- 1083 A So it was, // sort of, almost deliberately not spoken about?

- 1084 B Yeah. I mean, I think that's probably because the family, my granma's just
 1085 recently said something to me that, um, cos she says it's pretty obvious that I'm
 1086 gay, an' I said, 'why?' An' she said, because when I was younger I was so
 1087 effeminate. (Yeah) An' she says, 'an' that's why it was never spoken about,
 1088 because we didn't want to inflict it on you in case you weren't'. (Yeah) They still
 1089 think, um, it's not in the genes an' it's, you're pressurised into it, an' they think
 1090 that but, (Right) I believe different, nobody really knows, I don't think.
- 1091 A No, no, okay, so it, generally speaking, it wasn't talked about in any //way?
- 1092 B No.//
- 1093 A Do you think it would've, I mean, are you, do you think it would have made any
 1094 difference if it were, either...?
- 1095 B No, because it got talked about later on in life, (Right) when I got older, (Okay)
 1096 an' that was at my discretion so...
- 1097 A The, er, the next question I was gonna ask you was about, um, you know, whether
 1098 it was talked about much in school? An', I guess, we've already talked a bit about
 1099 that, //an' the implications of clause twenty eight.
- 1100 B No, it was never talked about in school other than people// sayin', 'oh you're gay',
 1101 but that's just the students an' that was the typical thing that everyone says
 1102 anyway //even if you're not gay.
- 1103 A As a, sort of, // as a term of abuse, //rather than...?
- 1104 B Yeah, // bullyin'. (Yeah) Instead of beatin' you up they'd call you somethin' an'
 1105 people used to say, 'oh, sticks and stones my break my bones but names will
 1106 never hurt me'. (Yeah) An' that's just a load of bull, I think names can 'urt more
 1107 than, (Mmm) someone, I'd rather someone thump me than call me summat.
 1108 (Yeah) If it was summat really vindictive.
- 1109 A Mmm. Do you think it would be helpful if, if, if it, if homosexuality was talked
 1110 about in schools, I mean, //in schools?
- 1111 B Yeah, //it would.
- 1112 A By teachers// in classes.=
- 1113 B =Um, in sex education I think it'd be better, not in general. (Mmm) Because, if
 1114 you put posters up they'd probably get ripped down by a lot of people. (Right)
 1115 But if it was in sex education they couldn't avoid it, it'd be a lot easier for a lot of
 1116 students. Because they know that they could still go and talk to the teacher.
 1117 (Yeah=) Or, hopefully talk to the teacher without worrying about the
 1118 consequences of talking.
- 1119 A Yeah, (.) okay, um, an' how did you then first make contact with other lesbians,
 1120 gay men an' bisexuals. Was it on the internet or...?

- 1121 B Yeah on the internet first, um, I couldn't go into the lesbian channels because I
 1122 was a bloke, um, it was like typical thing but, um, (.) I used to go into the gay
 1123 channels an' sit an' chat an' stuff, but at first I never even knew it was other
 1124 people I always thought it was the computer, as I said. (Mmm) An' I thought, it
 1125 sounds weird to think it, but I'd never had any influence [experience] with
 1126 computers before then. (Mmm) An' that's when I first moved to [name of a city]
 1127 that I got influenced with computers an' the internet an' started contemplating
 1128 things like that.
- 1129 A What about when you first, sort of, met, like nor' people other than on the
 1130 internet?
- 1131 B Um, that was here. (Right) I'd never seen anyone before here, well I had at [LGB
 1132 support service] but I hadn't seen anyone or known anyone that was gay,
 1133 (Mmm=) personally.
- 1134 A Okay. What about now, where do you, kind of, tend to socialise. Is it, is it, sort of,
 1135 do you tend //to, sort of...?
- 1136 B I don't.//
- 1137 A You don't?
- 1138 B Other than here. (Right) Um, I'd rar', I rarely go out to the pub because I've not
 1139 got the money for it an', (Mmm) I'd probably end up goin' out on me own, um, I
 1140 don't go round friend's houses or friends come round my house, cos mum won't
 1141 let 'em come round my house. (Right) Unfortunately an' //things like that...
- 1142 A Is that cos// they're gay or cos...?
- 1143 B No, anybody, any friends, she likes the house kept personal and private. (Mmm) I
 1144 s'pose it's (.) pretty reasonable respect in a way.
- 1145 A Yeah. So when you do go out, would you, would you tend to go to a gay place or
 1146 straight place or either or...?
- 1147 B Um, either, I'd say. (Right) More, more commonly gay. (Mmm) Because I
 1148 wouldn't feel pressured about anythin'. (Mmm) I'd know that there were other
 1149 gay people around me an' I wouldn't end up goin', 'oh he's fit, but he's straight'.
 1150 (B: Laughs) (Yeah) I mean, I wouldn't have the problem with things like that. I
 1151 could go into a gay pub and say, 'oh he's fit, and I know he's not straight, or I
 1152 hope he's not anyway'.
- 1153 A Yeah, okay. Just thinking about, um, (.) I gue', I guess, thinking about the pubs
 1154 and clubs, the gay pubs and clubs. What, how do you think they are in terms of
 1155 younger people, how, how, how, how do you think younger people find them?
- 1156 B Um, (.) what's the word, um, (.) I can't think of the word very, (.) I CAN'T
 1157 THINK OF THE WORD, um...
- 1158 A Describe.

- 1159 B It's weird to describe cos the word is the describing bit, an', (Right) hard to go
 1160 into, I'd say. (Right) You can't really, you know you want to an' it's easier, it's
 1161 really easy to walk in, but to walk in and not, not know anybody prior to that is
 1162 hard for you. (Mmm) The thought, ' well what are people gonna do in there, what
 1163 is it like, (Mmm) is someone gonna come up to me and just rape me or
 1164 somethin''. (Mmm) Because you hear so many rumours.
- 1165 A So, quite frightening in a way?
- 1166 B Yeah, that's the word, FRIGHTENING. (A & B: Laugh)
- 1167 A Or intimidating?
- 1168 B Yes.
- 1169 A Okay, an' what about, I mean, I, I guess, I'm thinking about you saying that you,
 1170 you'd, sort of, fairly sure that you were gay when you were, (.) .I don't know,
 1171 quite a lot under the, //the, sort of...
- 1172 B Age of// consent.
- 1173 A a) Age of consent, and b) age that you can go into a pub I s'pose. Um,...
- 1174 B Which are both the same. (Yeah) Although they're not are they? //No you can go
 1175 into a pub an' drink coke.
- 1176 A Well I think you can drink, // yeah that's right. So, I mean, ho', how, how does
 1177 that work in terms of the, the gay pubs and clubs round here, do they...?
- 1178 B Um, they let me go in an' drink coke. (Right) The nightclubs won't, but I used to
 1179 go in with my mum or somebody older than me and then they'd get me in, but I
 1180 don't really do that anymore cos I don't really nuke, like nightclubs so...
- 1181 A Mmm, yeah. Cos I just, I was just I was wondering, cos I was thinking, if you
 1182 couldn't get in to gay pubs and clubs cos you were too young, (.) then there would
 1183 be, would be basically, sort of, places like this...
- 1184 B Yeah, and gay cafes.
- 1185 A Yeah. Are there gay cafes in [name of a city]?
- 1186 B Yeah, there is one. I don't know where it is though. (A & B: Laugh) (Right) I've
 1187 never been into it but, (Right) there's I s'pose there is places like that, (Mmm) It's
 1188 just knowing where they are.
- 1189 A Yeah, yeah.
- 1190 B An' I'm busting [Needed to go to the toilet].
- 1191 A Are you, (A: Laughs) //shall we pause then?
- 1192 B Are we far?//

- 1193 A No we're nearly, //we're not far.
- 1194 B Well, well// I'll wait.
- 1195 A Okay, okay. Are there any, are there any ideas about places that don't exist on, but
1196 for, I mean, sort of, places for gay people to go an' socialise or anything like that,
1197 that don't exist now but you think would be a good idea?
- 1198 B Um, yeah, public places. (Mmm) I think a bit of everythin', like everythin''s
1199 segregated these days and there's things for everyone but there isn't things for
1200 others like in Manchester there's a gay shopping centre, I think that probably 'ud
1201 be a good idea round here because you wouldn't have to worry about goin' in an'
1202 buying gay literature and goin' to, like a book shop, goin' to Dillons, you don't
1203 really want to pick out a piece of gay literature an' go to the cash, the cash desk
1204 with it. (Mmm) Whereas if it was a gay shop then you wouldn't be so bothered
1205 about it, (Mmm) things like that. They're like, they're available in Manchester,
1206 but not here.
- 1207 A Mmm. So, more, sort of, a variety of, of different, kind of, (Yeah) //services?
- 1208 B Soci',// sociable things an', (Yeah) maybe a gay cinema or somethin', even if
1209 there's only one screen, (Yeah) an' they only showed like one film a night it'd
1210 still be a gay cinema. You'd probably get, you'd probably want a lot of people,
1211 you'd probably have a lot of people wanting hundreds of back rows. (A & B:
1212 Laugh) (Yeah) But more back rows than any other, kind of thing, but, (A: Laughs)
1213 something like that.
- 1214 A Yeah, okay. Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you'd like to talk
1215 about?
- 1216 B Not that I think of, not that I can think of no.
- 1217 A Okay, one last question.
- 1218 B Okay.
- 1219 A I guess, (A: Laughs) um, what made you think about (.) agreeing to do this
1220 interview or saying that you'd like to do this interview. Was it the...?
- 1221 B Attention again.
- 1222 A Attention?
- 1223 B Attention, everything I do, or try to do falls back on attention. (Okay, yeah) Also
1224 the fact that it's somethin' for me to do, I can talk to somebody, although I hate
1225 talkin', it's, gives me somethin' to do other than sit out there with people whether
1226 it's gonna be dead or, an' if it's gonna be dead then what are you gonna do, sit out
1227 there bored. (Yeah) An' it's give me something other to do.
- 1228 A Okay. Would it have made any difference if I were straight, would you have felt
1229 //less inclined to...?

1230 B Well, I didn't even know// you were gay until I read that consent form, so...

1231 A Right. But you knew before you, sort of, we did the interview, yeah?

1232 B Well, yeah, but it wouldn't 'ave made a difference, no.

1233 A Right. Okay, yeah, interesting, I just wondered. Okay, go for a wee!

1234 B Yeah!`

Interview 5
Dave
Interview Date
3/3/99

- 1 A Okay. People describe their sexuality in lots of ways, how would you describe
2 yours?
- 3 B Gay.
- 4 A Gay. Sorry.
- 5 B It's alright.
- 6 A Kicking you (A & B: Laugh). Um, okay can you, can you tell me roughly how old
7 you were when you first realised that you might be gay?
- 8 B Fourteen, fifteen.
- 9 A Right, an', I guess, people experience a range of different thoughts and feelings
10 when they, when they first begin to, sort of, question their sexuality. Can you
11 remember how you felt at the time, and what thoughts went through your mind?
- 12 B Um, I was actually going out with a lad at school when I was fifteen, that lasted
13 for about two an' a 'alf years at school and outta school as well.
- 14 A Right. So d', did you go fairly quickly into a relationship? Was, was the
15 relationship the thing that, sort of, made you start...?=
16 B =Yeah.
- 17 A Made you think...?=
18 B =Yeah, questioning me sexuality.
- 19 A Yeah. So you went quite quickly from questioning it into the relationship.
- 20 B Mmm, yeah.
- 21 A And how did that that feel?
- 22 B Mmm, (.) it was alright, er, (Right) It was just one of those things that 'appened. I
23 felt alright at the time and 'e felt alright at time, and we discussed it and it was
24 just a spontaneous thing that 'appened, (Right) and that was it.
- 25 A H', had you been, sort of, questioning your sexuality before y, you meet this
26 person or...?
- 27 B Um, (.) yeah I was, was probably questioning it (.) not very often and not with
28 anybody it was just, just me and that was it.
- 29 A Yeah, and so you were wondering yourself?
- 30 B Mmm, yeah.
- 31 A And how did you feel about that, did you feel okay about the thought that you
32 might be gay?

- 33 B Yeah.
- 34 A Or, w', were you worried about it?
- 35 B No. It was fine.
- 36 A Okay, so, so that was okay, 'nd you went fairly quickly into this relationship,
37 (Mmm) that lasted for quite a while?
- 38 B Yeah.
- 39 A Okay, do you think that you:r, your feelings about being gay have changed over,
40 over time?
- 41 B Mmm, they've been stronger.
- 42 A Right, well how do you mean they've been stronger?
- 43 B Um, first relationship when I was fifteen lasted two and a half years and then I
44 didn't come out to anybody or any of my friends or anything until I was nineteen.
45 (Right) So it was a long period of time. Um, then just read magazines and done
46 stuff like that so...
- 47 A Right, so when you were, sort of, in this relationship with this person that, that,
48 the first relationship that you had with a, with a man, (Mmm) were you having to
49 keep it quiet? You said you hadn't come out to your friends.
- 50 B Yeah.
- 51 A So it was, was it something that you kept just between, (Mmm) the two of you?
- 52 B Yeah it was a school friend at school. (Right) Same age as me and same class.
- 53 A Right. So you, you just kept it, you kept it from everybody else.
- 54 B Yeah.
- 55 A All the other people in school and...
- 56 B Yeah.
- 57 A What about your, your family an'...
- 58 B No, kept it from them as well.
- 59 A Right. How was that?
- 60 B Mmm, (.) I think if, if they would have known at the time, I think it, they would
61 have thought it was just a phase, and they still don't know about it now, even
62 though he used to come round and sleep the night and all stuff like that.
- 63 A Right, your family, is this?

- 64 B No, me first boyfriend at school. (Right) He used to come round my parents',
65 (Right) and stay the night, so...
- 66 A So, so they didn't know about it?
- 67 B //No.
- 68 A At the// time.
- 69 B They still don't know now (B: Laughs).
- 70 A Okay. (A: Laughs). They don't know, do they know, do they know that you're gay
71 or do...?
- 72 B Yeah, they know I'm gay.
- 73 A //But they don't know...
- 74 B But they don't know// that 'e was gay.
- 75 A Right, okay. So was it, I mean, was it difficult to keep it, to keep it quiet?
- 76 B Mmm, it was just something that wasn't discussed even at school or out of school
77 or anywhere else really apart from when me and 'im used to go to the pub and
78 stuff like that. (Yeah) And we used to 'ave time on our own, that's when it was
79 discussed mostly.
- 80 A What made you, what made you, kind of, decide that, not to, sort of, let other
81 people know not come out?
- 82 B Mmm, cos I was quite young at the time so I thought, .um, it was (.) best not
83 discussed (.) with anybody, an' that was it.
- 84 A Why, why, why was that, I'm just wondering...?
- 85 B In case of, um, homophobic violence or in case it was the wrong decision as well
86 and (.) that's all.
- 87 A So, so partly because of fear of, sort of, discrimination (Yeah=) and prejudice, but
88 partly because you were some, you, you wondered yourself whether (Mmm) you
89 might, might not be gay.
- 90 B Yeah.
- 91 A Yes, there's some uncertainty (Mmm) and you didn't want to, sort of, I guess,
92 come out.
- 93 B Yeah and confuse matters even more, sort of, thing.
- 94 A Yeah. So you felt a bit uncertain at the time?
- 95 B Yeah.

- 96 A Yeah. How do you feel about it in terms of that now, do you feel more certain or,?
- 97 B Um, no.
- 98 A Still uncertain?
- 99 B Things have changed and I know more (B: Laughs) than I did when I was fifteen.
100 (Mmm) Um, and I think, if I would have known then what I know now when I
101 was fifteen, I would have come out when I was fifteen, instead of when I was
102 nineteen. (Mmm) So I definitely would have done, yeah.
- 103 A Right, why, why do you say that?
- 104 B Um, different change of scenery, it's like when, the straight scene when you're
105 fifteen an' you go down your pub, an' that's it, so I would have preferred to go
106 down a gay pub instead of straight pub.
- 107 A Right. Why, why would you have, do you think you'd have preferred to do that?
- 108 B Um, (.) to experience it younger and see what it was like an' I would have made
109 up my mind a lot quicker.
- 110 A Right, yeah.
- 111 B Fifteen.
- 112 A So, sort of, what would it y', w', w', what it would be about, kind of, going to, to
113 gay pubs? Would it have been about meeting other gay people or...?
- 114 B Yeah, and realising that you're not the only person as well.
- 115 A Mmm. So you felt quite, I, I was wondering about that, with you, sort of, saying
116 that you'd kept, kept it between you and (=Yeah=) your boyfriend.
- 117 B Yeah. It was like the only two of us at school, (Right) who were either gay or
118 whatever.
- 119 A Yeah, and that felt quite, quite lonely, or isolating or //like you're the only ones?
- 120 B E::r, // yeah, quite lonely at times, so...
- 121 A Yeah, yeah, okay. (.) .Um, how do you think that being gay has affected your life?
- 122 B Um, (.) um, wider range of friends, um, (.) different people, different
123 environments, um (.) different experiences, .um, (.) that's about it.
- 124 A I mean, quite, quite sort of, dramatically?
- 125 B //Quite a lot yeah.
- 126 A Quite, quite, quite// a wide range of (=Mmm=) things you mentioned there. When
127 you say different experiences?

- 128 B Um, (.) the difference between like a straight pub and a gay pub, sort of, thing.
129 (Mmm) An' you get to meet different people.
- 130 A Yeah. Are the, are there any, um, an' are, an' are those positive things do, do you
131 feel?
- 132 B The majority yeah, yeah.
- 133 A Mmm, are there any negative ways in which being gay is...?
- 134 B Er, yeah, when you're coming out of a pub you may be called names or stuff like
135 that so...
- 136 A Mmm. So, so sort of.
- 137 B But it, it.
- 138 A Verbal abuse?
- 139 B Yeah, it just tends to make me stronger, sort of, thing I think. (Right) I'm not
140 going to let it get me down cos somebody's called me whatever.
- 141 A Yeah. I think that's quite interesting. I was going to ask you whether or not you
142 felt that being gay changed you as a person an', um, you mentioned there that
143 you, you felt that, sort of, experiencing verbal, verbal abuse had perhaps had the
144 effect of making you, you stronger?
- 145 B Yeah.
- 146 A Do you think, is that, is that the case?
- 147 B Yeah.
- 148 A Yeah. Do you think that being gay has affected you in, in any other way as, as a
149 person?
- 150 B Um, .the stereotypical image that you've got to go out with somebody, um, and
151 you've got to do it straight away and if you don't get it, um, just tends to put more
152 pressure on it, to get somebody or to go out with somebody, um, that's it. So, I
153 think you get that with the straight scene but I think you get it more on the gay
154 scene.
- 155 A Right. More pressure to be in, (=Yeah=) in a sexual relationship?
- 156 B Yeah.
- 157 A Yeah?
- 158 B Yeah.
- 159 A Right, and how, how, how have you handled that, how has that effected you?

- 160 B Mmm, it's been alright at times and then it's been pretty bad at times an' that's it.
- 161 A Right, so you feel that, that there's a, there's a greater pressure, sort of, within the
162 gay community (Yeah) for people to be actively, sort of, in sexual relationships.
- 163 B Mmm.
- 164 A So it's tough, tough being single?
- 165 B Yeah.
- 166 A Mmm. If you could chan, change, change or choose your sexual identity wh, what
167 would you choose?
- 168 B .Um, being gay, yeah.
- 169 A Yeah, can you say why?
- 170 B .Um, no (.) it's (.) just that (.) I've experienced a lot more than I think I would
171 'ave done if I was straight, and more friends, um, (.) a lot more fun besides.
- 172 A It's fun, yeah. I think that's important. (Mmm) Y, an', an', you, sort of, said you'd
173 experienced a lot more. I wonder whether, I was wondering whether you feel that,
174 you know, that's a way in which being gay has affected, kind of, who you are as a
175 person. That you've had to go through perhaps, either, er, more difficult or just
176 different experiences than straight people would, kind of...?
- 177 B Mmm, (.) probably different ones, yeah.
- 178 A Different ones, yeah. Okay, brilliant. The next, kind of, set of questions a:re about
179 relationships, alright, um, yeah as I said, um, these questions are about different
180 relationships. Um, and really I suppose I'm interested in how you feel being gay
181 'as affected those relationships. So over, I mean, first of all perhaps if you think
182 about, about your relationship with your parents, um. (.) Really, I guess, I guess,
183 how, one question is, sort of, how close do you feel that you are with your
184 parents, or...?
- 185 B Um, nowhere at the moment because we had a massive argument last year, um,
186 and I haven't spoken to them for five months now so. (Right) So, before that I've,
187 it was alright. Both my parents were, um, more pissed off about me smoking than
188 me being gay. (Right) Smoking was just normal cigarettes. (Right) That's it. (B:
189 Laughs) So they were fine about it an' mum's friends were fine about it as well.
- 190 A Okay. You mentioned earlier that, that y, you, sort of, you'd, there was a gap
191 between when you first, kind of, thought you might be gay, (Mmm) and when you
192 started to have relationship with your, with your boyfriend, an' coming out to
193 your friends and your parents. (Mmm) You said you came out when you were
194 nineteen, is that //right?
- 195 B Yeah, // yeah.

- 196 A What, what, um, I don't know what influenced your decision to, I guess, first of
197 all delay telling them an', and then...?
- 198 B Well the age of consent, it was like twenty one at the time and then, um, (.) it was
199 a decision I made on me own, um, after I'd left school and after I'd finished the
200 relationship. The first boyfriend went his way and I jus' went my way, an' we lost
201 contact for about a year an' then he got in contact with me, like a year later after
202 that, an' then I saw him last January, he came over to see me. (Right) So.
- 203 A And was that O.K?
- 204 B Yeah, yeah.
- 205 A So you, y, your relationship had ended, you'd left school, um...
- 206 B He got a job and I got a job.
- 207 A Right, and that, that felt like a good time did it to tell your parents?
- 208 B Yeah, yeah.
- 209 A Were you s' still living at home at the time or had you moved //out?
- 210 B Er,// I was, yeah I was living at 'ome at the time and it was like, like day by day
211 just getting more confidence and to, sort of, build it up and tell 'em what (Right) a
212 couple of years later.
- 213 A And how did, how did you anticipate they would react? Did you think they,
214 they'd be accepting or did you think they'd have a problem with it?
- 215 B I think they'd probably have a problem with it because I'm an only child as well.
216 (Right) So...
- 217 A How do think that, (.) (Um) impacts on how they would react?
- 218 B Dunno, dunno.
- 219 A You don't know, I was just wondering why you thought it would be different with
220 you being an only child?
- 221 B Errr, just one of those things that, 'ooh, our child couldn't be gay'. (Right) That
222 was it.
- 223 A Right, yeah, okay. So, so how did, how did you go about, kind of, telling them,
224 and how did they react?
- 225 B (B: Laughs) Well mum finds loads of my magazines, um, (.) um, when I was
226 going to tell 'er at the time an' then, um, she kept it a secret from me that she'd
227 found 'em an' then I just told her a couple of months after, after she'd found
228 them.
- 229 A Right. So it wasn't a surprise //perhaps for her?

- 230 B No, no// so...
- 231 A And how, how did she react when you, when you told her?
- 232 B Um, I think she was expecting it what with her finding the magazines in me
233 room, um, an' I think she was relieved that I'd made me mind up, er, instead of
234 keeping 'em in the dark even more.
- 235 A Mmm. So it was a relief for, for that to, to be, kind of...?
- 236 B Discussed.
- 237 A Discussed and for you to share that with them.
- 238 B Yeah, yeah.
- 239 A Right. And and was that the same for your dad or?
- 240 B Yeah, yeah.
- 241 A Right. So generally it, were they quite accepting of you, were they quite...?
- 242 B Yeah, yeah. Quite supportive as well. And said 'ooh if you go out make sure you
243 carry some condoms on you', (Yeah) 'an' don't get too drunk'.
- 244 A Right, right, okay. What about other family members though, I don't know if you
245 have any siblings or...?
- 246 B No sisters or brothers.
- 247 A No sisters, oh you said you were an only child, sorry. Um, brothers, not brothers
248 aunts, uncles, grandparents?
- 249 B I haven't really come out to any of them not yet.
- 250 A Right, right. Is that something that you, you would like to do or...?
- 251 B .Um, (.) I dunno I think they're old-fashioned so I think they'll see it as, (.) um,
252 not true, sort of, thing so, (.) so...
- 253 A Did you think they'd, sort of, be, um, reluctant to, kind of, accept it in a way?
- 254 B Yeah.
- 255 A Yeah, so is that difficult, does that pose any difficulties in the sense that, that
256 you're not able to be open with them or...?
- 257 B Well they've 'ad enough stress in their lives and I don't wanna give 'em any
258 more.

- 259 A Right, okay. Did you notice, um, or do you think there was any change in your
260 relationship with your parents when you came out in terms of, (Mmm) you
261 mentioned //that they...?
- 262 B I think// it was more supportive. (Right) Then mum says 'oh, er, if you've got any
263 problems or you want any advice come an' see me an' discuss it with me'.
- 264 A Yeah, yeah. So p'r'aps were you able to, sort of, talk more and be more open with
265 them?
- 266 B Yeah.
- 267 A Yeah?
- 268 B Yeah definitely.
- 269 A Okay, what about your relationship with your, with your friends. Um, I guess I'm
270 thinking both friends now, but perhaps also your friends when you were...?
- 271 B Mmm, at school.
- 272 A At school.
- 273 B Um, a lot of them disowned me as well and says 'oh, oh we, we don't want you,
274 um, no where near our group' and all this at school. (Right) So...
- 275 A And was that, was that b' before you came out?
- 276 B Yeah, //yeah.
- 277 A Right.// So did, did they suspect or, or...?
- 278 B I think they did yeah, yeah. (Yeah) And I did lose a lot of contact with friends
279 when I left school because they'd heard all these rumours, um, at school and a lot
280 of talking behind me back, but since then (.) most have done what they wanted to
281 do in life and I've done my thing and like half an' 'alf got in contact with me, one
282 way or another. (Right) Whether, if it's in town or whether if they've phoned me
283 up an' spoke to me, (Right) so.
- 284 A So, in, sort of, as time's gone on, (Mmm) those, those friendships have, sort of,
285 picked up again?
- 286 B Yeah.
- 287 A But it's quite difficult, it sounds like it was quite difficult at school?
- 288 B Mmm. Yeah, um, cos there was just me and my boyfriend, but now like looking
289 back (.) seven, eight years down the line, eight years, um, (.) there's been like (.)
290 fifteen people who I know about, fifteen people from school who now's gay
291 lesbian or bisexual (Right) now. (Yeah) So, (Yeah) a big majority.

292 A Yeah, okay. Do you think, I mean I'm just thinking about, it sounds like although
 293 you were, you hadn't come out at school, (Mmm) that y, you still got quite a lot
 294 of, um, there were quite a lot of rumours and comments behind your back, (Yeah)
 295 and stuff about, about your sexuality, um, I s'pose I'm wondering about, er, what
 296 that was like, I s'pose, and, and how it, how it effected your, how you were in
 297 school did you...?

298 B Um. (.) Didn't really change matters much. (Right) So, I didn't discuss it with
 299 anybody at school, I didn't discuss it out of school, I didn't discuss it with any of
 300 the teachers at school or anybody at school, (Right) so that was it. So it was just
 301 through the switchboard that, um, when I was nineteen that I got in contact with
 302 them and they gave me a load of advice and told me to pick up a load of papers
 303 and that was it.

304 A Right, yeah. Cos it's, I, I mean, I, I'm wondering how it was for you, kind of, for
 305 those, for that, for those four years, five years, um, kind of, not, not talking about
 306 it and yet, um, feeling it and, I guess, and wondering whether, you know, whether
 307 you were gay and having a gay relationship an', was it difficult not being able to
 308 talk to people or be open about it to people?

309 B Er, it was difficult in some aspects of it but then it was easy in some aspects
 310 because I think the less people that knew about it at the time for me personally, I
 311 think it was a lot less stress. Cos I didn't want one person giving me information
 312 and then another person giving me a diff', a second lot of different information,
 313 (Mmm) and I think that would have confused matters.

314 A Yeah, yeah. Do you think there's something about, um, needing to be, you
 315 mentioned earlier something about, sort of, waiting until you felt a bit more
 316 certain, (Mmm) um, before you, before you came out, do you think that's
 317 something that's, um, you know, important, to, to, kind of, to ha, have a time
 318 when you work through an' think through an' work out what, whether you are gay
 319 before you take the step of coming out and telling other people or...?

320 B I think it was just like reading magazines an' reading papers an' seeing things on
 321 telly, it was just the decision I made on me own and nobody else made that
 322 decision for me.=

323 A =Mmm, mmm. So you, you came to that, kind of, conclusion yourself through,
 324 (Yeah) through, through all sorts of different routes.

325 B Mmm.

326 A It sounds like you had a relationship and you sought information you looked at,
 327 (Mmm) gay magazines and what have you.

328 B Yeah.

329 A And then, and then when you felt more certain you, you, you, you felt okay about,
 330 kind of, //telling other people?

- 331 B Yeah. I got in contact// with the switchboard.
- 332 A Yeah, yeah, okay. .Have you got, um, is there any advice that you'd give to
333 people about coming out. I'm thinking perhaps particularly about younger
334 people?
- 335 B Mmm, (.) if you're uncertain, get in contact with the switchboard or, (Right) or
336 get in contact with your youth group, if they've, especially if they've got a gay,
337 lesbian, bisexual group. Go and discuss it with them rather than at school with
338 somebody or a teacher because you don't want to mix stuff like that with school,
339 (Right) in case somebody 'ears about it or anything like that.
- 340 A Right, and w, w, what would your w, what would the fear be about that?
- 341 B Er, being called names, being outted, um, an' I think it would change your views
342 if it 'appened to you at school if you were quite young.
- 343 A Mmm, if you got, //got...
- 344 B Yeah,// like different people making your mind up.
- 345 A Right, y', I mean, you mentioned switchboard and you mentioned I, kind of,
346 particularly perhaps a gay, gay youth groups.
- 347 B Like [LGB youth group], yeah.
- 348 A Yeah, do you think it's, um, do you think it's helpful to have sort of, um, that they
349 are, talking to gay, other gay people...?
- 350 B Yeah, because I think you tend to feel that you're the only gay person or lesbian
351 or bisexual person around. (Yeah) An' if you come to a youth group I think you
352 get to meet different people, discuss different things. (Yeah, yeah) So...
- 353 A Is that something that you found helpful?
- 354 B Yeah, very 'elpful.
- 355 A Yeah, okay. Just, I mean the last, sort of, er, set of questions about, sort of,
356 relationships is about relationships with work colleagues or, or colleagues at
357 college or whatever I don't know whether you, you've, (Mmm) feel that being
358 gay has influenced those relationships or...?
- 359 B Um, (.) I don't really know at, (.) at work, when I was like nineteen, I was
360 questioning it an' it, sort of, came up in a conversation with a work colleague and
361 she said 'oh you're not gay cos you don't look gay', um, (Right) and that's about
362 it. But at college recently, um, I've known a girl from here since last November
363 and I ant come out to 'er and then she's moved into the YMCA and of course
364 she's met all of my friends and all of my friends have said something, 'oh, Dave's
365 gay, er, did you know that?' and she's said 'no', but she now knows and she
366 thinks it's alright.

- 367 A Right, so that was okay in the end.
- 368 B Yeah, yeah.
- 369 A So have you ever come across any kind of, um, prejudice or, or difficulties either
370 at work or college?
- 371 B Um, there's been some gay remarks at college today cos I haven't exactly come
372 out at college being gay because I've only got like another month an' 'alf, two
373 months left. So I've just left it at that, so.
- 374 A Right, so you've made a decision not to, (Yeah) not to come out at college.
- 375 B Mmm.
- 376 A W, what was that based on, was it...?
- 377 B Cos it was only going to be a short period of time that I was going to be at college
378 therefore so, it's only like five hours a week. (Right) So's got really nothing to do
379 with anybody, it doesn't (.) upset me or owt like that so I just left it there.
- 380 A Right, it doesn't upset you not being out, is that, //is that what you're, is that what
381 you meant?
- 382 B No yeah, yeah, yeah.//
- 383 A Yeah, yeah, okay, thank you, um. Just a few questions about sexual relationships
384 or dating relationships, we've already, kind of, mentioned, um, the first
385 relationship you had. Um, have you, have you had any heterosexual relationships?
- 386 B Mmm, even though I'm gay, I've still got more straight friends than gay friends
387 and my straight friends think I'm, I'm, pretty fab (B: Laughs). (Right) And they
388 always go out to the pub with me as well, (Right) whenever they've got any
389 money. So, yeah, they really enjoy the gay scene even though they are straight.
- 390 A Right, so, so you're straight friends go out with you, (Yeah) //to gay places?
- 391 B To gay places, // yeah. (B :Laughs)
- 392 A Right, so, I mean, have you ever had a, kind of, sexual relationship with a woman
393 or...?
- 394 B No.
- 395 A No?
- 396 B No.
- 397 A And you're first relationship with a man was when you were?
- 398 B Fifteen.

- 399 A Fifteen. Okay, and was that a sexual relationship?
- 400 B Yeah.
- 401 A Right, an' how did that, how did that feel?
- 402 B .Er, yeah, I think it, sort of, it was the decision I made, it was the decision 'e
403 made, and it was just spontaneous, an' it just 'appened an' it was discussed, um,
404 and that was it.
- 405 A And was it in a, I mean, it sounds like it was a, sort of, a mutual, um, and sort of,
406 um, (Yeah) relationship rather than a, sort of, casual sexual thing.
- 407 B Yeah.
- 408 A Kind of, been together for two years so.
- 409 B Mmm, a bit intense, yeah. (Right) Like if I had any problems I would discuss
410 them with him and if he had any problems he'd discuss them with me.
- 411 A Yeah. Do you think that was, kind of, it was made more intense by the fact that,
412 kind of, nobody else knew about it or?
- 413 B I think it did, yeah.
- 414 A Yeah, yeah, um, earlier on you mentioned, um, the age of consent did, did that,
415 was that something that played on your mind at the time?
- 416 B Yeah, I, it was like the decision we both made not to tell anybody in case that
417 came up, (Yeah) as well. Whether, if it involved teachers at school or parents or
418 whether it even involved the police.
- 419 A Yeah, so it was something that you were quite conscious of, (Yeah) that it was
420 kind of...?
- 421 B An' it was serious as well, (Yeah) what with the age of consent being twenty one
422 and we were just like fifteen. (Yeah, yeah) We weren't going to wait (B: Laughs)
423 like six years.
- 424 A No, no (A: Laughs). A, a, I, I mean y', y' it must have been, did it make you feel,
425 were you worried about it or...?
- 426 B Mmm, (.) no, no, not really, it was just like a kept secret that just us two kept and
427 that was it.
- 428 A Mmm, okay, and what about other relationships that you've had since. Have you
429 had any other relationships since, (Mmm, yeah) since your first one?
- 430 B Yeah, not as intense as that one that lasted two and a half years, but ones that
431 have last six months, eight months. (Right) an' that's it, an' ones that have lasted
432 one night.

- 433 A Yeah, (A & B: Laugh) Right. Just as, just as important in a way.
- 434 B Yeah.
- 435 A How about, um, ones that have lasted just one night.
- 436 B Um, depends how I felt about 'em, um, at the time. It depends how they felt about
437 me, um, It's been like fifty, fifty that I still keep in contact with 'em, (Mmm) or I
438 really didn't think much to (B: Laughs).
- 439 A Right. And so sometimes that's y', your decision?
- 440 B Yeah.
- 441 A Okay. Do you think that, um, I, I suppose in particular because you said you, sort
442 of, went out with, um, your boyfriend, the first relationship that you had, (Mmm)
443 was quite, soon after you'd started thinking you might be gay. (Yeah) Do you
444 think that actually being in a relationship an', an' a sexual relationship with
445 someone of the same sex had, had a impact on how you thought about yourself,
446 //how you...?
- 447 B I think// it did, it was more on my mind at the time. (Right) When we were
448 discussing things and stuff like that.
- 449 A So you were, you were able to talk to one another?
- 450 B Yeah.
- 451 A Do you, did, did it make you feel any more certain that you might be gay or any,
452 any more confused or did, did it effect you in that way?
- 453 B (.) Say it again.
- 454 A Sorry.
- 455 B I'm listening to that [noise from next door].
- 456 A You're listening to? (A: Laughs).
- 457 B Yeah, (B: Laughs) sorry.
- 458 A Okay, um, I just wondered whether it, being in a sexual relationship with a man,
459 sort of, er, made you feel any, any more sure, or any, er, //less confused?
- 460 B I think it put, // put my mind at ease that I wasn't just the only gay person there.
461 (Right) And that was there was others out there, somewhere, um, at school or (.)
462 somewhere else as well.
- 463 A Mmm, yeah, okay. Have you ever, sort of, encountered any, any difficulties when
464 you've been in a relationship?
- 465 B Mmm, (.) no, no not really.

- 466 A Okay
- 467 B Just deciding which pub to go to! (A: Laughs) That's about it (B: Laughs).
- 468 A What about, um, how have you, 'ave you, sort of, introduced your partners to
469 your parents or other friends?
- 470 B Other friends, yeah.
- 471 A Right not, not parents?
- 472 B No.
- 473 A How do you, was that something you decided not to do or...?
- 474 B Yeah.
- 475 A How, w', what was that based on?
- 476 B In case it confused matters more, um, that was it.
- 477 A Right. Do you think your parents would, would be happy to meet one of your
478 male partners?
- 479 B Not at the moment cos I'm not talking to them at the moment. (No) But whether,
480 if I'm talking to them in the next six months, or next year or next five years I
481 don't know so...
- 482 A Right, okay, okay. .Right just a few questions about, about coping and about
483 support, and again we, we've touched on things already, but, I guess, um, I s'pose
484 some people experience difficulties, um, coming to terms with being gay, or,
485 themselves, or through their experiences of other people's, kind of, reactions to
486 them as gay people. So you mentioned, sort of, verbal abuse and sometimes
487 physical abuse, discrimination an' things. And, I guess, also, you know, some of
488 the more psychological difficulties about, about being frightened or lonely or
489 isolated or like (Yeah) you're the only person in the world who feels like this or
490 whatever or depressed. (=Yeah) Do you think that have you ever felt any of those
491 things?
- 492 B Depressed, cos I'm having counselling at the moment and I'm on anti-depressants
493 at the moment as well. (Right) Um, I'm having acupuncture as well for
494 depression and stress, (Right) um...
- 495 A Is that, do you, how do you understand that?=
496 B =It i'nt so much that me being gay, I think it's just stress of life an' everything
497 else. (Right) Stress of 'aving no money and, (Mmm) that's it. (Yeah) Just life in
498 general.
- 499 A So, not so much to do with your (No) sexuality?

- 500 B No.
- 501 A Do you think that you've, sort of, any of those problems that have been about,
502 about your sexuality?
- 503 B I think if, if, as I said earlier on, that if I would have known now what I would
504 have known when I was fifteen I would have come out a lot earlier, I wouldn't
505 'ave left it for four years just thinking about it on me own. I would have just come
506 out.=
- 507 A =Yeah, and how...=
- 508 B =When I was fifteen.
- 509 A So...=
- 510 B =Even though I was still at school, even though the age of consent was twenty
511 one.
- 512 A Right. And how was, d', d', was that thinking about it on your own, did that make
513 you feel? You, sort of, you, sort of, mentioned earlier like you felt quite alone in a
514 way?
- 515 B //Er.
- 516 A Or that// you might be the only person?
- 517 B Might have been the only person so, that was just the decision I just made on me
518 own an' didn't discuss it with nobody else. (Yeah) That was it.
- 519 A Do you think it would have been easier if you'd been able to discuss it with other
520 //people?
- 521 B No,// because I know a couple of people who 'ave discussed it with counsellors
522 and they 'ave actually, the counsellors 'ave actually (.) said 'you're not gay,
523 you're straight' and that was it, so. (Right) I think it was a decision I made on me
524 own nobody else could 'ave made that decision for me. (No) Because if
525 somebody would have made that decision that I was gay and turned me straight
526 all of a sudden, 'an then I would have 'ad a girlfriend an' would of had a kid, an'
527 then I would have came out when I was fifty being gay, so I think it would have
528 confused matters. (Right) So, yeah.
- 529 A Okay, okay, um, (.) yeah. How do you think, u:m, (.) how do you think you,
530 sounds like you've had some sort of, um, I don't know whether you, you'd call
531 them difficulties, but some issues to do with feeling like your the only person and,
532 um, you know, wanting to meet other people perhaps. How do you think, how do
533 you think you coped with those things, you, yourself?
- 534 B Mmm, just through counselling, mostly just discussed at counselling. (Right), and
535 discuss it with other friends or people who I know.

- 536 A Right, so talking to people was //helpful.
- 537 B Mmm.//
- 538 A Okay, and you mentioned, you mentioned also, sort of, talking to, to switchboard?
- 539 B Yeah, that was my first point of contact when dec', when I decided to come out.
- 540 A Right and was that a positive thing?
- 541 B Yeah, they gave me a lot of helpful advice an' places to go an' (.) different
542 centres an' different people to see and discuss things there.
- 543 A Yeah, okay, and h, how you mentioned counselling then, was that something that
544 you sought yourself?
- 545 B Yeah, yeah just recently over the last (.) eight months, nine months.
- 546 A Right and have you done that via here or?
- 547 B Via the YMCA.
- 548 A Right, okay, and has that been a , //that been a useful thing.
- 549 B Yeah it's been helpful, // yeah.
- 550 A Okay, do you think that there are other things that, that you've done or that
551 you've thought or, or anything else that would have helped you to cope with,
552 with, kind of, things that arose because you were gay?
- 553 B No.
- 554 A Okay, um, what do you think if, if, if anything could have been different, um, to
555 make it, to make things easier for you as a young gay, gay person of fourteen or
556 fifteen. What, what would have helped to make your life easier?
- 557 B Mo::re sexual, no not sexual orientation, er, sexual, um, sexual, sex education.
558 (Mmm) About HIV an' AIDS an' gay people an' bisexual people an' lesbian
559 people at school. (Mmm) Cos I think more people want to come out at, at, er, an
560 early age rather than twenty or twenty one or thirty or forty.
- 561 A Yeah. Did you have any?
- 562 B No.
- 563 A Um, (No) gay, lesbian, (No) bisexual stuff in your sex education?
- 564 B No, no.
- 565 A Was it discussed in any other of your lessons?
- 566 B No.

- 567 A Sexuality or homosexuality?
- 568 B No.
- 569 A Right, yeah. So more, more at school would have been helpful?
- 570 B Yeah.
- 571 A Okay, w, what about places like, like here, like the youth group here, were you
572 aware of //this place?
- 573 B No, no.// Just through the switchboard, (Right) and that was it.
- 574 A Right, so, so, I mean, there weren't, weren't posters up in school or anything like
575 that? //There wasn't...
- 576 B No.//
- 577 A Any information about it?
- 578 B No not even through the nurse, (Right) at school.
- 579 A Okay, yeah, so that, that might have made things easier.
- 580 B Mmm.
- 581 A What about, I was just wondering about, um, legal things as well, I mean, it
582 sounds like (.) the age of consent was something on your mind?
- 583 B Yeah.
- 584 A Um, do you think it would have made a difference if, if the age of consent had
585 been lower?
- 586 B Lower, yeah.
- 587 A It, it would have made things easier?
- 588 B Yeah. (Yeah) I think I would have probably would have come out more quickly
589 whether if it would have been six months or whether, if it would have been a year
590 or two years or even the full four years. (Yeah) But, yeah it was, was something
591 that was on my mind, (Yeah) at the time.
- 592 A Okay. Um, do you think that, do you think that support services, that places like
593 this youth group, places like, I suppose switchboard, um, need to be run by, by
594 gay people? Do you think they need to be //staffed by gay people?
- 595 B It doesn't really matter// as long as they haven't got their opinion over running
596 your opinion or anybody else's opinion or trying to turn you straight, sort of,
597 thing, (Right) instead of being gay. (Yeah) So I think it's your life, your decision
598 and nobody else should make up that decision for you or advise. (Mmm) Apart
599 from in the right direction and what you feel good about yourself at the time.

- 600 A Mmm, so people shouldn't be trying to push you into...?
- 601 B Being something that your not. (Mmm) Yeah.
- 602 A Is that an experience that you have had yourself personally at all, people trying to
603 do that?
- 604 B A couple of times through friends, yeah. (Right, right) Saying, er, like a couple of
605 my friends saying 'oh she's got a nice pair of tit's on her don't you fancy her?'
606 an' all this, an' it's like, 'get out of my face', (B: Laughs) 'I don't want it'. (Yeah,
607 yeah) So really, er, in one occasion like, one of my mates, I did question my
608 sexuality 'bout a year an' a half ago, cos he went on about it so much. In, not such
609 detail, but twenty four seven going on about it, um, and then it was decision I
610 made on my own thinking, 'oh get out me face, your not a true friend if your
611 gonna do that to me'. (Mmm) And I basically told 'im, 'get away' an' that were it.
- 612 A Yeah, yeah, yeah so not, not, um, it m', mus of, how did that feel for you?
- 613 B I felt a bit cheesed off at the time that somebody who could call, who call, call
614 themselves a friend at the time could do that or say that or point me in a different
615 direction, (Mmm) which I wasn't going in. (B: Laughs)
- 616 A Yeah, yeah, yeah, I mean, particularly, I mean, it might have been even more, um,
617 confusing if you, if you'd, (=Yeah=) been less, less certain and, (Mmm) about
618 your sexuality, I s'pose. Have you ever been offered or forced to seek support that
619 you've, you've not wanted, sort of, pushed into to, to seeing a counsellor or
620 anything like that.
- 621 B No.
- 622 A Okay, and, and just, er, one last question on this area. Do you think, um, thinking
623 about the people who are close to you, people like perhaps your parents or your
624 family or your friends or whatever. Do you think it would be helpful if there was
625 support or information services available for, for them as friends or //relatives?
- 626 B Yeah, // I think it would, yeah.
- 627 A Has anybody that y', whose close to you had any sort of //such support?
- 628 B No, // no. I think it would put their mind at ease say thinking that, oh, we're not
629 going to go out, 'ave unsafe sex every night an' stuff like that.
- 630 A Right. So, I mean, for example, do you think that, you know, it might have been
631 something that would have been helpful for your parents?
- 632 B I think it would, yeah, //yeah.
- 633 A Yeah, // yeah, okay, an' this is the last, is it the last section, it is the last section,
634 yeah, um, jus i a, a, sort of, er, number of questions that are broadly speaking
635 about, kind of, you:r, um, (.) I s'pose exposure to or contact with other gay men

- 636 and lesbians and bisexuals. Um, (.) did you know anyone who was gay when you
637 were growing up?
- 638 B Mmm, I had an inclining at time, not so much when I was growing up but at
639 school, but I never questioned them or anything or approached them it was just,
640 just something that, that someone used to go round and say 'oh you poof' and all
641 this. (Mmm) And I'm thinking 'ooh, we don't want that when, when I'm
642 fourteen, fifteen'.
- 643 A Right, so you...?=
644 B =And that was the reason why I decided to come out a bit later.
- 645 A Yeah. So you'd witnessed other people being exposed to...?=
646 B =Yeah.=
- 647 A =Sort of, homophobic bullying and stuff like that?
648 B Mmm.
- 649 A Yeah, so that's quite a, an' that then influenced your decision not to come out in a
650 way?
- 651 B Yeah.
- 652 A Yeah. Were they, was this person or people older than you then?
653 B Couple of years older than me, two or three years.
- 654 A Right, yeah, yeah. So, you've, sort of, seen it first, not first hand, seen it second
655 hand in a way that, that...=
656 B =Yeah.=
- 657 A People could be, could be, react in a negative way?
658 B Mmm.
- 659 A Okay. Is there anybody else outside of school that, that you knew? (Mmm) I was
660 thinking adults as well as people your own age?
- 661 B Probably one of the school teachers was gay, (B: Laughs) but I don't know about
662 that.
- 663 A Right, okay. Was that, sort of, a...=
664 B =But not discussed with the school teachers, sorry. (B: Laughs)
- 665 A Yeah, yeah. So more of a, a rumour or...?
666 B Yeah, I think he is gay now anyhow.

- 667 A (A: Laughs). Okay, do you think, do you think it would have been helpful if you'd
668 known, um, gay people?
- 669 B I think it would of been, or more advice at school or leaflets or posters, er, (.) er,
670 more sexual orientation information, (Mmm, mmm) at school.
- 671 A Okay, what about, th, thinking about the media like I s'pose, sort of, music, films,
672 TV, newspapers, whatever, were you aware of, of, um, gay people in the media?
- 673 B Um, there was Julian Clarey, um, River Phoenix 'e was bisexual. (Yeah) Um, um
674 and a couple of others as well.
- 675 A Yeah. How, how, how do you think, er, um, those people were portrayed by the
676 media. How do you think (.) gay people in general are, are...?
- 677 B Um, (.) sort of, gave them a bad name, sort of, slagged 'em off, (Mmm) so.
- 678 A And how did that affect, I'm just wondering how that affected you as a, sort of,
679 young person questioning //their sexuality?
- 680 B I, I just// thought it was a load of rubbish and didn't really pay much attention to
681 it.
- 682 A Right, right, okay. (.) An' we, we've talked about, sort of, whether homosexuality
683 was talked, talked about in school, an', an ' you say it wasn't really at all, perhaps
684 it, it was a bit by the, by the pupils, (Mmm) but not, sort of, within a, um, by
685 teachers within lessons and what have you. What about at home, was, was
686 homosexuality ever discussed at home?
- 687 B No.
- 688 A Or mentioned or...?
- 689 B No.
- 690 A No? Okay.
- 691 B I, I think the reason why it wasn't mentioned is because none of my parents knew
692 anybody who was gay, (Right) apart from so-called TV actors or people on telly,
693 (Yeah) or anything like that, or singers.
- 694 A So what, um, I s'pose I'm wondering how, what do you think influenced your
695 understanding of, of gay people, kind of, as you, as you grew up cos it's
696 interesting that there's, sort of, there's a bit of, of, of, um...?
- 697 B I think it was mostly the gay press, gay scene, gay lifestyle and that was about it.
698 So change of scenery from the straight scene an' (Yeah) that's it.
- 699 A Yeah. Do you think you knew what, when do you think, how old were you when
700 you think you, kind of, knew what it was to be gay, can you're, sort of...?

- 701 B About seventeen, about in the middle, sort of, thing.
- 702 A Right, right. So yeah, okay, (.) so there was a bit of, kind of, working out to do?
- 703 B Yeah.
- 704 A Bef', before you, kind of, (Mmm) felt that you really knew about it. Um, and I
705 guess you may of answered this question it was, was how, how you first made
706 contact with other lesbians, gay men, an' bisexuals? This was the first...
- 707 B Just through the switchboard, through [LGB youth group], through [LGB group],
708 um, I think that's about it, an' just readin' listings in the gay press, (Mmm) and
709 gay magazines and that was it.
- 710 A Yeah. And was that important for you? You said it was, sort of, a way of, of
711 finding out that you weren't the only person?
- 712 B Yeah, yeah.
- 713 A But, sort of, useful to, to, sort of...?=
714 B =Know where places are an' who to talk to, (Yeah) so.
- 715 A Okay. Where do you normally go out to socialise now? Do you go out on the
716 straight scene, on the gay scene or both or...?
- 717 B BOTH, both cos it's cheaper beer.
- 718 A Cheaper beer where?
- 719 B On the gay, on the straight scene. (Yeah, right) So... (A: Laughs) Like last night
720 was 'alf and 'alf, straight scene, gay scene. Monday night (B: Laughs) was
721 straight scene.
- 722 A Um, what do you thi', have you got any, any ideas about the scene? How do you
723 feel about the scene, the, the commercial...?=
724 B =It needs something doing with it but I, [name of a LGB pub] is a good pub cos I
725 went down the VIP night, er, the week before it opened, so. Even there's bad,
726 bit's of that, that I think it's too small and that the third floor needs opening up. It
727 needs more money from [a brewery] to get the third floor done.
- 728 A Right. Wh, wh, how do you think the scene is for young, younger people, do you
729 think it's a, a, sort of, (.) I don't know, accepting?
- 730 B I think it's, certain pubs 'ave certain people in and there is certain, (.) certain pubs
731 for young people, youngish people, (.) like eighteen to twenty five. An' they can
732 go out with their friends and not be approached by some stranger trying to chat
733 them up, who's like fifty-five.

- 734 A Right, an', and is that, I mean, is that something that, that you feel, is that
735 something you've experienced, is that something that's...?
- 736 B Something I've experienced an' other friends have experienced as well, (Yeah)
737 so.
- 738 A Do you think that's a, a, kind of, I s'pose a problem really for, sort of, for younger
739 people who are, sort of, first going //out?
- 740 B Um,// coming out, yeah, I think it is.
- 741 A Yeah, do, I, I mean, do you think there's anything that could be done to make it, it
742 better or easier or...?
- 743 B I dunno.
- 744 A No. What about, um, I mean, are there the places that don't exist, aren't around in
745 [name of city]?
- 746 B Decent, decent club, (Right) an' cheap booze, an' cheap entry to get in. Because,
747 er, I've got free membership cards for seven days a week even on a Sat'day, they
748 may be straight places but it's free entry for me to get in. Um, and up to four
749 guests, (Right=) and it's free for them. When, I'm not gonna to go into a gay
750 place probably ever again on a Saturday an' pay three, four, five quid to get into.
- 751 A Mmm, do you think that's an issue? I mean, I just thinking about...
- 752 B I think it's money orientated and the pink pound. (Right) I think you tend to get a
753 lot of that.
- 754 A Right, right, yeah. I wo, I'm just thinking about people who who, you know, who,
755 who just simply can't afford to do that.
- 756 B Mmm, yeah I think it puts pressure on them, 'oh we'll stay in tonight again'.
- 757 A Yeah, yeah, (.) mmm. Um, (.) and the other thing I was just wondering about,
758 thinking about the, sort of, commercial scene is, not only, as you say there's the,
759 sort of, the financial side of it, is but also the age, the age, kind of, um, the legal
760 age to, to get into clubs and to drink in, (Mmm) in pubs.
- 761 B But I, th, my view is, to be honest with you, is eight', er, smoking should be
762 eighteen an' drinking should be twenty or twenty one, same in America. (Right)
763 Because you still get kids eleven, twelve getting somebody adult to go into an off-
764 licence and stuff, and they're startin' drinkin' cider outside or under-age smoking
765 when it's like, twelve or thirteen years old. (Mmm) And people who come down
766 to [LGB youth group] who's twelve, thirteen years old who are smoking. (Mmm)
767 And I think, yeah definitely smoking eighteen.
- 768 A I, I'm just thinking about, I mean, it, it's not the case here, because there are, there
769 are, for example, there's this place where people can meet, (Yeah) um, but, I
770 guess, there must be some places where there aren't youth groups, (Mmm) where

- 771 the commercial scene is the only, only, sort of, place to meet, other gay people,
 772 and yet if you're under the age of (.) eighteen I s'pose you can't, (Yeah) strictly
 773 speaking, um,...
- 774 B I think...=
- 775 A =Get access to those places.
- 776 B I think it's good that [LGB youth group] caters for the under fourteens, fifteens,
 777 sort of, thing. (Yeah, yeah) Cos there 'as been a couple of incidents where people
 778 'ave been fourteen, fifteen questioning their sexual', sexuality, or they may have
 779 come out when they were fourteen, fifteen. (Mmm, yeah=) And it's s', some place
 780 for them to go and discuss things that's not their parents or teachers or other
 781 friends at school or, aunties, uncles or something like that.
- 782 A Mmm, so somewhere, sort of, //outside of there?
- 783 B Safe, // safe to discuss problems. (Right) So...
- 784 A Yeah, yeah. So do you think, I mean, do you think it's important to have a, have
 785 somewhere like...?=
- 786 B =Yeah.
- 787 A Like this? (Mmm) Yeah. Okay, (.) is there anything that we haven't, sort of,
 788 talked about that you think's important, that you'd like to talk about?
- 789 B (.) No.
- 790 A Okay, er, I suppose the last, the last, kind of, question I was going to ask you was
 791 just, um, (.) I s'pose, thinking about doing this interview, um, what made you,
 792 made you think, think about doing it?
- 793 B (B: Laughs) Everybody else has done it.
- 794 A (A: Laughs) Yeah good, good answer. I mean, any, any, is there anything else, any
 795 other reasons?
- 796 B No, just to air me views and (B: Laughs) to help you in your college studies.
- 797 A Yeah, okay, and, and how, how's it been //having done it?
- 798 B Alright, // yeah.=
- 799 A =Yeah?
- 800 B Yeah.
- 801 A Okay, brilliant, well thanks very much, //thanks for your time
- 802 B Alright.//

803 A It's interesting.

Interview 6

Luke

Interview Date

31/3/99

- 1 A Right, people describe their sexualities in, in lots of different ways, how do you
2 describe yours?
- 3 B Bisexual.
- 4 A Okay. Um, and people experience lots of different thoughts, emotions, (Mmm)
5 when they first start to, to realise or think that they might be, might be gay, might
6 be bisexual. Can you describe, kind of, how you felt, what was going on for you
7 at that time?
- 8 B I first found out something was, I have to say STRANGE with me when I was at
9 school. (Right) You know, I kept on, like, when the showers, when, cos it was,
10 like, a mixed school, and the showers was, like, dead close, you know, the boys'
11 an' the girls', an', like, the girls' showers there was, like, little keyhole, so the
12 boys used to look through the girls', an' they always used to ask me to keep an
13 eye out an' see if the teacher was coming, so I'm, like, standing there an' I kept
14 on looking at the blokes, well the lads, an' I think, 'cor, you've got a cute arse',
15 an' I was like, 'hey wait a minute', you know, 'this is wrong'. You know, my
16 dad's told me, you know, my dad's showed me some pornos, so he's, he's
17 taught me literally the ins an' outs about sex, showed me a porno an' that was it.
18 I was like, 'oh, so you do that an' then you do that, oh, an' that seems okay, it
19 seems easy'. An', like, when I started I looking at the boys, I was like, 'aye?
20 Whoa', you know, 'you're strange', an', you know, it was just really weird, an'
21 then I, my first experience was with one of my best mates from school. (B:
22 Laughs) Cos he turned an' says that he was gay an' I was like, 'gay? Gay?'
23 [spoken very quietly]. You know, I was thinking, 'what the hell's gay?'. Oh he's
24 happy! (A & B: Laugh) (Yeah) So, like, that was it. But, like, when I left school I
25 realised that, I realised more about it an' whatnot (Mmm) so it felt okay, but I did
26 get some stick at school, quite a lot of stick (Mmm) especially with my surname.
- 27 A What's your surname?
- 28 B [Surname], which is spelt [X-X-X-X-X]. They used to spell it [X-X-Y-X-X,
29 reference to being gay] (Yeah) an' lads, the majority of the lads who used to give
30 me stick, I found that now I've seen them in the gay pubs an' whatnot, an' I was
31 like, 'wait a minute, you used to give me stick an' you're in here snogging a
32 bloke, tut, bastards' sort of thing, (Mmm) you know, I'm really sort of pee'ed off
33 with it. But now I see the funny side.
- 34 A Right, (A: Laughs) yeah. So how old were you when you first, kind of, had that
35 sense of being strange, //or different?
- 36 B Oh god.// I'd say when I was about, say, third year in comprehensive (Right) an',
37 like, the first experience I had, I'd been like, well you could say messing around
38 with another male person, when I was a fourth year (Right) an', like, obviously I
39 used to, like, have a girlfriend, but, we never used to do anything, an' I found out
40 that my girlfriend was, or IS NOW A LESBIAN. (Right) I'm, like, 'fab!' (A:
41 Laughs) But that's, you know, that's basically it, you know.
- 42 A Yeah. So, how did you ff', how did you feel when you said you, sort of, realised
43 that you were, kind of, different or strange (Mmm, Mmm) or...?

44 B I was too scared to tell people (Mmm) you know, especially my parents, cos
 45 they're like, 'are you getting another', you know, like, when I didn't have a
 46 girlfriend, 'are you getting a girlfriend', 'when are you getting married', I was,
 47 like, 'leave me alone, I don't want that, I don't know what I want'. (Mmm) You
 48 know, 'I want a bloke but I don't', you know, it's really done my head in, so
 49 anyway I just get in, bringing this so-called girlfriend back, which, which I was
 50 goin' out with in my eyes, but, you know, (Yeah) she was a lesbian, an' it was
 51 just one strange thing going off, cos she was keeping 'er parents off 'er back.
 52 (Yeah) She's goin' out with me, she knew my (.) preference an' I knew 'er
 53 preference an' we were just, like, helping each other (Right) but we, we couldn't
 54 talk to anyone we were just sitting there an' she was like, 'cor she's got a cute
 55 arse', an' I was like, 'well he's got a cute arse'. (A: Laughs) It was just weird,
 56 you know, sitting down, like, after school, sitting down, smoking a cigarette
 57 talking about things, she says, 'what is your parents going to say if you finally tell
 58 them about it?' 'I don't know'. It's really ss', (.) you know, really, really
 59 confusing, awkward, especially when you've got like, strict parents, (Right,
 60 yeah=) dead 'ard.

61 A So, it's quite confusing, quite frightening (Yeah) an' you, it, it sounds, like, this,
 62 kind of, relationship with this, this girl who was also gay was (Mmm) quite, er,
 63 was almost a way of, I don't know keeping, keeping your parents at...=

64 B Keeping parents at bay, sort of thing, gettin' 'em off your back.

65 A Right, so it was quite a good way of, kind of...

66 B Yeah. (B: Laughs)

67 A Um, I don't know...

68 B Keeping it quiet.

69 A Right, yeah.

70 B An', like, having no stress with me parents like, you can imagine it, you're
 71 bisexual, you like a bloke, you haven't got a girlfriend, your parents don't know
 72 your sexual preference, 'oh when you gettin' a girlfriend, when are you gettin'
 73 married?' (Mmm) It was like, (.) you know, 'whoa, whoa, whoa, dad', you know,
 74 'shut your trap', an', you know, I wanted to say, 'dad look, shut your trap, I'm
 75 bisexual', but I know they'd have done, kicked me out, (Right, so, sort of) kept,
 76 kept it quiet (Right) an' whatnot.

77 A Okay. How do you, thinking about now, (Mmm) do you think, have you, have
 78 your feelings and thoughts about bein' bisexual changed sin', from then?

79 B No, I still get really stressed out with it (Right) it's, like, really awkward, I'm
 80 seeing like, obviously, with my healthwise an' whatnot [HIV positive], I have to
 81 see, you know, a psychotherapist, but 'e still helps me out anyway with my sexual
 82 preference. (Right) You know, 'e advises me when I tell 'im what's happening,
 83 I'm stressed out with this, I'm stressed out with that, an' 'e says, 'well sit down
 84 an' talk about it'. Obviously I came out to my parents, which got rid of the stress

85 from that. (Right) So I think I told them when I was twenty or twenty one, you
 86 know, dad's sitting down watching his flippin' football. [His team] playing,
 87 whatever, [B: sniffs] an' my mum's sitting down doing a paper, like, an' I had
 88 enough of it, I stood up. 'Mum an' Dad I wanna tell you summat'. Dad turned
 89 round an' says 'Luke, sit down, shut up.' (.) No way! I got up, turned the TV off,
 90 'Mum, Dad, I'm GAY' I just says 'gay' to get 'em, you know, to get it off, so
 91 they wouldn't think, 'bisexual? What's he mean by bisexual?' (Mmm) So I just
 92 says, 'gay'. Turned the TV back on, sat down, dad's mouth just went bleugh,
 93 [opens mouth] like, he was catching a flippin' bird of prey or somethin', his
 94 mouth just dropped. My mum looked at me, an' then she looked away an' she
 95 carried on doing her paperwork. I thought, 'hey, wait a minute', so I said to my
 96 mum, I says, 'mum do you wan' me to move out', she goes, 'no', I says, 'oh, I
 97 better go back upstairs an' unpack my stuff'. (Right) She goes, 'why you packed
 98 your stuff up?' I goes, 'just in case you kicked me out.' She goes 'no, you're still
 99 my son.' I thought, 'cool, wicked.' Turned round to my dad, says 'dad do you
 100 wanna cuppa?' Didn't talk to me, didn't talk to me for about, say about three
 101 months. But he's okay now with me. (Right) But on certain, certain subjects I
 102 can't talk to him about, so I go see my, my, er, psychotherapist an' 'e helps me
 103 out an', like, I turn round to him an' says, 'look, I'm getting pestered by this
 104 bloke, I'm getting pestered by this woman, I can't cope with it. I like this woman
 105 an' I like that bloke, I don' know whatta do.' You know, cos like, people assume
 106 being a bisexual person you're hardfaced, just shag anyone willy dilly nilly or
 107 you go out with one person an' you go behind their back. I can't do that, you
 108 know, if I go out with, I class myself as, when I'm free an' single, bisexual. If I'm
 109 with a bloke, I class myself as gay (Mmm) an' if I'm with a woman, you know, I
 110 class myself as straight, but like, I do have to, now an' then, go to the bloke side
 111 because a woman can't, satisfy (B: Laughs) what I need (Right) so I go there.
 112 That's why i', it's hard still for me to cope with, (Right) but obviously with a
 113 bloke they can satisfy me both ways. (Mmm) But a woman can't, it's awkward.
 114 So I still see my psychotherapist an' 'e tells, 'e said to me, he says 'Luke, go out
 115 with a woman, if she knows your sexual preference, if she was okay with it, you
 116 know, fine, you can still go with her, but you can have, like, a bloke on the side
 117 sort of thing.' Like, if he don't like to have sex with a bloke, but he likes to (.)
 118 have a bloke have sex with him, that's fine, you know, you're having sex with a
 119 bloke an' whatnot, but I'm like, 'yeah but I wanna have sex with a bloke an' I
 120 wanna bloke to have sex with me'. (Mmm) That's where a woman can't help me
 121 out. I can have sex with a woman, but, she can't have sex with me. (Yeah) He
 122 says 'well, you get a strap-on dildo.' I was like, (.) 'it doesn't feel right', you
 123 know. I like a bloke, you know, with, like, a bloke's body, he's got hair an'
 124 whatnot (Mmm) an', like, with a woman she's got breasts, an', like, if you're
 125 lying down an' this person's lying on top of you, if it's a woman you can feel
 126 their breasts, (Mmm) an' it just puts me off. I've tried it before when I wank, (B:
 127 Laughs) that's why, an' it's bloody awkward still. I wish I was either gay or
 128 straight, (Right) but bisexual, it's just too much.

129 A So it feels quite confusing?

130 B Yeah, still, an' I'm, like, gettin', gettin' on a bit (A & B: Laugh)

- 131 A Okay, do you see it as something that, do you, do you see yourself as always
132 being bisexual?
- 133 B Yeah=
- 134 A =Or do you see, do you see it as something that might change, or...?
- 135 B I don' know, I, now this really will sound strange. I have (.) sexual preferences
136 with women, they have to be black, female women. I don't like white female
137 women, an', like, Chinese, I've never been with Chinese, but I do like them. But
138 I've been with like, white female women an' to me they're borin'. I've been with
139 a black, female woman, an' they're nice. (Mmm) Some of them I've been with
140 are too, er, what's the word, you know, they like sex too much. (.) You know, sex
141 in my eyes is, like, a bonus in a relationship. You don't just build a relationship
142 on sex, you know, it's, if a relationship's there an' you like the sex, it's like, you
143 know, just a bonus.
- 144 A Part of the relationship?
- 145 B Yeah. Don't have sex, then relationship. An' like, that's what some of the female
146 women I was having trouble with, (Mmm) you know, I was picking , you know,
147 nice looks, nice figure, they just wanted sex. Couldn't cope with it. (Mmm) So,
148 like, it's still awkward. (Mmm) An', you know, I don' know what preference I
149 might go for at the moment, you know, still in limbo you could say.
- 150 A Does it, does that feel uncomfortable being in limbo? (ye:ah) Does it feel like
151 you, you'd, you'd be happier if you were...?
- 152 B Yeah, I know, it's cos like, (.) I like myself being single, (.) but I'd, I'd like to
153 have someone there to give me love, (Mmm) but, you know, if a male person
154 gives me love an' if, I would be, I'd be, like, stressed out, cos at the moment I've
155 got one female person wantin' to get off with me an' I've got, like, a round of
156 blokes, an' I'm like, 'oo:e:r don't like them blokes, I like her, but I like one of
157 them blokes', an' like, you know. (Mmm) I did try it once, I was, like, two-timing
158 this woman an' I was two-timing this bloke for the woman (.) An' like, she knew
159 I was going out with a bloke , an' he knew I was going out with 'er, but he didn't
160 want me to go out with 'er, cos 'e wanted to, (.) as 'e put it, he wanted my penis
161 for 'imself, an' 'e didn't want to share it. I was, like, 'well look , I haven't had
162 sex with 'er yet, you know, just kissed her an' whatnot, an you know rubbed each
163 another up', (Mmm) 'an' that's it', but it was just doin' my head in an' she was
164 the same so, like, just pushed 'em away. So I'm friends with them but they still
165 wanna go back out with me (Right) an' I can't, you know, it's awkward. (Mmm)
166 You know, you're goin' out with, like, female persons, female woman an' she
167 knows your sexual preference but she don't like it, (.) an' that I can't cope with.
168 (Mmm) I'd like to go out with someone who knows my sexual preference an'
169 who can cope with it. Like, if I go, if I went out with a female (.) bisexual
170 woman, (.) that'd be heaven, you know, a match made in heaven, (Mmm) you
171 know, obviously she can go to her (.) girlfriend an' she can come to me as her
172 boyfriend an' whatever, (Mmm) but it hasn't worked out yet. That'd be my, you
173 know, the thing I'd like to happen is to have, like, a bisexual female person an'
174 then a gay bloke (B: Laughs) it's heaven then. (A: Laughs) No stress!

- 175 A Okay, okay. How do you think, how do you think, um, e:r (.) gay people that you
176 know react to you (.) being bisexual?
- 177 B They're o', the majority of people are okay. You know, they like me because,
178 they say, they call me greedy, an' I'm like, 'what do you mean greedy?' 'Oh, you
179 like both holes', an' I was, like, 'best of both worlds, you know, every hole's a
180 goal', you know, I 'ave a laugh with them, sort of thing, an' they're like, they
181 dunno what it's like in my eyes, if they'd seen what it'd be like, they'd think,
182 'bloody hell, no way, I couldn't be doing with that', (Mmm) but like, they're
183 okay with me, an' we 'ave a laugh an' whatnot, (Mmm) it's just fun with 'em.
- 184 A An' what about, what about straight people?
- 185 B They're okay. Some straight people, my straight friends were okay, they 'ave a
186 laugh with me an' whatnot. (.) One of my straight friends gave me a kiss on my
187 lips an' I just sat there an' was, like, (.) you know, gobsmacked, my mouth
188 dropped open, I was, like, (.) you know for about a minute mouth gaping wide
189 open, just staring into space, an' then I come to an' I was like, 'you just gave me
190 a kiss on my lips, you're straight, straight blokes don't give blokes kisses on lips'.
191 He's like, 'well I've known you for a year Luke, you're my mate, an' I always
192 give you a kiss on your cheek.' I was like, 'yeah, but you gave me a kiss on my
193 lips, you're straight.' It was just like, SHOCKED ME an' they just, like, got a
194 buzz out of it (A: Laughs) I was like, 'no way!' (A: Laughs) You know, 'go away
195 an' leave me alone.' They're pinching my arse just for a laugh, an' I'm like,
196 'gerroff, don't touch what you can't afford!' (A & B Laugh)
- 197 A So, it sounds like, um, (.) you said, sort of, saying there's still quite a lot of
198 confusion around for you, (Mmm) there was quite a lot of confusion when you
199 were younger an' that it's still there in a way. (Ye:ah) There's still things that
200 haven't quite sorted out. Does it, um, cos you talked about it being quite
201 frightening when you were younger, (Yeah) an', has that, has that changed?
- 202 B It has changed, yeah, in that, I, like, you know, I can handle it now. (Mmm) You
203 know, I go out (.) on the gay scene an' like, but it's still there in a way, though,
204 you know, I see this nice little woman an' I think, 'cor, she's cute', then I see this
205 nice bloke, an' I'm like, 'cor he's cute', an' I'm like, e::rr, (.) you know, an' I
206 just think, 'oh', (.) you know, just brush it off, an' just go out an' enjoy myself
207 (Mmm) an' have a laugh with my mates an' whatnot (Yeah) an' if anyone tries to
208 get off with me, an' if I don't like 'em, I just, 'leave me alone, (.) I don't want
209 you', an' I push 'em away. You know, I just go out to enjoy myself now (Yeah)
210 so like, that's something I can cope with, but when I was younger, every now an'
211 then, especially when I left school, an' I'm going on the pub scene, cos I looked
212 older than I was, (Mmm) so I'd go in the pub an' get served, so I was going in
213 [name of a LGB pub], (B: Laughs) an' er, the majority of people looking at me
214 scared me, you know, an' in their eyes, 'young meat on the market, ooh let's get
215 'im in bed', (.) an' that just really scared me, you know (Mmm) an' every time I
216 went in, eyes lookin' at me, it was like they was undressing me with their eyes. I
217 couldn't cope with that. (No) Now I go in on the gay scene, I'd say about once a
218 month (.) an' sometimes I get that an' I think, 'huh, whatever'. You know, 'look
219 at me, you can undress me with your eyes but you can't get me' (Yeah) cos
220 they're, like, you know, I've got more, (.) well, mature with it, (Yeah) an' I've

221 got used to it an' it's, I, I get a buzz out of it in a way, (Yeah) you know, like, you
 222 get, like, the maturer men, say about thirty or forty looking at you, 'cor, he's got a
 223 cute butt', or 'he's got a cute body ', so I like, I play it, you know, I play it, I play
 224 it on with them, an' I walk by with them ss', you know wiggling my arse, an' I
 225 like, torment 'em, an', like, when they come up an' chat me up, I'm like,
 226 'whatever!', walk off. (B: Laughs)

227 A So, that feels li', sort of, like, something that's manageable now, (Yeah) but when
 228 you were younger...?=
 229 B =When I was younger I couldn't cope with it, it really scared me (Mmm) I had to
 230 go out on the gay scene with some friends. (B: Laughs)

231 A Sorry, say...

232 B I had to go on the gay scene when I was younger with, like, some friends of mine.

233 A Right, so you needed to kind of, //to go, to go...

234 B Some moral support, // (Yeah) you know, in a group as well, so I felt more secure.
 235 (Mmm, yeah)

236 A Just, I was just thinking back to what you said about, sort of, coming out to your
 237 mum and dad (Mmm) and it sounded, um, like that was a, a relief in a way.

238 B Yeah it was, it felt like I, like, you know, like, you're keeping summat secret, an,
 239 like, it feels like you've got, like, a tonne of bricks on your shoulders. (Mmm)
 240 Then, like, when you tell someone that thing you've been keeping a secret from
 241 them for some time, it feels like 'phrrummm ', it's just been knocked off your
 242 shoulders. (Mmm) But then you have to put up with like, your parents, or a parent
 243 not talking to you for a bit, (Mmm) an' that can really do your head in. (Yeah)
 244 Cos, like, my pare', well, my mum's okay with me, well, ss', so she said, but I
 245 think she still has doubts about it. (Mmm) But my dad, 'e's okay with it, he's
 246 fine, you know, now anyway, but then it was about say three, just about say six
 247 months that he didn't talk to me, (Right) you know, like, he had a car an' like,
 248 obviously when I was younger I used to love washing 'is car, you know, I used to
 249 wash it, clean it an' whatnot, an' when I told 'im my sexual preference, I like,
 250 every weekend I used to wash 'is car, round, you know, on the dot of three
 251 o'clock, 'Dad, do you want your car washin?' Didn't talk to me. So I used to pick
 252 up 'is car key an' he'd turn round, an' his actual word was 'what the fuck are you
 253 doing with my car keys.' I was like, 'I'm washing it.' He says 'I don't want your
 254 flippin' grimy hands on my car'. (.) I was, like, 'whatever then.' [said quietly]
 255 You know, (Mmm) it really, you know, did my head in, an' I used to go upstairs
 256 an' cuddle up an' cry. (Yeah) But, like, now 'e's okay. He comes round an' 'e's,
 257 like, an' 'e comes round to where I live, an' we sit down an' we 'ave a laugh, you
 258 know, smoke cigarettes (.) an' whatnot, but 'e's okay, you know, when I get a bit
 259 peed off with 'im, or if I'm getting tired of 'im, 'Dad, I wanna go to bed, go
 260 home', an' he goes out, he goes home.

261 A Right. What do you think, what do you think, kind of, (.) has brought about that
 262 change in him, from kind of not , not speaking to you to...?=
 263

263 B =Well, I think he's seen, you know, cos like, I think it's about, well when I told
 264 'im, about a year later when I'd told 'im, I had a, a boyfriend stop the night
 265 because, I did something wrong with the law, so, obviously, I 'ad to pay, pay the
 266 dues sort of thing, you know, you do the crime, do the time. (Mmm) So I, I did
 267 the time, but before I did the time, I had a boyfriend to stay. So my boyfriend
 268 stopped the night. I literally had to creep round my mum an' dad to let 'im stop
 269 the night before I went to court to go to prison. (Right) So they let 'im stop the
 270 night, I stopped in bed with 'im if there was no hanky panky. Hmmn, no hanky
 271 panky, yeah right, when they was asleep we had it, sort of thing. I went to court,
 272 whatnot, got sentenced, er, 'e said 'e was gonna wait for me. You know, every
 273 weekend, or every fortnight, me mum an' dad was coming to visit me (Mmm)
 274 with him an' I think that brought my dad round seeing what I was, like, an'
 275 whatnot. But I was, like, sticking up for myself, you know, they was giving me
 276 stick in prison, 'flippin' poof', sort of thing, I was like, 'tut, leave me alone', an'
 277 they was, like, tr', you know, some people was trying to get me in bed, (.) you
 278 know, trying to force themselves on me, so I was sticking fo', up for myself
 279 (Right) you know, fightin' back. (Yeah) An' the prison officers didn't like it cos I
 280 was like, injuring people, so I got moved, (.) like, in thirteen months, well, yeah,
 281 half of three years is whatever, yeah (Mmm) I got moved to, to say about thirteen
 282 different prisons for sticking up for myself. (Right) An' eventually I came out,
 283 'bout two weeks later he dumped me, my dad was workin' at the time an' my
 284 mum was in bed. I just got home, you know, after 'e's like, given me the shock
 285 an' like, you know, I just drank a whole bottle of vodka, an' I'm, like, really
 286 drunk an' whatnot. Dad phones up, 'Luke', I'm like, 'what?' 'Where's your
 287 mum?' 'In bed asleep.' 'What's up?' Er, 'David's left me.' 'Oh, go' bed, I'd just,
 288 you know, get some sleep', you know, 'you'll feel fine in the mornin''. (.) I
 289 didn't, I went upstairs, took my painkillers, an' whatnot, necked the whole lot. I
 290 went to sleep.(.) Dad came home from work, didn't realise what I'd done, they
 291 woke up. Mum went to work, she came back, it was about half nine, ten o'clock,
 292 they woke me up, I was like, 'what? Leave me alone, I wanna go to sleep', an' I
 293 covered myself up. She noticed I took the tablets, she ran downstairs, told my
 294 dad, my dad says, 'right, take 'im to 'ospital'. Dad literally carried me out of the
 295 bed, put me in the car, took me to the 'ospital. Dad found out why, my dad went
 296 berserk, I goes, 'Dad just leave it.' Then I told me dad, you know, that 'e was
 297 HIV positive, an' like, we'd been having unprotected sex, (.) an', like, my dad
 298 just went berserk again, an' I was, like, 'leave it', you know, it's like, 'it takes
 299 two to tango'. An', like, obviously I'd been talk, t', more to my dad than my mum
 300 because, in my eyes, my mum don't wanna know me anymore. (Right) You
 301 know, she comes round when I, you know, if I'm giving her summat, she'll come
 302 round to see me, or if she wants summat, she'll come round to see me, but that's
 303 it, you know, my dad comes round every night from work (.) an' whatnot,
 304 obviously they got divorced, but they shouldn't, like, argue about anything, you
 305 know, if I'm their son they should come an' see me.

306 A Mmm. So you're now, it sounds like you're now closer to your dad, or see more
 307 of your dad than your mum (=Yeah) an' you feel like, I mean, I don't know, do',
 308 it sounds like your mum was, was okay and quite, sort of, supportive when you,
 309 (Mmm) when you did come out to her, but...=

310 B =She was supportive but, you know, it was, was just strange. An', like, now she's
 311 (.) in a way distant from me. (Mmm) Obviously she's got a fiancée an' 'e's like,
 312 'e doesn't, I think 'e doesn't like me, an', like, the feeling's mutual, I can't stand
 313 'im. To me, well my mum says he's forty, to me he's, like, seventy years old (.)
 314 an' he's, like, stuck in 'is ways, you know, from their era, (Mmm) that's it. An'
 315 like, I think my mum's told him my sexual preference, an', like, he won't talk to
 316 me. You know, 'hi, Darren, is, er, me mum there?' 'Yeah, just hold the line a
 317 minute', an' 'e goes, 'oh, it's him on the phone'. An' mum goes, 'who's he?'
 318 'Your son, Luke' [said with disdain]. An' then, like, she comes, 'hiya', an' I'll be
 319 like, 'tut, yeah right, whatever'. An' I feel like putting the phone down on 'er.
 320 (Right) You know, cos of the reaction I've got from her fiancée (Mmm) an', like,
 321 I've told her I've changed my name as well from Louis to Luke, now my mum
 322 calls me Louis still, which is obviously they're parents, but 'e's been calling me
 323 Louise, (.) you know, an' I said to my mum, I says, 'Mum, if 'e ever calls me
 324 Louise again, tell him I'm gonna knock his block off'. I goes 'my name's Louis
 325 or Luke, but I don't know 'im, so it's Luke to him'. (Mmm) So my mum's told
 326 'im an' whatnot, an' it's just really strange, he, like, takes the piss out, you know,
 327 I used to live next door to my brother, but I've moved away from 'im, cos I just
 328 can't do with being near family. 'e's turned round an' gone, 'oh, thank god he's
 329 moved from, you know, from Pete, at least Pete'll get himself sorted out now,
 330 fucking stupid twat Luis is ', an' I'm, like, 'tut, yeah right, I've been trying to
 331 help 'im.'

332 A So, so, it sounds like it's, it's, your mum's partner's quite=

333 B =Negative //towards me

334 A =Negative// towards you?

335 B Yeah, can't stand 'im.

336 A So, do you think your mum, do you think, why do you think your mum's, kind of,
 337 more distant now, do you think it's to do with...?

338 B =With her new fiancée. I'm sure it's gotta be.

339 A And not so much to do with your, her, her feeling about your //sexual preference?

340 B Mmm.// I'm sure it's her fiancée, she's sticking by 'im sort of thing (Mmm) an'
 341 that just, like, really does my head in.

342 A Difficult.

343 B Yeah.

344 A It sounds like you, you've got a brother as well?

345 B Well, I thought he was my real brother, but he's my step-brother, you know, my
 346 mum an' dad were married, my mum went an' 'ad an affair, caught pregnant, out
 347 popped him! (Right) To put it blunt. (A & B: Laugh)

348 A So is, he, he's a younger brother?

- 349 B He's older than me. (Older?) Three years older.
- 350 A Right. An' is he your only brother or sister or are there more?
- 351 B Er, I've got more step-brothers an' step-sisters, (Right) you know, I've got two
 352 step-brothers an' one step-sister from my dad's previous marriage, and again with
 353 my mum, I've got a foster sister cos my mum had another affair, an' that foster
 354 sister I, I think she is about, well, when I was twenty three, my mum told me she
 355 was twenty. So obviously, she's three years younger than me.
- 356 A Right, an' are you close to, to any of them?
- 357 B Um, close to my step-sister, you know, which is from my dad's previous
 358 marriage. Cos she's got five kids (Right) an' like, every weekend I have, I used to
 359 have all four of them down, cos obviously she's got, like, four lads, one girl, the
 360 girl's got married, so, like, four lads are, you know, (.) the oldest one's coming on
 361 sixteen (Right) an' as I says, I used to have all four of 'em down. I couldn't cope
 362 with four kids, (A: Laughs) screaming an' whatnot, so I said to my sister, 'I'll
 363 have one down over weekend.' I had one down an' it was like, 'Luke I want this,
 364 Luke, I want that, I wanna go on this, I wanna go here, I want this ', so I said to
 365 my sister, 'I don't wan' 'im anymore ', you know, 'he's just not, I'm not having
 366 'im round'. She goes, 'why?' I goes, 'well, helping himself to my food, sayin',
 367 instead of askin', 'can I have, or can we do this, it's I want, I want'. (Mmm) An',
 368 like, I can't cope with that. I was brought up to say, 'can I have ', or, 'I would like
 369 to go here, can I go there please ', not, 'I wanna go here ', or I, you know, like, I
 370 live near the bowlin' alley. 'I wanna go to [name] Superbowl', an' I was like, 'tut,
 371 yeah, but everything revolves around money. If you haven't got money you can't
 372 go to this place'. 'Well save your', his exact words were, 'save your goddamn
 373 fucking money up'. An' 'e's, like, twelve years old. (Right) An' if I was like, you
 374 know, if I said that to my mum, or whatever, I'd then 'ave expected a clout round
 375 the 'ead. (Mmm) I', I wanted to hit him. But I thought, 'no, he's, like, twelve ',
 376 I'm, like, twenty five, he could, like, tell, get me done. (Mmm) So I told, told his,
 377 his mum an' she says I should have slapped him one. I goes 'no, cos I don't know
 378 me own strength'. (Mmm) Which I don't. (Mmm) So, like, I said I don't want 'im
 379 down anymore. But the older one, he's, he's, he's a laugh, you know, he comes
 380 down an' we have a chinwag. He smokes cigarettes so like, give him a cigarette,
 381 he smokes the POT, but he wants to join the army. (Right) (A: Laughs) So I says
 382 to him, 'you got three year, you know, three months before, you know, you gotta
 383 quit smoking pot'. So 'e's coming down this weekend, I'm gonna get some pot,
 384 we'll have a smoke an' that's it then. He also drinks, (.) which is fab, you know, I
 385 can, like, go out an' jus' like, be with the lads. (B: Laughs) (Mmm) You know,
 386 my nephew, be with the lads, an', like, took him into a bar, an' he's only fifteen.
 387 (B: Laughs) Gave him some money an' said, 'look, get drinks in, I'm going
 388 toilet.' He goes, 'they won't serve me.' I goes, 'look, just ask for the drinks, it's a
 389 student bar they'll think you're a student, whatever'. You know, 'Just chill.'
 390 (Mmm) So 'e ordered the drinks. I was in the toilet, having a, relieving my
 391 bladder, comes back out, he goes, 'they served me, brill, brill, they served me.'
 392 He was, like, buzzing on it. (Yeah) I was like, 'well, it's a student bar, they think
 393 you're a student, whatever, you know, just chill.' So like, it's a laugh.
- 394 A And do they know about, about your sexual //preferences?

395 B Yeah.// they know about it an' they're fine.

396 A They're okay?

397 B Yeah, like, one night I had one of me nephews up, the second oldest one, dunno
 398 how old he is now, an' like, my (.) boyfriend, the one who I've been going out
 399 with, in my eyes, for five days (.) 'phones up an' wants to come down, an' I'm
 400 like, 'well, I've got me nephew down'. 'So, well ask him can I come down or
 401 whatever'. I goes, 'jus' hold the line', so I ask me nephew. He's, 'what, your
 402 boyfriend? Will he try it on with me?' I goes, 'look, if he touches you, I'm gonna
 403 twat him one!' You know, 'but he won't because he doesn't, you know, he's
 404 going out with me, that's it'. So my boyfriend came down, he was like, you know
 405 the young lad playin' on the N64 [Nintendo], an' my boyfriend says 'Luke, can I
 406 sit on your knee?' an' I was like, 'well, yeah, you know, he's gotta get used to my
 407 sexual preference'. (.) So my boyfriend's sitting on my knee, my nephew turns
 408 round, sees what's happenin', an' looks away again. (B: Laughs) Cos we was,
 409 like, kissin', I thought, 'oh sshit!' You know, an' my nephew looks again after
 410 we've finished, an' 'e's, like, literally beetroot. (.) An' I was like, 'wha's up
 411 Jake?' He goes, 'you two was kissin'. I was like, 'yeah', he says, 'you shouldn't
 412 kiss a bloke', an' I was like, 'look, I'm gay, you're straight, you can kiss women,
 413 I can kiss women, you know, whatever'. (Yeah) An', like, 'e was okay with it
 414 then, 'e, 'e, sai', said it looked weird, two blokes kissin' (Mmm) which I 'ave to
 415 admit being young an' whatnot, you know, it would look weird. (Yeah) But, I'm
 416 his (.) uncle so he's gotta get used to it. (B: Laughs)

417 A Yeah. Okay. Are there, um, an' there's loa', you've talked about loads of things,
 418 an' I want to, sort of, pick up on some of the stuff (Mmm) that you've said but, (.)
 419 Um, can you think of positive (.) things to do with, are there positive things to do
 420 with being bisexual, for you?

421 B Positive things. Er, er. I don't really know. (.) Well, my mate says he's, he's, one
 422 of my straight mates turned round an' says he understands my, my sexual
 423 preference being bisexual an' 'e says I'm lucky in a way, an' I'm like, 'why am I
 424 lucky?', 'e says, 'well, you've got best of both worlds, you can have a woman an'
 425 you can have a bloke ', an' I'm like, 'yeah but you don't wan' all the stress with
 426 it'. (Mmm) Like, in a way, if you take the stress out, you know, (.) that could be a
 427 positive thing. (Yeah) You know havin' both things. (B: Laughs)

428 A Yeah, an' I mean what I was gonna ask you wa', wa', was, whether there were
 429 negative things, an' I guess...

430 B The negative thing is the, the stress. (Yeah) You know, like, (.) you, you know,
 431 you're goin' out with a woman an', like, your goin' out with a bloke an' they
 432 know about each another, or they don't know about each another, an', like, you
 433 go to see the bloke, you'll have (.) hot, rampant sex with him, you go back home
 434 to see your girlfriend, she wants it an' you've just had it with him (.) it's, (Mmm)
 435 it's catch two, sort of thing.

436 A Yeah. An' it sounds, er, like from what you've, kind of, said about, um, kind of,
 437 where you're up to with, with your (.) bisexuality that for you it, it, it's, kind of,

- 438 important to be able to have sex with both men and women, kind of, at the same,
439 not at the same time, (Yeah) as in a threesome, but...
- 440 B Yeah, (B: Laughs) that would be fun!
- 441 A (A: Laughs) But, kind of, you know, not to, sort of, have a spell, a period of time
442 when you're just (.) (Mmm) seeing men or, or seeing women, but to be able to do
443 both, kind of. (Yeah) Um.
- 444 B I can, I have been out with a bloke for two years, an' I didn't stray to the female
445 side (Right=) but, you know, I was like, 'she's cute, she's cute' sort of thing. On
446 one occasion, an' this really embarrassed me, cos I was going out with 'im for
447 two years (.) or whatnot an' I was walking down the street in [name of a city],
448 near, well, near the post office, the main post office, yeah? I was walking down
449 an' as I says, I do have this tendency for nice female, black women. (.) an' she
450 did have a nice figure, you know, curves in the right places an' whatnot, an' she
451 was wearing a low-cut bra, so you could see the top bit of her bosoms. I'm
452 walking down an' I saw this, an' I thought 'cwoa::r'. An' like, he's beside me,
453 an', like, something started to grow, an', like, I was wearing tight jeans at the
454 time. She looked at me an' she saw me smiling, she looked down an' she, an' her
455 eyes just stayed down there an' I thought, 'what's she looking at', an' I thought,
456 'oh my god!' So I pulled my jacket down an' I must have gone red, I felt a bit
457 warm. An' 'e looked at me an' goes, 'what's up?' I said, 'oh, nothing' an', like, 'e
458 lifted my jacket up an' noticed it (.) so we had a little argument there. You know,
459 right in the town centre. (Mmm) 'What are you on?' You know, I was like, 'look,
460 just shut up let's go to a place where, you know, so no one can hear us an' sort it
461 out'. We went to a place an' we got in the car an' 'e started shouting in the car,
462 'what, ' his actual words was, 'what the hell have you got an 'ard on for?' An' I
463 said 'well, you know I have this tendencies for black, female people an' she 'ad
464 the nicest curves'. 'Yeah, but it's fish.' An' I was like, (.) 'no, it's not fish, it's a
465 woman with (.) a vagina an' bosoms.' 'Yeah, but it stinks of fish', an' I was like,
466 'well, if you don't like it, lump it, meaning we're over.' (.) An', like, 'e started
467 cryin', I was like, you know, 'what you crying for?' You know, you got, you
468 know, we were going out with each, we'd been with each other for two years, an'
469 (.) we sorted it out. Then 'e left me about a month later, for another bloke, an' I
470 was like, 'tut, so what's he arguing at me for?' (Mmm) You know, if I left him
471 for a woman, I'd understand, he'd have been, like, really peed off wiv' me.
472 (Mmm) But it's his, he left me so I thought 'whatever!' (A: Laughs) You know,
473 I'd got over it about a month later but, you know, (Mmm) I see him now an' then,
474 I feel like hittin' him (Right) but I don't. I just sit there an' talk to 'im, you know,
475 sm', smile but really I'm really still pissed off with 'im. (Mmm) You know, but,
476 cope with it. We have to don't we? (we do) (A & B: Laugh)
- 477 A If you could choose your sexual identity would you, would you choose to be gay,
478 or straight or bisexual or...?
- 479 B If I could choose my sexual preference, I'd choose to be bisexual. But there'd
480 have to be a condition; no stress.
- 481 A Right, so bisexuality without the stress?

482 B Yeah! (A: Laughs)

483 A Okay. How do you think that, um, (.) that being bisexual has affected you as a
484 person, if at all? Do you think that being bisexual, or, you know, having those
485 sexual preferences has had an impact on who you are?

486 B I'm not sure really. I'd have to ask my mates about that one! (B: Laughs)

487 A Yeah. It was a difficult question, because for some people, they, kind of, feel like,
488 well I've always been...

489 B Yeah. (U:m) I'm really laid back, you know, in a way I'm laid back with life,
490 unless someone really, you know, narks me, an' I just snap at 'em (Mmm) but,
491 you know, obviously I'm okay, you know, I'm laid back, I enjoy myself, (.) I take
492 each day as it comes, well, I have to with my healthwise but, if I wa'n't, you
493 know, if my health wasn't like that, in a way I'd still take each day as it comes (.)
494 But, my life as general, (.) the majority of mature people, I say mature, when I
495 say mature, I say about say, forty plus, especially straight people, are really naive
496 (.) (Mmm) an' I do give some people stick. An' where I live I've got, like, er, this
497 people who's been giving me stick, an I think to myself, 'now if I was straight,
498 would they still give me stick?' (Mmm) 'An' if I was gay would they be give me
499 stick even more?' Whether I was a lesbian, female person, 'would they give me
500 stick or whatever?' (Mmm) You know, an' like, it's really 'ard.

501 A What sort of, what sort of, stick have they given you?

502 B Well they've been moaning about any little niggley thing. You know, going down
503 the stairs, when I used to work, obviously, an', like, I'd usually lea', leave the flat
504 at three in the mornin'. They used to moan about me going down the stairs.
505 They're saying I'm stamping, you know, down, going down the stairs. I wasn't, I
506 was tiptoeing. (Mmm) An' I was coming back 'ome about nine, ten o'clock at
507 night an' they was moaning about that, (.) me going back up the stairs at nine, ten
508 o'clock at night. I've got a parakeet, they moaned about that. (Right) An'
509 whatever, you know, they moan about anything. They moan about my guests, you
510 know, comin' up. The latest time I've 'ad a guest come in is about, say, half
511 eleven an' they're moanin'.

512 A And so you're kind of wondering whether these (.) people are, kind of, (.) doin'
513 this because of, because of your sexuality?

514 B Yeah. But (.) above me, I've got a black person, an' opposite me I've got an
515 Asian person, (.) then above the Asian person is the neighbours from hell, as I
516 class 'em. An' like, below me I got a disabled person. An' opposite him, I've got,
517 like, a family, you know, I'd say bloke about say late twenties, a woman about
518 say mid-twenties, an' they've got a child. Now in that block, no one's moaned
519 about the bird. An' if there's any loud music, whatever, they'll come an' tell me,
520 you know, knock on my door, buzz me up, 'can you turn the music down'. 'Yeah,
521 sure I'm sorry mate' sort of thing. (Mmm) Neighbours from hell don't, they
522 moan, you know, straight to the 'ousing association. (Right) So like, I've 'ad,
523 like, an eviction notice, but that's been put on hold. It's all because of that.
524 (Right) An' they did turn round to me an' says, 'you stupid fucking poof, if you

525 give us any more stick, we, or if you, we, you know, if we don't like what you're
 526 doin', we're gonna get you kicked out'. (Right) So they're half way there.
 527 (Mmm) An' now we've got mediators in, an' like, you know, they do, like, a
 528 little, you know, they come an' see me, they see them, they see me, they see
 529 them, an' they've done, like, this little contract . An' the contract thing is, 'do not
 530 put the bird on the balcony, do not put the bird near the windows ', er, 'when
 531 leaving your flat would you kindly go down the stairs more quietly ', er, 'would
 532 you not use the backdoor, don't use the back, don't leave the backdoor unlocked,
 533 unlocked.' I've never used the backdoor. You know, cos it's', ss', it's too dark.
 534 (Mmm) You know, you go out at night time an' it's the backdoor, an it's, er, you
 535 know, someone might jump ya. So I go out the front, because it's more (.) light,
 536 (.) but I can't understand. 'Don't put the bird near the window. Don't put the bird
 537 on the balcony.' I've got a balcony in the nice weather, obviously a bird would
 538 like some sun, (Mmm) you know, cos obviously I'm a smoker, so I put the bird
 539 there. They moan. So, you could class that as victimisation. (Mmm) But, they're
 540 gettin', you know, they're using anything to get to me.

541 A Right, so it's not, kind of, it doesn't sound like they're, they're being (.) most of
 542 the time they're not being very direct about, (Mmm) about this=

543 B =But they're going round it

544 A =Yeah.

545 B Sooner or later, I'm gonna, like, flip an' I would, I would love to twat 'im one,
 546 but I'm not, cos obviously 'e can get me done for it. (Yeah) So I'm gonna go
 547 round it legally.

548 A Yeah. Sounds like a wise, a wise choice. (A:Laughs)

549 B Yeah! (B: Laughs)

550 A Um. We've talked about, or you've talked about, um, (.) kind of, coming out to
 551 your mum and dad (Mmm) and about some of your, some of the rest of your
 552 family, is there anybody else in your family that we haven't talked about? Um,
 553 that's, you know, particularly important, that...?

554 B Well, one time, when I came out to one of my step-brothers, cos one of my step-
 555 brothers, he's, er, how would you class 'im? He's not a hells angel, but he is, you
 556 know what I mean, (Yeah) he's one of these bikers, an' he's like, you know,
 557 grebby biker sort of thing, he's got all the different bikes, an' whatnot, and, er, it
 558 took me a month to come round to tell 'im. I goes round to his place, sits down,
 559 (.) he, an' he knows I smoke the pot, (Mmm) so I sat down, an' his name's Tony,
 560 I goes 'Tony can I do a joint', he goes, 'yeah'. Does a joint, sparks it up. I goes,
 561 'Tony, I got somethin' to tell ya'. He goes, 'what?' I says, 'it's regarding me
 562 personally ', he goes, 'what, you're gay?' An' I just dropped the joint, (.) an' he
 563 says, 'Luke the joint's on the floor'. I was like, 'oh, shit!' Pick the joint up an' I
 564 goes 'how did you know? When, who told you?' You know, I was, like, really
 565 shocked, I thought 'shit, one of my family's told 'im', an' I've told all my family
 566 members who I've told, not to tell any other one else (Mmm) I wanna tell 'em.
 567 He goes, 'oh, no, no one's told me, I realised'. (.) I was, like, 'HOW?' You know,

568 I thought I'd kept it secret. (Mmm) He's like, 'oh, you know, the way you look at
 569 blokes'. I was like, 'oh shit, I'd better do it more subtle then!' (B: Laughs) (Yeah)
 570 An' I told another family member, an' 'e was okay with it, he's, like, really into
 571 his god, you know, I think he was a C of E or whatever (Right) or evan', I can't
 572 say it, evan', (Evangelical?) YEAH, (A: Laughs) one of them. (A & B: Laugh)
 573 An' like, er, when I told 'im it was, like, a shock to 'im (.) an' he took me to
 574 chu:rch, tryin' an' get me ble:ssed an' tryin' to get, you know, tryin' wash it away
 575 from me (B: Laughs) he thought he could wash it off me (Mmm) but 'e couldn't,
 576 but, like, he's still okay with me, we have a chinwag an' whatnot when 'e comes
 577 down because he lives in [another city]. (Right) An' then I told my other family
 578 members, you know, aunties, uncles, nephews, sort of thing (.) an' they're fine.

579 A Right, so generally, it sounds like your family have been quite (ye:ah) positive? =

580 B =Especially one member in, now, I don't know what she is to me, but she's my
 581 dad's brother's daughter. (Right) When I told 'er, she was, 'oh you're a Wendy.' I
 582 was like, 'a Wendy, what the bloody 'ell's a Wendy?' Cos she's from [a city in
 583 the West Midlands]. An' she goes, 'oh, we call gay blokes Wendys', an' I was
 584 like, 'so what do you call lesbians, then?' 'Malcolms.' I was like, 'oh, okay then,
 585 I'm a Wendy, oh good'. (A& B: Laugh) You know, so I just, like, chilled out
 586 with 'er, she says, 'oh', now she lives in [name of a town], an' she goes, 'when
 587 you come down, one of my mates knows loads of gay blokes, so if you haven't
 588 got a boyfriend, you'll be, you know, come down for a weekend, we'll have a hot,
 589 horny weekend.' I was, like, 'fi:ne! Bring loads of condoms then!' An', like, she,
 590 she's brill.

591 A Excellent. So how, interesting, it sounds like your dad was, was quite, sort of, a
 592 difficult //coming out experience.

593 B Person, yeah.//

594 A An' also, I wonder what, what was it like, kind of, having this, I can't remember
 595 'is name the guy, //the guy who was quite religious?

596 B The biker?// Oh. Er, his name was Chris.

597 A I mean, how did that feel to you, that //he was trying to cure you, or...?

598 B It was really strange, taking,// taking me to church, you know, an' sittin' there.
 599 An' I was like, yeah, I do like church, don't get me wrong, whenever I go in
 600 church it feels like I got a whole weight lifted off me. (Right) You know like, it's
 601 a hot, a hot summer's day. I go into a church an' I feel nice, cool, relaxed,
 602 (Mmm) you know, I'm stressed out before I go in, I go in there an' I'm like, it
 603 feels like there's no stress. (Mmm) Everythink's gone an', you know, what's been
 604 annoyin' me. An' I'm, like, just relaxed or whatever, then I go back out, an' I'm
 605 like, 'phew', you know, I wish I could just stay in church.

606 A Yeah, so it feels like quite a comfortable place for you to be? =

607 B =Yeah. But, like, when 'e was, like, telling me, 'oh read this', you know,
 608 obviously I do like reading the bible, but, when people's telling me what chapters

609 to read, an' telling me it's wrong what I'm doin', an' I jus' says, (.) 'look Carl,
 610 you believe in that, I believe in what I believe in, obviously you don't like, or you
 611 don't think it's, you think it's wrong what I am, but we all 'ave to, like, live our
 612 lives whatever we've done', sort of thing'. (Mmm) 'An' I like to be what I am,
 613 an' I can't change that, but' you know'. An' he says to me, he turns round an'
 614 says, 'well how about when you're on your deathbed, sort of thing, what you
 615 gonna do then?' An' I goes, 'well obviously, I assume, you know, there's the god,
 616 there's gotta be a god, or summat, an', like, obviously, 'e, he'd know what people
 617 are like, an' he'll understand what they're going through. So surely the Christ, I
 618 won't go to hell, you know, I've done nothing wrong, apart from that time when I
 619 did crime, you know'. (Mmm) But obviously, I'd ask 'im for, like, his blessing,
 620 an' will he forgive me for my sins what I 'ave done'. (Mmm) An' 'e should take
 621 me'. (.) (Mmm) An' 'e says, 'well yeah, but he won't take you because you're
 622 gay'. (Mmm) You know, he's probably took loads of gay people, you know, we
 623 are now in the 1990s nearly coming on to 2000, not when the bible was (.) made
 624 up. (Mmm) Obviously it might have changed, 'e might have got more relaxed,
 625 you never know. (Yeah) An' 'e jus', jus' shut up then, he thought, 'ooh', you
 626 know, an' 'e saw my side. (Yeah) But it was really hard. I had to, like, push it on
 627 'im. 'He might have been relaxed now', an', you know, (Mmm) literally saying
 628 that, all the time. (Mmm) So he's, like, come to with it now, he's okay.

629 A That's good. An' it sounds like you, for you, you can, um, kind of, combine,
 630 having a belief in a, a god (Mmm) and your sexuality, it doesn't sound like, like
 631 it's, causes any problems for you.

632 B No. Er, I feel more, comfortable, I tell you what, I feel more comfortable in
 633 church. (Mmm) It's gotta be a, I can't sit in those blimmin' awful churches where
 634 they, you know, where they sit down an' read the hymns, you know, word for
 635 word, an' there's no, er, what's the word, no lifting to it. (Mmm) There has to be
 636 life in it for me. (Yeah) That's why I like the eva', evan', eva', yeah! That thing!
 637 (Them!) (A & B Laugh) Or gospel churches (Mmm) where the black people go,
 638 cos they are more lively with it. (Yeah) But I can't go to C of Es an' the other
 639 one, (Yeah) whatever that one is, (B: Laughs) they just sit there an' read it an'
 640 there's no life in it. (Yeah)

641 A Okay. Just thinking back to, um, (.) to, kind of, when you were at school and
 642 stuff, we've talked a bit about school, I'm just thinking about, (.) um, you said
 643 that you came out to your parents when you were about twenty one-ish, (Mmm)
 644 kind of age. Were you (.) in or out, or were you open at all about your sexuality at
 645 school?

646 B I was like, closed with it, you know, I didn't tell anyone (Mmm) but there was a
 647 few people, well, I say few, two, who (.) I thi', you know, obviously, I knew they
 648 was because they told me, an' I thought, 'hmn', sort of thing, then I told 'em an'
 649 we was okay, we was 'aving, like, sexual experiences with each another (Yeah)
 650 an' obviously, one of them's my best mate, an' we was getting stick in school and
 651 I was the one who started fighting back. You know, first year, second year, it was
 652 get', you, you get used to it. Third year it really annoyed me, fourth year an' fifth
 653 year I just started fighting back.

654 A So what sorts of stick were you gettin'?

655 B Er, getting pushed, abo:ut, people spittin' on me, gettin' verbal abu:se. On one or
 656 two occasions I finished school, an' I was going home, an' you know, I don't
 657 know what year it was, when I had the TB jab, (Mmm) an' then you had the scab
 658 on top, init? Walkin' home from school, I takes my shirt off enjoying the nice hot
 659 weather, 'bout three lads come out from a different school, knew my sexual
 660 preference an' whatnot, knew I was from a rival school, which made it worse,
 661 they picked up a razor, you know, they'd got a razor put it in my TB scab an' slit
 662 it. An' I'm standing there, an' I'm, like, tensing my fist up to, like, get rid of the
 663 pain, an' I was, like, gritting my teeth, an' they er, they punched me one, they
 664 kept on punching me, an' I was, like, just standing there taking it, (.) cos my dad
 665 says if I ever come home again crying (.) he was gonna slap me with 'is, well,
 666 whip me with 'is belt, an' like, the belt's got, like, studs on, cos my dad's strict,
 667 so I stood there, took it, an' eventually I flipped (.) an', like, started fighting back
 668 (.) an' it was, like, three on top of me, (.) er, an', I dunno what happened, 'cos, I
 669 usually 'ave blackouts when I have violent, when I get violent, an' it was just
 670 down the road from my, from my dad's, well from my mum an' dad's, an' my
 671 dad's just finishing work an' noticed what was 'appening, an' pulled me off 'em
 672 (.) Got 'ome an, like, me dad says, 'what you doin'?' I was like, 'well, look what
 673 they' done to me', he says, 'well, you know you done, you got 'em on the floor
 674 an' you're kicking hell out of 'em'. I was, like, 'aye? What? (.) Didn't know I did
 675 that'. My dad says, 'well, you got a violent streak in ya ', an' I was like, 'no I
 676 'aven't ', you know, in my eyes, or when my psychotherapist says as well, I've
 677 got a violent streak in me, 'e says, you know 'cos, 'e did that 'ypnotism
 678 thingummegiggy, an' 'e says when I'm, you know, when I get too angry, I 'ave a
 679 blackout, an' then I 'ave a violent blackout. (Right) So I, that's why I, smoke
 680 cigarettes, but when I was at school I didn't know, (Mmm) an' that's when I
 681 started, like, (.) fightin' back, you know, people pushin' me, an' I just, like,
 682 couldn't cope with it any more, you know, I'm walking into class, well, walking
 683 down the hallway, (.) someone puts a foot out, trips me up, 'an whatnot an' I
 684 gerrup an' just pushed 'em back. (Mmm) You know, when you're at school,
 685 pushed, 'F-off' sort of thing as well. Headmaster come round an' noticed what I
 686 did an' gave me a detention, told me dad, Dad 'ad a word with me, 'why you
 687 pushin' people around?' I goes, 'well, what do you expect? They push you, push
 688 me around an' whatnot', (Mmm) 'give me some digs an' trip me up. Don't expect
 689 me to stand there and take it like a stupid twat, do ya?' He was like, 'no ', an' I
 690 was like, 'tha:nk yo:u!' (Yeah) So like, I started fightin' back an' gettin'
 691 detentions, an' people then, like, when I was a fifth year, didn't give me any stick
 692 after that, (Right) you know, they just looked at me, 'ooh, shit, it's him again'.
 693 (B: Laughs)

694 A Okay, so you were able to, kind of, to, to sort of fight back, sort of. (=Yeah) What
 695 about teachers? Were, how, how did they, were they aware of your sexual
 696 preference?

697 B N:o. One teacher, I think she was. I say she, cos it was a cookery teacher an' she
 698 knew I liked cookin'. You know an' we're sittin' there an' we was talking, an'
 699 whatnot, she kept on comin' up to me, she always came up to me, an' we all used
 700 to 'ave a laugh, sh', an' you know, we used to go and, you know, like, on
 701 lunchbreak, (.) I used 'ave my lunch an' whatnot, go an' have a chinwag with 'er,
 702 sort of thing. (Mmm) An' she, she liked me, an' I liked 'er, an' SHE DOES

703 KNOW NOW. Now I see 'er in town now an' then, she goes, 'hiya Luke, how's
 704 it goin'?' I'm like, 'fine'. 'Got a boyfriend?' 'N:o'. (A & B: Laugh) An' I'm like,
 705 'shi:t, you know, schoolteacher askin' 'ave I got a boyfriend!' (A: Laughs) An'
 706 she: is about, well she's retired from school now, (Right) an' I'd say about six,
 707 six, sixty or summat (Mmm) or seven, you know, in between that age, sixty to
 708 seventy, she, you know, she's like, so laid back it's unbelievable. (Mmm) I can't
 709 believe she was born in that era. (B: Laughs)

710 A Yeah, yeah. Okay. (.) Um, the next, kind of, set of questions are about, (.) cos
 711 we've been sort of skipping about a bit, (to an' fro) um, were about , about sexual
 712 relationships an' dating. (Yeah) I mean, I guess we've talked quite a lot about that
 713 already, (.) e:r, is there anythin' (.) is there anythin' a', about dating or sexual
 714 relationships, be it casual sex or, or, kind of, relationships, that we 'aven't, we
 715 'aven't had a chance to talk about?

716 B Casual sex, I got off with three straight blokes. (Right) (B: Laughs) 'Cos, er, they
 717 was curious, you know, I'm an', like, in [name of a LGB pub/club], (Mmm) go
 718 down, walking to [a city centre location], an', like, drinking lager cos I drink that
 719 a lot, so I go to the toilets in [a city centre location] an' they're having a piss an'
 720 that, you know, on numerous occasions people's been walkin' behind me an' I'm
 721 like, [looks over shoulder] sort of thing, 'are they gonna jump me or what?' An' I
 722 go into the toilets, an' on one occasion I was in the urinals, relieving my bladder,
 723 an' this bloke was, like, two urinals away from me, doin' the same thing. I was
 724 finished, pulled my zip up, went to wash my hands , 'e went to wash 'is hands. As
 725 'e went by me, 'is arm, hand touched my arse, I thought, 'na:a, didn't happen did
 726 it? N:aa.' Came an' washed my hands, dried my hands (.) an' 'e was like, 'e's
 727 standing, stood next to me waiting for the hand drier, even though there's another
 728 one, which was free. An' 'e said to me, 'e says, er, 'where you going now?' An' I
 729 was like, 'wha's it gotta do with you?' He says, 'well I noticed you coming out
 730 [name of a LGB pub/club]', an' I was like, 'yeah, and?' He says 'well', an' he
 731 turn round an' goes, 'are you gay or bisexual?' I was like, 'well I'm bisexual,
 732 what are you?' 'Straight'. An' I was like, (.) 'shit ', you know, 'I'm gonna get
 733 beat up now'. (Mmm) An' 'e says, 'well', you know, 'e says, 'I wanna experience
 734 it, I, you know, me mates've been tellin', you know, 'e turns round an' says
 735 'well', 'is mates, like, say, 'don't knock it till you try it', cos 'e was always, you
 736 know, some of 'is mates have tried it an' they don't like it , an' 'e wanted to try it,
 737 an' I was, like, (.) 'why wanna try it if you're straight?' You know, I couldn't
 738 GET, YOU KNOW, I COULDN'T COMPREHEND in my 'ead. (Mmm) An' 'e
 739 says, 'well I don' wanna, I don' wan' you to fuck me, but I wanna fuck you ', an'
 740 I was, like, (.) 'yeah, right', ss', you know, an' I was, was a bit drunk, went back
 741 to his place, an' we, you know, one thing led to another, (.) we (.) did oral sex an'
 742 he did all oral sex to me, an' I couldn't believe a straight bloke was doin' it , an'
 743 then, like, he eventually let me have sex with 'im, then 'e had sex with me an',
 744 like, I stayed the night, I slept in the same bed with 'im, an' then the next mornin'
 745 we had it an' I then like, I went away, you know, went, did my thing the next day.
 746 (Mmm) An' I was like, you know, pinchin' myself, 'did that really 'appen? Did I
 747 'ave sex with a straight bloke?' (.) an' like, as I said, on numerous occasions,
 748 that's happened, an' like, obviously I've met gay blokes, bisexual blokes, an'
 749 straight women. (.) But it's just, you know, it's weird when you do it with a

750 straight bloke. (.) (Mmm) An' I couldn't comprehend it. (A & B laugh) STILL
 751 CAN'T COMPREHEND IT NOW, but, (Yeah) I'm not a slag! (B: Laughs)

752 A Do you, um, (.) I s'pose the next, kind of, group of questions are about coping
 753 and support (Mmm) um, (.) .and I s'pose some people experience difficulties
 754 either coming to terms with being either gay or bisexual (Uh huh) or, cos of
 755 things (.) that happen to them because of the way other people react, so, so, sort
 756 of, prejudice or, (Yeah) or abuse, or whatever, you know, an', er, an' things like
 757 feeling, feeling frightened, feeling isolated, (.) worryin' about what's safe an'
 758 unsafe sex, things like that (.) .how, I mean, have you experienced any of those
 759 things?

760 B (.) Mmm no. The one, the only one thing I experienced was, (.) er, an' I still get
 761 pestered by this one cheeky person, wants to have unprotected sex with me, an'
 762 wants me to have unprotected sex with him. Obviously, take into account my
 763 healthwise. (Mmm) An', I've told 'im that, you know, 'I'm HIV positive'. He
 764 says, 'I don't give a toss abou'', oh, his actual words was, 'I want to fuck you
 765 without a condom, and I want you to fuck me without a condom.' An' I'm like,
 766 'well, you know I've got HIV though?' An' like, 'well I don't give a toss', (.) so I
 767 asked 'im (.) turned round, says, 'oh, when you left school, have you ever used
 768 condoms before?' He says, 'I'm twenty (.) two an' I haven't used condoms yet.'
 769 (.) I go, 'well, how about blood tests, do you go for tests regular?' 'No, I don't
 770 give a toss if, you know, we all die sooner or later.' (.) It's like, 'well, this
 771 person's got a weird attitude to life. (Mmm) [alarm goes off in room] Oh my god!
 772 (Yeah, um, right, yeah) Strange init? (Yeah) You know, 'e, 'e doesn't know if
 773 'e's got any STDs, or if 'e's got HIV, or 'e's got AIDS, or whatever. (Mmm) So,
 774 someone could have sex with 'im unprotected, an' then he could give them, like,
 775 gonorrhoea_or, (.) any other STDs, or the major one, AIDS or HIV (Mmm) an' 'e
 776 doesn't know 'e's givin' it to people. (.) (Yeah) An', like, what really did my 'ead
 777 in, HIS EXCUSE was first that, 'well, I can't use condoms cos they burst on me.'
 778 (.) (A: Laughs) I was like, 'why do they burst?' 'Oh, my dick's too big'. An' I'm
 779 like, 'yeah RI:GHT!' Condoms can, you know, I've blown condoms up, an' they
 780 can go real big (Yeah) or whatnot, an' they can hold quite a lot of water, (.) an',
 781 like, I've never 'ad a condom burst on me, yeah, I, I've 'ad tight ones, an' they're
 782 too tight an' uncomfortable, so, I've just took 'em off. (Mmm) But, the excuse
 783 was, they burst. (.) So I, I seeked advice on that one first. An' I goes, 'look,
 784 condoms never burst, they're too strong, especially the extra strong ones, (Mmm)
 785 they're all especially made for (.) havin' anal intercourse, but you use water
 786 lubrication'. (Mmm) 'Did you use lubrication?' 'Yeah'. 'SO HOW CAN THE
 787 BLOODY THINGS BURST?' He was like, 'okay, well I 'aven't got a problem,
 788 I've never had sex with a condom'. I was, like, 'tut, (.) go away, leave me.'
 789 (Mmm) An' 'e keeps on pestering me now an' then (.) but I just keep on brushing
 790 'im off (Yeah) I did turn round to 'im once an' say to 'im, (.) 'look, if you wanna
 791 have sex with me you're gonna 'ave to get me totally pissed an', you know, get
 792 some drugs so I can have some drugs an' whatnot, (.) an', like, I'd probably fall
 793 asleep or whatever, an' I wouldn't know what's happening.' An' 'e turn round
 794 and says, 'ooh, I've got a fantasy of fucking people while they're asleep'. I'm
 795 like, 'oh my god!' (B: Laughs) I thought, 'no way!' (B: Laughs) Panicked. (A
 796 Laughs)

- 797 A Okay. Um, (.) I mean, it sounds like that's quite di', it sounds like that, quite a
798 difficult situation (=Mmm) especially if you're, kind of, you know, you know
799 yourself you're H', HIV (=Mmm) positive.
- 800 B I did at, at first before I found, well before I knew, (.) you know, I used to use
801 condoms, (.) an, like, I did find it really (.) uncomfortable, er, it took quite a lot of
802 work to, you know, cos I'd get a condom out, put the condom on, an' I'd lose me
803 hard on. (Mmm) So I'd have to sit there an, like, (.) play with it (Yeah) with the
804 condom on to get it hard, or, ask them to roll over on to their belly so I could see
805 their buttocks. An' then put my balls near their arse an' play with myself to get
806 another hard on. (Mmm) Or take the condom off, then do that, an' then put the
807 condom on quick again, an' then, but I'd lose it. (Yeah) I felt, you know, it was
808 real 'ard being young an', but eventually I got used to it, (Yeah) an' now it's just
809 (.) natural, you know. Have an hard on, slip a condom on, lube, an' well! (B:
810 Laughs)
- 811 A Away you go!
- 812 B Yeah. But I can't, you know, even if someone goes near, you know, if they're
813 like, say, (.) they're like, you know, I'm lying on me back, they're crouched on
814 me, we're kissin' an their arse goes near, my, my cock, my cock just loses it, you
815 know, it just loses its hard on straight away. (.) An then like, they have to, like,
816 play with it an' the condom goes on, an' they can stick their arse near it and it
817 won't die. (Right) It's really strange now. (B: Laughs)
- 818 A So, it's, kind of, the reverse? (Yeah) And, and is that, someth', do you think
819 that's, what, why do you think that is?
- 820 B Obviously, because I know, my healthwise (Yeah) an' I'm too scared of, like,
821 passing on to other people. (Yeah) You know, if I 'ad sex with someone else
822 unprotected and come up 'em or whatever (Mmm) they could catch it an', like,
823 that'd be on my mind forever, you know, 'oh shit, I've just given someone else
824 HIV', (Mmm) you know, an' like, I could not cope with that. (Yeah) Like, when I
825 first, you know, I was goin' out with someone (.) an', like, (.) they didn't want me
826 to use condoms, they wanted to have it unprotected, so I had unprotected sex,
827 went to the hospital, had a test while I was goin' out with them, an' I told 'em I
828 was 'aving unprotected sex, this is, like, the same day testing (Mmm) went back
829 an' they told me I was like, reactive, I'd better use condoms an' get my boyfriend
830 in for a test, I was like, 'oh shit!' (.) So like, went back an' then I found out I was
831 an' he went for a test an' he found out he wasn't. I was like, 'thank fuck for that',
832 [spoken quietly] you know, it was like, 'shit, I might have given someone else
833 HIV, I can't', (=Mmm) 'cope with it.' (Mmm) But then when they found out they
834 wasn't, I was like, 'thank bloody', you know, 'thank the lord!' (Yeah) It was like,
835 one weight off my mind, I mean, I, I went out and got pissed //to celebrate.
- 836 A So that's// a real, a real fear, sort of, (Yeah) infecting somebody else.
- 837 B An' other people do it without, you know, I've known other people to do it
838 without condoms, (Mmm) you know, having sex with other people without
839 condoms, an' passin' it to other people, an' I'm like, 'we:ll', you know, 'he needs
840 a slap', (Yeah) you know, 'he needs it chopping off!'

- 841 A An' do you know, er, h', how old were you when you found out that you were
842 HIV...?
- 843 B Well, I found out in 1995, Christmas time. So that's like, ninety five, ninety six,
844 ninety seven, ninety eight, (.) ninety nine. Four year ago. (Right) Which makes
845 me, (.) I'm not good at maths! (B: Laughs)
- 846 A Twenty one-ish?
- 847 B Yeah.
- 848 A Something like that. (A & B laugh)
- 849 B So it was really hard an' like, I used to come here an' get counsellin', plus I was
850 gettin' counsellin', well, I was gettin' counselling here for, like, my sexuality
851 (Mmm) you know, c', coping with it, an' I was gettin' counsellin' at [name]
852 Hospital for my healthwise. (Mmm) But now, I find here it was, you know, the
853 actual thing was, (.) don't tell the staff, that it was crap here, receiving
854 counselling for my sexual preference. (Right) Cos I was talk', I assumed the
855 woman I was talking to was straight (.) an' in my eyes, straight people don' know
856 what gay, or bisexual, or lesbian people are goin' through (Mmm) an', like, with
857 [name] Hospital, I assu', well, I know, my counsellor's gay. (Mmm) So 'e knows
858 what I'm going through, (Yeah) an', like, in, in my, you know o', obviously, (.) I
859 do feel safe talking to women, but (.) the woman I was talking to here, she was,
860 like, just (.) crap! (Right) You know, an' she was straight, an' it gave me a bad
861 impression of straight women.
- 862 A Right. So that was an individual (Mmm) person here, not, not part of the group?
- 863 B Not part of the group, it was just an individ', you know, an' shh, she's a
864 counsellor (Right) she was just totally crap. [spoken quietly]
- 865 A And is the person, I mean, you're sort of saying that the, the, the guy at the
866 [name] Hospital, kind of knew what you were going through, is, is he, do you
867 know whether he's HIV, do you his HIV (.) status? =
- 868 B =No. The person at the [name] 'ospital, you know, gives me counsellin', he's
869 like, he's healthy, you know, he hasn't got HIV or nothin' like that. (Right) An'
870 he's a: psycho:therapist (Right) so 'e, you know, 'e understands what I'm going
871 through (Mmm) an' I, ss, I've been seeing him since I found out I was HIV
872 positive. (.) An' like, he knows that I've got, like, a bad streak in me. (Right) An'
873 I've never told him that. (B: Laughs) (Right) You know, obviously, (.) I told 'im
874 when 'e 'ypnotised me (Okay) but, like, 'e wanted it to come from me. (Yeah)
875 An', like, one counselling session, this was November time, I told 'im what I was
876 goin' through, you know, getting pestered by this person, getting pestered by this
877 person, getting pestered by a young lad, I say young, I say twelve. (Right) An'
878 like, 'e says 'Luke, what you gonna do about it?' I says, 'well, I'm just gonna
879 keep pushing 'im off me, you know, leave me alone, leave me alone, I don't wan'
880 it'. An' he says, 'Luke, you got a mean streak in ya', 'an't ya?' An' I was like,
881 'me? No:, I'm swe:et, you know, sweet as sugar', an' like, 'e says, 'well why
882 won't you look at me an' tell me?' An' I was like, 'okay then, yeah, I've got a

883 mean streak, you know, but I can't cope, you know, I can't handle it, you know, it
 884 comes out of me, when, you know, when I get angry, you know.' (Mmm) An'
 885 people's told me, it does come out when I get angry an' whatnot. You know, I get
 886 angry an' then, sort of thing. An' 'e says, 'well, do some of these exercises, do
 887 some of this', an' whatnot. (Mmm) An' I says, 'well, smoking, it calms me
 888 down'. (B: Laughs) He says, 'well don't smoke then.' An' I'm like, 'you what?' I
 889 smoke only ten cigarettes, but I got on to twenty, well, sorry forty, (Mmm) I've
 890 got down to twenty again, I'm trying to get back down to ten, but, he knows what
 891 I've been going through so 'e's okay.

892 A Mmm. So it sounds like he's quite a source of support?

893 B //Yeah.

894 A And he's// been a support about stuff to do with HIV...

895 B He's been a support for my healthwise, for my sexual preferen', (.) you know,
 896 sexual preference, I got it out, an' like, you know, with g', what's going through
 897 my life in general, you know, like, I'm gettin' pestered by this bloke, gettin'
 898 pestered by another bloke, gettin' pestered by a woman, er, an' he helps me with
 899 that, an' he also helps me with like, my family problems, you know, like, i.e., my
 900 mother. (Mmm) He like, in a w', in my eyes, he's like another dad. (Mmm) Well,
 901 a mum an' a dad. (Yeah) You know, it's, you know, I can talk to 'im, but I used
 902 to see 'im every fortnightly, then it was reduced to weekly. Oh hang on, it was
 903 weekly, then every fortnightly, then it was monthly, now it's every three months.

904 A Right, and is that okay for you?

905 B Ye:ah. (Yeah) It's brill, you know, cos like, when I was like, when I first found
 906 out, I couldn't cope with it. (Mmm) An' like, I think I trie:d, well, when I first
 907 came out, I (.) tried to kill myself, (Right) an' then like, I coped with that. An'
 908 then when I fel', found out my healthwise [HIV positive], I tried to kill myself
 909 again. (Mmm) An' then I started seein' 'im an' 'e was helping me out. An' 'e's,
 910 when he, when I told 'im I tried to kill myself, well, 'e came into the 'ospital
 911 where I was. He says, 'what you doing there?' You know, 'what you done now?'
 912 an' I was like, er, 'blah, blah, blah'. 'Right, oh', with my healthwise, 'look, you
 913 got loads of life', you know, 'life in front of you'. I was, like, 'yeah but', (Mmm)
 914 you know, I thought it was, (.) you know, few weeks an' you're dead. (Yeah) An'
 915 like, now I realise, I could walk out, get knocked over by a bus, that's killed me.
 916 My virus 'asn't. (Yeah) So, like, I coped with that, an', like, a few years later I
 917 tried to kill myself cos (.) one of my boyfriends left me, when I was, like, goin'
 918 out with 'im for two years, (Mmm) an' he came in to see me again.

919 A Right. So he's been there for you through, through (=Yeah=) quite a lot of times?

920 B He's only one (.) friend, you know, who I see as regular as clockwork, or used to
 921 see regular as clockwork, but I see 'im now and then, who came to visit me as
 922 well, an' obviously, my mother and father. (Mmm) That was the only people who
 923 came to visit me. (.) (Right) An' like, I've, I got numerous amount of friends, but
 924 I don't class 'em as friends now. I class them as, like, associates, (Mmm) cos they
 925 never came to see me when I was in 'ospital (Mmm)

- 926 A When you, you said that one of the times that you tried to kill yourself was, was,
927 kind of, around the time when you were comin' out. What, what //was that about?
- 928 B It was jus',// jus' stress, cos like, you know, (.) when I left school, an', like, the
929 woman I was goin' out with when I was at school, she, like, went 'er separate
930 way and I went my separate way, an', like, you know, I had, like, boyfriends, but
931 I didn't 'ave any girlfriends. (Mmm) An', like, I came 'ome one day, my dad
932 said, 'when you gonna get another bloody girlfriend?' I was like, 'Dad just give
933 me time, you know, I'm com', I'm try' na get my life sorted out, you know, earn
934 some money' and whatnot. An' 'e was like, 'well you need a girlfriend, you need
935 to get married'. I'm like, 'yeah, right', you know, 'get off my back'. An' I says,
936 'why do you want me to get married anyway?' He says 'oh, to carry on the family
937 name'. I'm like, 'tut, is that all you want me for?' (Mmm) You know, 'I'm your
938 son, you know, you should respect what I, you know, what I do'. (Yeah) So, like,
939 I just couldn't cope with it, an' that's when I just (.) tried it , an' they didn't know
940 why, an' they still don't know why to this day.
- 941 A Who? //Your, your mum and dad?
- 942 B They think, my, my parents.// They don't know why to this day. But they know
943 why in one, you know, when I tried killin' myself, when my boyfriend left me,
944 they know about that, (Yeah) but they didn't know why when I like, er, when I
945 was younger an' I was coming out, well, trying to cope with it. (Mmm) You
946 know, jus' too stressful, especially when you got, like, a parent, that, like, my
947 dad's now sixty two, he was in about, say, late forties, early fifties, (Right) you
948 know, an' like, they're set in their way, (Mmm) an' you, you know.
- 949 A What do you think would have made, what would've made it easier for you,
950 sounds like it was really tough, an' there was a lot of (.) stress an' ...?
- 951 B Yeah. If there was summat at school about it. (Yeah) Obviously, there's sexual
952 education. You have sex with a woma:n, an' then they show the bit where the
953 baby goes an' all that, you know, the egg grows an' whatnot (Mmm) then the
954 woman gives birth to the baby, an' then bleugh! The afterbirth comes out, that's
955 when I went to the toilet. Came back. An' they didn't say anythink about any
956 other sexual, (.) you know, sexualities or anything like that. They just put, 'you're
957 a man an' a woman, they have sex', they didn't show you the sex bit, (Mmm=)
958 they just sh', you know, 'there's a male, there's a female ', they showed you
959 naked bodies, it went blank or it went black, an' then there was, like, the egg, you
960 know, 'oh this what happens when you have sex, you produce a baby, you know,
961 the egg', an' I was like, 'tut, yeah, right'. You know, I know how you have sex,
962 I've seen, you know, cos, obviously my dad is a bit (.) laid back with 'is pornos,
963 an' he used to, like, play porno, 'well this is how you 'ave sex Luke', an' I was
964 like, 'eugh!' (A & B laugh) You know, 'eugh!', sort of thing. An' like, at school
965 they didn't say anything. An' they should do summat else for you, for young
966 people at school as well, (Mmm) you know, like, if someone's gay at school, you
967 know, it's real hard for 'em, (Yeah) an' there should be, like, a counsellor (.) at
968 school. Obviously, they've got ss', nurses and doct', they 'aven't got doctors, but
969 they got nurses 'an't they at school? (Mmm, yeah) They should 'ave a counsellor
970 as well, (.) so, like, if anyone th', thinks they're that way, or feels they're that

971 way, (Mmm) (.) they can go and see the counsellor. (Yeah) There's was, there
972 was nothing.

973 A So that would've been helpful?

974 B Yeah.

975 A I guess more, so more in', information at, in, in sex ed., also somebody who was
976 there to, kind of, counsel?

977 B Yeah, like, if you se', sex education, they show you, like, a man an' a woman
978 havin' the:ir thing, then a female an' female 'avin' their thing, an' a man an' a
979 man 'avin' their thing, obviously, they don't show you the sex, but tell you the
980 ins an' outs of it, then people can, (.) you know, 'oh, (.) I, I prefer that', or, you
981 know, 'I have', you know, sort of thing. (Mmm) An' like, there'd be a counsellor,
982 there should be a counsellor there at the same time they're showin' you the sex
983 education. (Yeah) An' then, like, the counsellor should say, 'but if you feel, you
984 know, you're (.) in, like, one of them brackets, you know, make an appointment
985 to see us or whatever, (Mmm=) an' it won't go any further'.

986 A Yeah. //So it needs to be confidential?

987 B That's, that's what they should be doin' // Yeah.

988 A Yeah.

989 B But they didn't, they, there was nothing like that.

990 A Was there anything about safe sex in your sex //education?

991 B No, // there was nothing about safe sex, you know, 'You have sex, that's it'. (.)
992 An' then like, obviously when I left school I realised it was condoms, an' I didn't
993 know about [name of gay men's health service], (Mmm) an' the [name of gay
994 men's health service] popped up sort of thing. (Yeah) An', like, I went there an'
995 like, free condoms, free lube, er, then, you know, for anyone who takes drugs
996 [spoken quietly], free needles, er, an' there was loads of other things, an' I was
997 like, 'what's a dental dam?' An' there's this, like, STRINGY THING an' I was,
998 like, 'ooh!' So I got some of them, an' I got the gloves, an' I thought, 'ooh, fab!
999 Posh!' (B: Laughs) You know, sort of thing, an' I was, like, 'this is cool sort of
1000 place'. (Yeah) An' I was, like, receiving help from there. But I would never go
1001 there for counsellin', cos I only stick to one place now, (Mmm, yeah) cos I feel
1002 more secure, not, I feel at ease there. (Yeah) Cos if I go an' see someone else for
1003 counsellin', I gotta go through it all again.

1004 A Yeah, I think that's really important (Mmm) that, that, you know, you feel, I
1005 think, I think it's imp', I imagine it might be confusing seeing two.

1006 B Yeah, it'd be really awkward, you know, you talk to one person about one thing,
1007 you'd talk to another person about (.) another thing, plus that same thing, then
1008 you gotta go an' see that person.

- 1009 A Mmm. So, so the guy you see at [name of hospital] is, is gay, is that, it sounds
1010 like that's quite important (.) to you, //you feel...?
- 1011 B I, I, // I feel 'e is gay. I have my own my, my, er, what's the word I'm looking for?
1012 You know, like, bein' a gay person you can tell another gay person, or bein' a
1013 lesbian, you, you know, (Mmm) you can tell people in them brackets, an' I as,
1014 I'm, am say about ninety nine percent certain that he is gay (Right) an', like, in a
1015 way that's, you know, I feel safe with 'im. (Right) You know, I sit down, we 'ave
1016 a chinwag, an' I tell 'im bits and bobs, an' it's, like, fine, you know.
- 1017 A Okay. So in terms of thinking about, kind of, (.) support services (.) for, for, for
1018 young gay (Mmm) people, do you think it's, kind of, important that they're run
1019 by gay people, bi', bisexual people?
- 1020 B Er, for, like, gay, bisexual an' young lesbian people, er, I'd say it'd be really (.)
1021 supportive if they have, like, a lesbian there, a gay person there, an' a bisexual
1022 person. (Mmm) An' like, obviously, a counsellor who, who is in one of them
1023 brackets as well, (Yeah) you know, there, on hand, you know, sort of thing. Like
1024 say, take the example of this group, (Mmm) you know, new member comes in,
1025 youngish, er, an' whatnot, an' they need to talk to someone, they can talk to that
1026 person. Like, there's been a few young people come in 'ere, but they've been
1027 threatened, so they won't come 'ere any more. (Mmm) An' I've told Claire about
1028 it, but nothing's happened.
- 1029 A When you say they've been threatened, they've felt threatened, or, they've,
1030 they've //been...?
- 1031 B They've// been threatened verbally, you know, (=Right) 'ooh, if you go to [the
1032 LGB youth group], if you go in', blah, blah, 'this place, we're gonna twat you
1033 one', (Right) an' I've told, I've given messages to people, to tell 'em, 'look, if
1034 you wanted to go down, you know, down to the group, you can come down to the
1035 group, I'll make sure if', you know, nothing happens to 'em.
- 1036 A So they've been threatened by people outside?
- 1037 B Yeah. Who usually use the group now an' then. (Right) But they're too scared,
1038 (Right) an' I know what it is like being, you know, cos the person, I think he's
1039 about, he's just left school, so he's, like, sixteen or seventeen. He's one of them
1040 age groups, (Mmm) so 'e's, like, influent', can't say the word, you know what I
1041 mean, yeah? (Yeah) Influential, ss, you know, someone can say something to 'im,
1042 he's, like, 'shit! I won't go there any more'.
- 1043 A Yeah, so he's, sort of, //easily influenced?
- 1044 B That's, // yeah, that's how I felt, when I was young (Yeah) but no:w I've, you
1045 know, I know what it's like, (Yeah) an' it would be helpful if 'e came back in,
1046 an', like, if anyone started on 'im, 'e could, like, say, 'look', you know, to
1047 member of staff, 'look, 'e's giving me stick ', (Mmm) then the staff should have
1048 words with 'im.

1049 A So it s', I mean it sounds, 'cos, cos you've talked a bit (.) at the beginning of the
1050 interview about, kind of, growing u', an' the, the scene sometimes being quite
1051 frightening feeling (Yeah) an', and also, kind of, sometimes these, you know, it's
1052 not always easy to attend, attend these groups. (Mmm) How do you think that
1053 could be made easier in a way, or could be different?

1054 B Errrr, gosh. (.) Well some groups are okay, an' like, obviously, there's, there's a
1055 group for, like, (.) er, prostitutes, you know, like, rent boys an' whatnot (Mmm)
1056 in [name of a city], there is a group for that in [name of a city]. (.) Er, er, really,
1057 they should', they should 'ave, like, as I say, something, different members of
1058 staff (Mmm) an' a counsellor there, you know, on hand or whatever, or the
1059 person come an' arrange a meeting with the counsellor, with a member of staff
1060 there. (Yeah) So like, whatever, er...

1061 A Do you think they're helpful, these, sort of, these sorts of, kind of, groups?

1062 B So:me groups, yeah. One thing would, would be advisable for the groups, like, on
1063 the the clause, you know the rules, [ground rules for the group] (Mmm) is like, if
1064 there's a new member comes in, an' if, like, if it's a female, or male, an' if they're
1065 cute, the people should not, like, stare at 'em, 'cor, he's cute', sort of thing
1066 (Mmm) an' whatnot. You know, cos, like, first impressions last. (Yeah) An' they
1067 should be (.) subtle and diplomatic and keep their own, you know, like, if they
1068 think, 'phwoar, he's flippin' sexy, I'd love to get into 'is knickers', sort of thing,
1069 they should keep it in their, you know, not say it or whatever, or say it to someone
1070 else, (Mmm) some other person, cos it will go round. Keep their opinions to
1071 themselves (Yeah) an' whatnot.

1072 A So it feels, ss', so', something about it being, (.) um, unhelpful? Or, o:r (.)
1073 frightening, if, if you go to a place an', an' your sort of, sss', sss', sexualised, or
1074 seen as, sex is, kind of...?

1075 B Yeah. Like, I'm trying to think. It would be helpful if the person, people wouldn't
1076 think, 'phwoar, he's cute, I would love to fuck 'im', sort of thing. (Mmm) They
1077 shouldn't think that, they should think, 'well, 'e's a new member, 'e needs to
1078 know things an' whatnot', yeah? (Mmm) Advise 'im, help him out, or her. (Yeah)
1079 Not just think, 'corwo:ar', you know, 'I wanna get into 'is underwear'. (Yeah)
1080 Cos that'll, that is, like, a bad thing. An' it's a bad im', you know, first
1081 impressions last, an' it doesn't help the group.

1082 A No. Why do you think that happens? What do you think, I mean, how easy is it do
1083 you think for young people, young gay or bisexual people to...?=
1084

1084 B =When I was young, whenever I saw someone cute, I was like, 'fuckin' he:ll!'
1085 You know, 'I wanna get in', you know, but now, yeah, I ss', I keep my opinions
1086 to myself, (=Mmm=) I don't say, you know, I don't say it to another person, cos
1087 it, it does go round, (Yeah=) it's like Chinese whispers.

1088 A Do you think it's easy to meet, (.) sort of, um, potential boyfriends or, or...?=
1089

1089 B =//in groups?

1090 A girlfriends, // if you're, if you're young an' gay?

1091 B It is but, like, being young and gay, er, (.) the relationships doesn't last long.
 1092 (Right) An' I found that out. I'd 'ave like, (.) cos there's some (.) Also, young
 1093 people do go cruisin' as well, (.) you know, cruisin' the toilets. (Mmm) You
 1094 know, they assume that's the only thing. Cos I met this one person in, in a toilet.
 1095 He was, (.) sixteen, going on seventeen, you know, he's left school an' whatnot,
 1096 he's on YTS, an' his parents don't know 'is sexual preference, 'e's totally gay,
 1097 an' 'e's only in, well, 'e comes to [name of a city], Monday, Tuesday,
 1098 Wednesday, that's it. An' on 'is lunchbreaks, he goes to the toilets, and (.) has (.)
 1099 his (.) fun? (Mmm) Then goes back to work. (.) An', like, I've told 'im about
 1100 groups, but, (.) he's gotta, like, get out. An' some parents are really strict,
 1101 (Mmm=) you know, you've gotta be in at a certain time, (Yeah) an' it's, like,
 1102 awkward. (Yeah=) =An' like, obviously, cos 'e lives in [name of a city suburb],
 1103 (.) which is roughly, it's about five miles away from the city centre. (Mmm, yeah)
 1104 An' some, you know, buses run every hour, (Yeah) an' if 'e's got a deadline to
 1105 get there, 'e can't come to a certain group. (.) I 'ave told him like, there's a, you
 1106 know, a group on a Tuesday, a group on a Wednesday, a group on a Thursday.
 1107 He's not bothered coming to it.

1108 A Mmm. So thi', I think you made, that's quite an important point, cos there are
 1109 some people who, either for, sort of, because they live out, or because they have
 1110 strict parents, or cos they don't have enough money, (Mmm=) perhaps, can't
 1111 always get to these, sort of, groups.

1112 B Yeah, an' then like, they get in, er, they go an' cruise around the toilets, an' they
 1113 get off in toilets, they probably get nicked, then they'll get brought out. (Mmm)
 1114 You know, they haven't done it themselves, they've been brought out the closet
 1115 by someone else, or by the law. (Mmm) Which is a bad thing, you know,
 1116 especially if you're living with parents, (Yeah) an' you, like, you got caught for
 1117 cruising in a toilet, a public toilet. (.) No way! Cos, like, it's, you know, you can
 1118 imagine what the parents'd be going through. (Mmm) So like, I've tried to
 1119 influence 'im to come to a cert', you know, come to a group. (Yeah) An' to be
 1120 ss', subtle about it, you know, cos I was, I was in the toilet (.) on one, you know,
 1121 on one occasion I was in the toilet, I went to wash, you know, I went to the urinal,
 1122 (.) done my biz., went into the, er, washroom, washed my hands, an' I noticed 'im
 1123 lookin' at my arse. (.) I thought, 'wait a minute'. He's sitting down, on the t', you
 1124 know, on the table in the washroom staring at my arse, 'he's gotta be', [B:
 1125 coughs] you know, 'he's gotta be gay', (Mmm) or whatever. I went and dried my
 1126 hands, an' 'e come to the doorway (.) lookin' at me, an' I looked at 'im, an' I
 1127 looked down in his genital area, noticed 'is zip was down, I thought, 'yeah, he is'.
 1128 I walked out, 'e walked after me, you know, walked out after me, caught up with
 1129 me, says, 'do you wanna go somewhere?' An' I was like, 'pardon?' You know, 'e
 1130 was, like, approachin' me, I could 'ave been, like, a policeman. (Mmm) You
 1131 know, I could 'ave been, like, a gay basher, (.) an' how's 'e gonna exper', expe',
 1132 you know, exp', well, explain to 'is workplace that 'e's just been beaten up on his
 1133 lunchbreak, (Mmm, yeah=) you know. So, we sat down, you know, I went with
 1134 'im to a certain place, gave 'im a few cuddles, kisses, he, he was like, just g', you
 1135 know, I knew what 'e wanted straight away, (.) sex. (Mmm) But no way. An' I
 1136 said to 'im, I told 'im about groups an' whatnot. He wa'n't interested. You know,

well I think 'e was, but 'e couldn't do it because of his parents. (Yeah) I even gave him my mobile 'phone number. (.) Said, 'look, if you wanna go a certain place, 'ere's my 'phone number, 'phone me up. If you 'aven't got enough money, I'll 'phone you back'. (Mmm) I 'an't ss', heard from 'im, or seen 'im in about a month's time. (Mmm) So like, you know, I advise people, try to help 'em out, if they don't meet me 'alfway, I don't meet them. (Yeah) You know, cos it's well, it's a waste of time, it's wasting your time an' energy.

A Mmm. Okay. Have you, in terms of just thinking about, cos, sounds like there's been, there's been quite a lot in your, your life (=Yeah, yeah=) that you've had to kind of, cope with, um, you know, I, I, your health, you know, stresses about, about your sexuality (Mmm) your dad's reaction, you know, we've talked about quite a lot of stuff. (.) Have you, (.) [interview briefly interrupted to warn us it was five minutes before the centre closed] um, (.) can't think what I was saying now. Have you ever, have you ever been forced to ss', to, sort of, seek help that's been, or had help, that's been really unhelpful or...?

B No. You know, obviously, people's tried to advise me, (Mmm) who are not (.) sexual orientated my side sort of thing, I say 'look, don' even go there', you know, 'It's not your cup o' tea, you don't know the situation on it, so, shurup'. (Mmm) An' they shurup. (B: Laughs)

A Um, I'm just tryin'a skip through quickly, and see whether there's any stuff. How, an' I'm just thinking about, about a while ago now, when you were younger, how was it that you first, kind of, made contact with, with other...? =

B =Gay people?

A Or bisexual...?

B Doin' the same thing when I was younger, I used to do, cruising toilets, (Right) which is really immoral and unhygienic and, (.) an' what's the word, (.) yeah, immoral, unhygienic, and it's not right, (Right) you, you know there should be, like, little notices, you know, like, in the paper, there should be like, in the local paper, advertisements for, you know, like, for people, you know, 'gay, lesbian, bisexual group meets', blah, blah, blah. 'if you want informal advice, 'phone number', blah, blah, blah. (Mmm) There's nothing for it, (Right) especially for young people, you know. Or there should be, like, flyers in school, you know, like, i', on, they should 'ave, like, a little poster thing. (Yeah) You know, on the school board, 'gay an' lesbian peo:ple, if you wanna know more information, go', blah, blah, blah. (Yeah) Or 'phone this number up'. An' it should be a freephone number (.) (Yeah) Because, obviously, you know, Childline, freephone number, (Mmm) it should be a freephone number, cos there is young people out there, (Mmm) an' they don't know anything about it, anything, an' they go round the toilets.

A So, kind of, for you, the first, first route into, sort of meeting (.)...?

B Gay people, //was going round...

A Gay people//

- 1179 B Cruising toilets.=
- 1180 A =Was going cruising, an' having, havin' sex?
- 1181 B Casual sex, in toilets. (Yeah) Which was, now when I think about, is dirty.
- 1182 A I guess it's, kind of, quite d', a dangerous thing, as you say, (Mmm) you could get
1183 arrested, could get...
- 1184 B Caught or beaten up, or whatever.
- 1185 A Mmm. So how, so then how did you, kind of, find out about...?
- 1186 B The groups?
- 1187 A Yeah, the groups.
- 1188 B I met one particular person, who was at university, an' 'e told me about the
1189 groups, an he gave me fly', you know.
- 1190 A Right. So it was, kind of through someone else?
- 1191 B Yeah. (.) [B:burps] Pardon me. He gave me, like, flyers on certain groups. Well,
1192 gave me a flippin' booklet! (Mmm) You know the, er, the [name] project thing.
1193 (Yeah) Gave me that booklet, an' I was like, (.) sittin', I was sittin' on the BOG,
1194 lookin', I was like, 'OH MY GOD!' An' I looked at 'im, an goes, 'oops! I'd, like,
1195 done the wrong thing, an' started off in the toilets!' (B: Laughs) An' 'e says, 'oh,
1196 we all do that, event', you know. (Mmm) Even 'e did it, (Yeah) an' 'e, you know,
1197 so it's like, you know, there's a grapevine, sort of thing. (Yeah) But they should
1198 stop it. You know, toilets, they should, you know, they should do summat at
1199 school first.
- 1200 A Yeah. I think that's, that's, really, yeah, important. Right, it sounds like we'd
1201 better stop. (B: Laughs) I could talk for hours. (Mmm) Thank you.

Interview 7
Sarah
Interview Date
28/4/99

- 1 A People describe their sexualities in lots of different ways. How do you describe
2 yours?
- 3 B Gay. Don't like the word lesbian. (.) I just don't like the word lesbian, so I'd
4 rather be known as gay really.
- 5 A And, um, (.) most people experience a whole range of different thoughts and
6 feelings when they first start to realise they might be gay. Can you, kind of, tell
7 me, sort of, how you felt, what thoughts went through your mind and what you
8 did, when you, when you first started to realise. I guess also how old you were
9 when you started to realise.
- 10 B Well (.) when I first knew I was gay it was like when I was nearly thirteen, I
11 think, and it was like first, the first ever time I've thought that, you know, the first
12 time I had feelings I think it was when I was, you know, certain programmes
13 came on and I saw like these women on telly and thought 'ohhh I like it' an' all
14 and, er, (.) and just on telly and magazines and stuff 'n' and everybody at school
15 was going on about their boyfriends 'n' an' used to say to me, 'what, haven't you
16 got a boyfriend yet?' and I'm going, 'no, no'. So, er, I wasn't interested in boys
17 obviously, (B: Laughs) so people were getting a bit sussed and my mum, um, (.)
18 didn't know at that time 'n', um, it was 'ard keeping it from people cos I didn't
19 feel like I could tell anybody at that (Mmm) age.
- 20 A What was, what was that about? was it, did it feel...?
- 21 B It, it felt (.) you know, I wanted to say but I didn't feel that the: (.) I thought it
22 was just, I didn't know why I was feeling like that to begin, at the beginning an' I
23 thought why, I felt strange like it wasn't, like I shouldn't be like that but, as I got
24 older, when I was about fifteen, I felt it was right, but I didn't tell anybody that,
25 er, I didn't come out until I was eighteen. (Right) So it took quite a few years.
- 26 A Mmm. So and how, can you tell me what that was like, sort of, sort of, keeping
27 that, keeping that from people?
- 28 B Hell. Cos, especially being in a small school as I was, cos it was a disabled
29 school, and I thought well I can't tell anybody till I leave cos, cos it's only a small
30 school an' being, er, disabled as well you don't really, you know, you don't really
31 tell anybody in a small school like that cos you get you don't know how they can
32 take it and you know. When there's more people you can deal with it but it's hard
33 innit, so...
- 34 A And what, what were your, kind of, I guess, concerns about, about how people
35 might react?
- 36 B Yeah, um, I mean I've got to be honest I, I 'ad a crush on a teacher once and I, I
37 don't know if she noticed or not, but it was really 'ard, it really was an', er, it was
38 embarrassing as well (B: Laughs) cos er, I dunno, I mean I just react how I react
39 and sometimes (.) I 'ope that people don't pick it up sometimes, but you don't,
40 when you first with them you can't help it and it's like, I hope they don't notice
41 (A: Laughs) and that's what, that was what was 'a:rd cos, you know like when
42 you fancy somebody you might look at them and turn away but, like, you know,

43 but some people can take that funny if you keep doin' it, and that's what I had to
44 watch when I was younger, you know wharra I mean? (Mmm) and that.

45 A So you had to be //careful about...

46 B I used to// I used to get like comments off people, 'why do keep?...' You know,
47 'what's up with you?' And like and so, and one person says 'oh you're not,
48 you're not a poof are you?' I thought I was really just, I was really angry (Mmm)
49 so, er, (.) yeah (.) an' at the, at that time anyway when I was at thirteen and that I
50 was coming to terms with like, cos when I was younger with my disability I
51 didn't know any different as such and was growing up, (Mmm) er, as I got older,
52 (.) er, from thirteen til I was (.) seventeen it was the 'ardest years to deal with
53 'aving a disability and again to come to terms with the fact I'm going to be in a
54 wheelchair. (Mmm) So, as well as that I had to put up with that as well, so...

55 A Right, so sort, of two things here (Yeah) that you're dealing with at the same
56 time?

57 B Yeah, it wasn't easy at all.

58 A No. How do you think, um, how do you think you coped with having both those
59 things to, kind of, deal //with?

60 B Er//, well, the disability I was, was fine to deal with but that, that together, just,
61 er, you know that was (.) horrible, er, but, um, (.) it got easier the older I got.
62 (Mmm) You know, so er,...

63 A Did you do anything? Did you, sort of, was, did you try to find out anything
64 about, sort of...?

65 B No, because the, the, um, the gay scene in [name of a town] isn't that big at all.
66 (Right) They've got groups and that but they've only just started up groups a
67 couple of years ago, but it's only a small town anyway and (.) the access isn't a
68 hundred percent and...

69 A The physical, sort of, //access?

70 B Yeah//, and then they've only got like. er, pubs, like a few pubs and a club and
71 they've got stairs and (Mmm) like in the club itself, but the pubs are open but, (.)
72 you know, (.) no, there wasn't, there wasn't really much there for me, so...

73 A Okay. So you said it was about, kind of, you were about eighteen when you,
74 (Yeah) when you came out?

75 B Don't I remember! (B: Laughs) a:h (.) I remember telling, telling, er, cos what it
76 was, one night when we went on 'oliday, we went on 'oliday anyway, er, for a
77 week and one night, um, me sister was talking about relationships and, you know,
78 about boyfriends and that, an' we were just talking and, I don't know, I felt it was
79 right and after, she questioned me, a question about, you know, fishing for
80 answers you know what I mean cos I think she knew that I was, that I was going
81 to say something, cos it was getting to that stage where I was, you know, I said
82 summut, so. Anyway we was talking all night and she asked me and I, I said 'no,

83 no' and she kept, and she said something else, and I said I might as well tell you
 84 now (.) I'd told my sister on her own, she said 'well why', she said, 'I knew all
 85 along, why didn't you tell me?' and I felt stupid like, you know, (Mmm) like
 86 when I told my mum, I told her when we got back home, and my sister didn't say
 87 anything and, e:r, til we got back home and (.) my mum asked me an' I, an' like I
 88 said, 'yeah I am, why? I am gay and that' and she went quiet, she didn't speak
 89 much for the week, I mean she spoke to me but she didn't (.) be how she were
 90 normally was with me. So, (Mmm) it was difficult, but she's the most supportive
 91 person in the world now.

92 A Is she?

93 B Yeah, I mean if anybody says anything, like if anybody (.) says anything not of,
 94 anything horrible to me she'll say well (.) you know, I haven't got no problems
 95 with it, you know. (Mmm) I mean she's got friends who are gay herself, you
 96 know.

97 A Do you think that makes it easier for her?

98 B Well no, because the thing that was (.) hard, I think she didn't expect her own
 99 daughter to be gay and I think that she, she says now that it she's not against
 100 people who are gay it was just the shock of her own (.) daughter, so...

101 A Mmm. What do you think she was, kind of, worried about, or upset about?

102 B I think it was this, you know, my mum's a different generation anyway, of
 103 course, but she says like, I had a talk to her about this once, and she said, um, it's
 104 because, like, when she was younger, people, (.) it was not talked about an' she
 105 was scared about what people were going to say about 'er daughter and she didn't
 106 want me to get upset and stuff, but she's proud about it now, like proud that I'm
 107 happy of who I am. (Yeah) She doesn't, she says as long as it makes you happy,
 108 that's all I want for you.

109 A That's great.

110 B So...

111 A So, it sounds like she found it a little bit, //sort of, a shock at first?

112 B At the beginning//, yeah.

113 A And then?

114 B It was a shock thing.

115 A Right. So you told your mum, and you told your sister first?

116 B Yeah, me sister first.

117 A And she'd kind of already guessed?

118 B She guessed, yeah (B: Laughs).

- 119 A Did she tell you why, how she, sort of, knew?
- 120 B Er, yeah, she says, (.) I goes, 'how did you knew?', she says 'it's just, I didn't
121 know, she says it's, you know what I mean, I, like, through your personality,
122 what sort of things you do', and she says, cos I 'ad posters up on my wall like of
123 women and she has blokes on the wall, so (B: Laughs) that gave it away a bit, you
124 know.
- 125 A Yeah, yeah. So they were both, it sounds like they were both very supportive.
- 126 B Yeah.
- 127 A And then, have you come out to other people since then, or... ?
- 128 B Yeah, my friends, um, me very close friends and people who are close to me,
129 yeah. But I find it, like for anyone who's gay, anybody at all, it's the 'ardest
130 thing, like you're forever coming out for the rest of your life, (B: Laughs) (Yeah)
131 and that's the 'ardest thing as well. (Yeah) Cos you're finding you have to do it
132 all the time or not bother to say anything cos, you know, cos sometimes I think
133 well, (.) 'not again!'. You know, cos you have to, or not quite, I mean, I don't tell
134 everyone, (Mmm) just people who are who new friends I meet or whatever, er, if
135 I get know 'em and they're really good friends I'll say (.) cos without, if I kept
136 that from them, you know, an' they found out then they didn't want know, they
137 wouldn't be friends in the first place would they? They just wouldn't be, if they
138 were against it, so I might as well be honest in the first place.
- 139 A Yeah. Do you, do you, what, what kind of influences your choice to tell someone
140 or not to tell someone? Do you know what I mean? I mean how do you decide?
141 Cos I know what you mean about the, sort of, you're forever having to come out.
142 (Yeah) Cos I guess unlike a disability, (Yeah) a, a physical disability, people
143 can't tell immediately (Yeah) by looking at you so you are having to do this.=
- 144 B =I still get the things with the disability where, where like, you know, this old
145 bloke came up to me once and said, 'what, what, what accident have you had?',
146 you know, he thought it was an accident, cos I don't look, um, (.) disabled,
147 disabled, if you know what I mean, with, um, really bad legs where, (.) you know,
148 I do (.) I don't look, you know like, not look, I mean (.) cos, some people's legs
149 are worse than others' (Mmm) where, they, you know what I mean, you can tell
150 that their knees, knees, cos I've had operations on my legs so (.) me knees are
151 straighter, so I sit better, so people think I've just had a op a like, er, (.) like er, (.)
152 accident, like, so, (Mmm) but I say 'no it's just CP', like I haven't got it as bad as
153 other people, but, you know, which I'm grateful (B: Laughs) for, you know, it
154 could've been worse, but, (Yeah) so.
- 155 A I'm trying to think what I asked, what we were saying. I guess I was, sort of,
156 asking you (.) how you decide, or what, what influences you when you decide to
157 tell someone, or when you //decide not to tell someone?
- 158 B Well, um, sorry, // sorry. Um, (.) well what really rags me up, when I get really
159 angry is when I'll be like in restaurants, or just sitting around waiting for
160 something in a queue and you hear people like just talking about things and you,

161 you know, they'll be saying oh and then you'll hear it, conversation about 'oh he,
 162 he's gay or she's gay oo:h' you know what I mean? and that really rags me off,
 163 and then if somebody, er, says to me, you know, a, a bloke, cos I've got a lot of
 164 friends who are, er, men, like, er, gay and straight and straight women an' gay
 165 women, you know, everybody, you know what I mean, but when I'm with me
 166 straight mates like, (.) er, straight men, like, me friends, right, um, they assume
 167 they're my boyfriends, you know what I mean, I goes 'no, no', cos I get on with
 168 blokes really well, you know (Mmm) and that's annoys me as well, cos they
 169 think I 'ate all men and I don't. My best friends are mostly men anyway.

170 A Mmm. I guess it's a common (.) //stereotype.

171 B And I get, and, // yeah, and I get the thing of, cos I normally I have my hair a lot
 172 shorter than this and when I put gel on it and put it back all like a style an' I get
 173 like, like I think it was (.) about three months ago, went in a shop and, er, this
 174 woman and her son was like walking past, she goes, 'oh let him come past', and I
 175 says, 'excuse me, I'm a woman', (B: Laughs) and I get that occasionally, you
 176 know, (Mmm) and it just makes me laugh that does really, I think well,
 177 sometimes I like telling people, sometimes I don't. (A: Laughs) It just doesn't,
 178 you know (.) I dunno, you know, it shocks some people, dunnit, you know.

179 A Yeah, yeah. How do you, you know, you talked a bit about, kind of, how you felt
 180 when you were younger, when you were first starting to realise that you might be
 181 gay and, um, maybe a bit unsure and, um, kind of, felt, you said, I think, you felt
 182 it wasn't quite right?

183 B No I, no, I knew that it wasn't, I di', not meaning wasn't right for me, I mean it
 184 didn't seem right cos I, people were saying 'oh they've got boyfriends' and all
 185 that and I felt like, you know, when you're at that young age and think 'ah that's
 186 not right, you shouldn't do that', but after time went on I thought 'no I feel', cos
 187 it was a strong feeling, it wasn't just a feeling, it was like really, really strong
 188 feeling, (Mmm) an' I thought, I felt a lot 'appier when, when I was being true to
 189 me-self really.

190 A Mmm, yeah. And what was that, what was being true to yourself, was that, was
 191 telling...?

192 B Being, telling myself (Right) that it was right to be like that. (=Right, right=) Cos
 193 it was making me feel really depressed and that, you know, (Mmm) keeping it in
 194 all the time. I had to keep it to myself for a few years, (Yeah) so.

195 A So that was quite, was quite hard and quite depressing. (Yeah) So did you come,
 196 did you, kind of, come to that, come to a point where you, you...? =

197 B =Couldn't take no more after that. (Right) Cos after school I went straight into
 198 college and I think that's what did it, cos coming out of a special school which is
 199 not the same as like mainstream so it's more one to one, sort of, really, you get a
 200 lot more 'elp. (Mmm) When you go straight into, cos I went into college after,
 201 you're meeting all kinds of people and it showed me like you've got to be proud
 202 of who y'are, and I met a mix of people who, who were gay for the first, like for
 203 the first time, cos when I was younger I didn't know that many gay people,

204 (Yeah) and that 'elped me and then I got to know people and into groups then, but
 205 even like, there was only one but I mean it'd only started up but there's not much
 206 round there, (Mmm) for me, but I met new people and...

207 A So did that, it feels like that contributed to, to you, kind of, being able //to feel
 208 okay about it?

209 B I, I felt like//, I felt like it had lifted off me shoulders, you know, I felt a massive
 210 release.

211 A Right. So that was, kind of, when you started to, to feel that you were being true
 212 to yourself?

213 B Yeah

214 A And was that before you, before you told your mum and your sister? It was
 215 before you came out to your mum and your sister?

216 B No, I think it was a mixture of both (Right) really.

217 A So it was kind of around, (Yeah) around the same time? Yeah. Okay. So, moving
 218 on and thinking about kind of now, cos (Yeah) we've talked about how you felt
 219 then (Yeah) about being gay. Have, have, how do you feel now about being gay?

220 B I'm proud about it (B: Laughs), you know.

221 A Proud?

222 B I've got no problems with it. I'm, you know, I think I'm getting as I'm getting
 223 older I'm getting more (.) okay with, you know, dealing with people as they start
 224 on me, (Mmm) you know.

225 A So dealing with, sort of, people being abusive (Yeah) or prejudiced, or whatever?

226 B Yeah

227 A Yeah. Cos that can be a hassle, can't it?

228 B Yep.

229 A But you feel you're getting better at dealing with that?

230 B Yeah.

231 A Okay. What, can you think of any positive things about, about being gay? You
 232 know you said you're proud to be gay, can you think of positive aspects of //that?

233 B Well// I think the one of the (.) I remember the first time when I went to London
 234 Pride last year with, um, with Catherine [previous partner] and everyone, er, (.)
 235 an' that was the first time I went to the London Pride and I just saw everybody,
 236 and the atmosphere and everything, so that's helped a lot, you know what I mean,

- 237 and I, (Mmm) just felt brilliant about it, and, (.) and I wouldn't want, I wouldn't
238 want to have a bloke anyway. (B: Laughs)
- 239 A No. So that's definitely one of the positives. (A: Laughs)
- 240 B So that's one too.
- 241 A Yeah. Okay so, I mean, being at Pride?=
242 B =And meeting new people as well who are in the same boat and 'elping younger
243 people I find that, you know, I feel that I'm helping someone, cos I, I wouldn't
244 mind helping younger people in the same position as me, or you know and what
245 have you, just helping 'em and (Mmm) saying look, you know, you've got, just
246 helping them through what I went through (Yeah) that's what I wanna do, 'elp
247 people.
- 248 A Yeah. Do you think there's a sense of, um, I'm just thinking about what you said
249 about being at Pride and everybody being there and meeting people who've had,
250 sort of, similar experiences, do you think there's a kind of sense of community,
251 or...?
- 252 B Yeah, there is. I think they're a lot, I think the gay community are a lot, um, (.)
253 close, you know, a lot, you know, they're, they're close, it's I dunno I can't (.)
254 they understand more than (.) I mean (.) do you know what I me:an? It's, I mean,
255 are...
- 256 A I think I do.
- 257 B Yeah. (B: Laughs)
- 258 A I, I mean I guess it's, tell me if I'm, tell me if I'm wrong, I guess I, I'm
259 wondering whether you're, you're, sort of, talking about a kind of closeness or a
260 kind of common experience?=
261 B =Yeah, both, yeah.
- 262 A Yeah, um, yeah, okay. What about, are there any negative ways that being gay
263 has, kind of, affected your life?
- 264 B Mmm, (.) um, yeah, er, because I've 'ad one incident where, er, cos I 'ave carers
265 into 'elp me with certain personal care occasionally, you know? (Mmm) Well I
266 do a lot now cos I've had an operations, before I didn't need so much care but
267 now I do cos I've 'ad operations, an' um (.) they found out from somewhere that I
268 was gay cos I was openly a lot more about it when I was like eighteen and they
269 must of cos everybody knew me and everything, an', er, it just got back to the
270 care agency and they wouldn't come into me. They said, an' I had a big meeting
271 an' they said, I goes 'why? Why aren't you coming into me?' an' 'e said, 'well,
272 (.) you know, we've found out you're gay and we feel threatened by it', and I just
273 went mad, absolutely berserk, and then they apologised at the end of the meeting
274 and said 'we're sorry we'll come in an' sort it out' and I said, 'no, I'm sorry
275 you're not coming in to me', I said 'I'm not 'avin' that'. (Mmm) Know what I
276 mean? So that was one of the worst.

- 277 A Crikey. So did you have to get someone else?
- 278 B Cos I thought to me-self, well, I've got the same feelings as a, a man's got really
 279 if you think about it, you know, and if, if, you know, they'd been, er, they said
 280 they felt, (.) you know, (.) as if, as I mean if they went into a bloke, you know,
 281 they're more like, you know what I mean, it's just the same thi:ng, it's not,
 282 (Mmm, yeah) I mean, I, I they assu:me you fancy every women as walks past and
 283 it's like, 'no!'
- 284 A So it sounds like you had to, you had to, you handled that very, (Yeah) um, in a
 285 very strong way and, sort of, //challenged them?
- 286 B Um, yeah.// I mean, once right the, and another bad experience I had was, er,
 287 when I went out with me ex, who was one of my exes like when I was at college,
 288 (.) er, (.) this boy who was in this other class what we joined, we got friends with
 289 'im and he, and he wanted to go out with me and I, I didn't say anything at first
 290 and he says, he found out I was gay and I says, he lived not far from me at the
 291 time and he was, he came down to his nan's cos she didn't live that far away an'
 292 one night he was drunk and came down me mum's street and shouted like, you
 293 know, 'she's a lesbian' like at the top of his voice and, like, the whole, the whole
 294 two streets heard it. An', and then my mum had to face it, (Right) and that was,
 295 that was, that 'urt me that did. (Yeah) Cos I thought it's my mum's okay, my
 296 mum's proud about it but she shouldn't have had to put up with, you know, cos
 297 it's not my mum's fault, she just has to deal with the receiving end of it, you
 298 know what I mean? (Mmm) Cos peop', neighbours were asking. My mum just
 299 denied it cos she couldn't, like me mum's, um, not exactly, um, in good 'ealth
 300 herself and I didn't think that was fair really, (No) er, I mean she can 'andle
 301 things like that, but it's just how it happened it wasn't nice. (No) You know warra
 302 mean? It was upsetting that was really, cos the 'ole street knew and everything
 303 and they had and you know and then that started that off.
- 304 A Your dad off?
- 305 B No, no, that, it started that up with people talking (Oh, right) and 'assling and all
 306 that but...
- 307 A Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, I guess, I suppose both those experiences are quite, (Yeah)
 308 quite, um, nasty cases of, of people being prejudiced against, against (=Yeah=)
 309 gay people and kind of targeting that at you. I guess that is one of the negatives.
- 310 B Yeah.
- 311 A Okay. If you could choose your sexual identity, would you choose to be gay or
 312 straight (.) //or bisexual?
- 313 B Oooh,// gay of course! (B: Laughs)
- 314 A Gay, of course?
- 315 B Yeah.
- 316 A Okay. Why? (A: Laughs)

- 317 B Cos I'm, (.) I love, like I wouldn't want to be anything else, cos I don't know
 318 anything else, you know what I mean, and I, I feel 'appiest, I mean people 'ave
 319 said that to me before, just curious to see 'would you like be, you know go out
 320 with a bloke.' I said, 'NO, NO!' (A: Laughs) Ple:ase, I'd rather have a good cup
 321 of tea! (B: Laughs)
- 322 A (A: Laughs) Definitely. Okay. (.) Um, we've talked a bit already about kind of,
 323 um, when you came out to your mum and your sister, and the next set of
 324 questions are about relationships with different people in your life, um,
 325 particularly, I guess, family, you know family and friends and just I suppose I'm
 326 particularly interested in, in how you think your being gay has affected those
 327 relationships, if at all.?
- 328 B With (.) friends?
- 329 A With either, well first of all perhaps, if we start off with, with your family. We've
 330 talked about your mum, and your mum, kind of, (Yeah) it sounded like your mum
 331 was quite accepting?
- 332 B Yeah, she's, she's wonderful my mum is, she is.
- 333 A Do you think that your, do you think that your relationship with your mum was
 334 affected during that time when, kind of, you were wondering, or, or knew you
 335 were gay but //didn't want tell people?
- 336 B I don't//, I think, cos my mum turned round and, the very first, like at first and
 337 said, she asked me and I denied it when really, when at first, the first ever time
 338 she asked me it didn't feel like right saying, that's why I came out at eighteen
 339 and, and, um, (.) and I think she thought it was a phase, she says, 'oh Sarah it's a
 340 phase' and I goes 'oh', and then like, then she realised when I got to like eighteen
 341 it wa', an', an' I goes, an' she said, an' then 'so do you want to', you know, I
 342 said, 'it's a long phase then i'n't it like' (B: Laughs) she says, 'well', and it
 343 started her thinking and then I think she realised then. (Right) So I think she was,
 344 you know, cos I dunno, she just wanted, (.) you know, she thought I'd be 'appy
 345 being straight, but I said Mum, like what you said, are you 'appy straight or gay,
 346 and I said 'Mum, I'm 'appy being the way I am'. (Yeah) She says 'but you've
 347 been through a lot', you know, 'you've been through 'assle' and I says 'I'm 'appy
 348 with who I am, okay I've 'ad 'assles with people, but I wouldn't change 'em for
 349 the world'. (Yeah) So, yeah.
- 350 A Okay. So (.) do you think that your relationship with your mum's been affected at
 351 all?
- 352 B No, in fact it's made it stronger. (Right) Like cos that's, you know, being honest
 353 with, with me mum like, you know, an' that and I mean she could've took it the
 354 other way and chucked me out and that was a, you know what I mean, and I was
 355 worried about that at first and then I thought 'no'. I had a feeling she'd be alright.
- 356 A Yeah, so it's...

- 357 B A few of my friends haven't been so lucky, you know, they've been out on the
358 street, you know, I just think, well, my mum's brilliant, you know, she's there for
359 me.
- 360 A Yeah. (Yeah) So, sort of, kind of, being, being able to be honest and share that
361 has been (Yeah) //a strengthening...?
- 362 B Stronger//, yeah.
- 363 A And I, I, I guess sort of, how about your sisters? (My sister?) Is that the same
364 thing (Yeah, yeah) with your sister, or...?
- 365 B Yeah, I think it's made it better cos I don't have to make excuses or lie or stuff
366 like that cos I don't, I'm not the sort of person who lies anyway, and being, when
367 you're like, well you know 'ow you say stuff to get out of stuff and it's, you
368 know, sort of, I, I found myself doing that when I was younger and I thought I
369 shouldn't be lying about it, so I felt better when I told everybody.
- 370 A Yeah. So that time when you were, kind of, when you hadn't come out to them
371 felt a bit, bit difficult, (Yeah) felt like you weren't, weren't quite being honest?
372 An...=
- 373 B =Yeah that put a lot of stress on it as well.
- 374 A Yeah, so, so although, so I guess, yeah, your relationship was under, under stress,
375 kind of, (Yeah) not that it wasn't close or whatever but it was just a bit awkward?
376 Or?
- 377 B Yeah, at the time.
- 378 A Yeah, kind of keeping a part of you, (Yeah) secret or all the time. Okay. What
379 about other family?
- 380 B Well my cousin, my cousin, um, Sam, she's gay as well. (Right) So it's, you
381 know, I mean she's younger than me she's only fifteen and she's finding it 'ard
382 still. I mean she's with a girlfriend, but she, her mum doesn't know about it
383 though, you know.
- 384 A Right. But she's been able to //tell you?
- 385 B She's been with// her for two years, you know, but she's told me in confidence
386 and (.) I don't know if her mum knows for definite, I think she's got, I dunno, she
387 might know but she hasn't told anybody she knows if she does, but I think we,
388 you know, particularly with that one, cos I'm closer to 'er than most of my other
389 cousins. I love 'em all, but the thing is we've got summat in common so we just
390 have a laugh an' she's going through a 'ard time herself, so...
- 391 A Yeah, so it must be nice for her to have, (Yeah) (B: Laughs) have an older, older
392 gay cousin that she can talk to?
- 393 B Yeah.

- 394 A Don't you think that would have been nice, nice for you when you were, sort of,
395 younger? To have someone?
- 396 B Yeah, yeah.
- 397 A Yeah. Okay, so cousins. Is there anybody else? What about, kind of, grandparents
398 or aunts or uncles, or...?
- 399 B Er, my uncle, my uncle's brilliant, my uncle, yeah, 'e's fine about it and, an' like,
400 yeah it's about it, and my aunty and uncle, cos I've got loads of aunties and
401 uncles but I don't see them much (.) cos they're all living all over the country so,
402 (Mmm) you know, and er, (.) um, so it's mainly like one of me uncles and one of
403 me aunties cos we, part of the family doesn't get on with the other half, if you
404 know what I mean, (Right=) so we see them more often. And my, and my
405 granddad, I wanted to tell me granddad but he's not, I mean, I think he's going,
406 you know, a bit ill and that, he keeps forgetting stuff, I don't know what's up with
407 him, but he's getting worse, he keeps forgetting so I think, well it's not worth it
408 (Right) cos and I don't want to upset him cos he's seventy four, you know what I
409 mean.
- 410 A Right, and do you think it would upset him?
- 411 B Well, he's at that age where, you know, (.) I mean he's not well at the minute, so
412 I don't think it would be right. (Mmm) So, don't need to really.
- 413 A Okay. So is there anybody, kind of, in your family who, it sounds like a lot of the
414 people in your family have been very accepting and positive about, about you,
415 your being gay. Is there anybody who's, who's not, who's reacted in a, kind of,
416 negative way or (.) with, for whom it's made your relationship get worse or
417 become difficult?
- 418 B Um, (.) yeah, I've 'ad one or two like so-called friends who've been friends but
419 when I like told them they just didn't bother and then I rang them up and said
420 'What's up with you, cos you're being dead funny?', said, 'oh, (.) I don't want to
421 be friends with you anymore' and that was it like, but that was when I was 'bout
422 fifteen but, well, they weren't me friends, they weren't friends in the first place
423 were they?
- 424 A Right. So they were, they were, kind of, mates from school or...?
- 425 B They were just (.) around where I lived.
- 426 A Right. And that was cos you were gay they didn't want to, to be your friend or...?
- 427 B Yeah.
- 428 A That must have been quite hard when you were that age?
- 429 B Yeah, it was.
- 430 A How do you think, how did you cope with that then?

431 B It upset me really. (Mmm, yeah) But I didn't show it really, cos I don't really
 432 show it. I'd, I mean, I keep a lot inside and I know I shouldn't, but, I do, cos I've
 433 been a lot, um, through a lot and, you know, I mean the thing with my dad's
 434 separate but that, that I really don't want to talk about, but I went through, you
 435 know, it wasn't nice with my dad either. (Right) So that's why [tape inaudible – I
 436 don't want to talk about it?]

437 A So you've had...=

438 B =Bad memories and (sighs) things happened an', (Mmm) they destroyed my life
 439 really basically an' bad memories and that what happened and everything.
 440 (Mmm) Yeah, and people say to me, 'is it because, are you gay because of what
 441 your, you know, what cos your dad was violent' and everything else, and I said,
 442 'well', and, and I said 'no, to be honest, it's not because of that' I said 'it's not
 443 because of that at all'. I said 'I'd be a', I said, 'no, it's not'. It isn't, I know it's
 444 not that. (Mmm) Cos I'd know for definite if it was that, but it's not. (Yeah) So,
 445 (.) so I haven't had it easy, really, but I still I, I mean I'm the most positive person
 446 around. I, I mean people say to me, 'Sarah, you've been through a lot. If I was
 447 you, I would have cracked up by now'. I says 'well you 'ave to, you 'ave to keep
 448 going and be positive about it' (Mmm) 'in the best way you can'. (Yeah) So...

449 A Yeah. So one way of coping with, with, with, all the, sort of, things that life threw
 450 at, threw at you, for you, is to, to, to, kind of, think positive?

451 B Yeah.

452 A To look on the bright side. What, what...=

453 B =Because you either think positive or sink don't you? (Mmm) And once you get
 454 down that downward spiral, that's it.

455 A So kind of...=

456 B =That's it really.

457 A Are there other things that have, that, that you do to, kind of (.) cope. Do you, I
 458 mean you said you, kind of, tend to keep things //in?

459 B Yeah, okay, I'm a positive person yeah, but everybody in the world has down
 460 times, I mean, I'm not saying I'm positive all the time cos I aren't, (No) but the
 461 majority of the time I am. (Yeah) I have my off days like anybody, but, (Yeah)
 462 yeah.

463 A What, um, what other things, are there other things that help, help you to cope?
 464 Do you, sort of, (.) do you find it helpful to talk to people? or do you...?

465 B Yeah, I like meeting people and talking to people and, (.) um, to help, I like
 466 helping people a lot. (Yeah) Like, you know, if (.) just, cos I've been through a
 467 lot myself I find it helps me talking to other people about being in the same
 468 position or whatever, or just, just like being, you know, meeting people and (.)
 469 doing what I can.

- 470 A Yeah. Okay. (Um) I guess a sort of similar question but just, just thinking about
 471 (.) I suppose people that you've come across either through school or through
 472 college or though any jobs that you've, you've, you've had, have you found that
 473 being gay has affected your relationships with any of those people? Teachers or
 474 lecturers or employers or? I guess we've already talked about carers //[tape in
 475 audible].
- 476 B Oh the carers, yeah. Wha', not, not all the carers. The carers now who I'm with,
 477 you know, and like I've had quite a few because of movin' and what have you
 478 and whatever. (Mmm) Err, everyone has been absolutely brilliant, cos obviously
 479 if I've got to live in my house they're going to find out at some stage and at, at
 480 the minute the new ones I've got, you know, are absolutely brilliant about it and,
 481 but this particular one, this once, it was a couple of years ago, was just absolutely
 482 out of order. (Mmm) So, (So) That was, that was the one really but I haven't had
 483 nobody else really who's really bothered me.
- 484 A Okay. (.) Have you got any advice that you'd give to someone who was, kind of,
 485 young and thinking that they were gay and, wondering about coming out and
 486 telling either family or friends?
- 487 B Yeah, I'd say, well first of all I'd say, you know, (.) 'coming out is the best
 488 feeling you can ever have cos if you keep it in, it'll just destroy you'. And, cos I
 489 found the longer you keep it in, the worse it gets but it's different for each
 490 person's situation as I say but, (Mmm) er, 'just do the best you can and don't,
 491 .don't let anybody say it's wrong cos it isn't, you, you, you're, you're like a
 492 unique person and everybody's entitled to live how you want, and take each day
 493 as it comes and don't think too much in the future' cos, you know, er, cos (.) cos I
 494 found that I was thinking 'well what happens if this, that and the other', you
 495 know, (Mmm) er, 'when I tell this, when I do that', don't, you have to live for
 496 each day and just say 'well, I got through that hurdle, here's my next one but I'm
 497 half way over (A & B: Laugh) and that's my attitude, so...
- 498 A That sounds good advice. (Yeah) Okay. Just a few questions about, kind of, um,
 499 dating and sexual relationships, not, not too intimate, (B: Laughs) don't worry.
 500 Um, have you had any relationships, have you ever had any relationships with
 501 men?
- 502 B No. I had like once this like he was about one or two years older than me I was
 503 like eight, eighteen and it was like one particular night he said, 'I want to go out
 504 with you' and I said, 'no, no, don't want to', he says 'why?' I said, 'cos I don't'.
 505 He like started coming on to me and trying to kiss me and I said 'gerroff!' (B:
 506 Laughs) like, you know, 'gerroff me' and then like, but I hate that cos, you know,
 507 I've had that once and it's like not, no: I don't...
- 508 A Not for you?
- 509 B No.
- 510 A Okay. What about, um, relationships with women? Have you had...?
- 511 B Yeah, quite a few.

- 512 A When was your first? How old were you when you had your first?
- 513 B Errr, I was (.) seventeen. Like it was not long after, 'ang on, yeah the middle of
514 the year when I was seventeen after me birthday, so February my birthday is' so
515 it was like the July after that when I was seventeen.
- 516 A And how was that?
- 517 B (.) Brilliant. It was like my first relationship and I thought I was on cloud 9 for
518 about, (B: Laughs) I was like buzzing for a week I was, I couldn't keep still, I
519 was like, I was like a:h it was terrinble! (A & B: Laugh). So...
- 520 A Oh good. Did it, did it affect how you (.) felt about being gay? I was just...
- 521 B No, it was, I mean, it give me a buzz at first cos I thought, you know, after all,
522 you know, me feelings come out, to myself, to my family and then, you know, I,
523 I, sort of, was seeing, I met this like, me first girlfriend, err, bef', like (.) the year
524 before I told me mum and she didn't know about it. (Right) She thought she was
525 me friend and then I when I told my mum, every girl that came, this was before,
526 she thought it was like a girlfriend cos she was laughing about it to me like the
527 other year. She says 'I thought' I goes 'well I can't blame you for thinking that'.
- 528 A (A: Laughs) So you were having, you were seeing this woman and your mum
529 didn't know, she just thought it was...?
- 530 B Yeah, she thought she was me friend. (B: Laughs)
- 531 A So, and you've had several, several other relationships, (Yeah) since then. Okay.
532 (.) Um, (.) here we go. [turning over page of interview schedule] Just...=
- 533 B =Yeah, I didn't, er, cos, er, I've like, I've been, like, all my good friends have
534 been, like, lesbians like but wh', one of, like, me exes', like, bisexual and that
535 has like been the hardest thing. Well, it is 'ard to begin with, I mean, I've been
536 out with 'er for two years nearly, just under two years and, er, I think, er, I mean,
537 when I first went out with 'er, you know, it didn't matter to me. It was 'ard, it was
538 hard and like I say, cos every so often she'd look at blokes and, while she was
539 going out with me, look at 'em, she didn't go out with them but, (Mmm) and that
540 got on my nerves a bit cos I thought, you know what I mean? But I accepted her
541 for it, you know. (Yeah) Cos I, you know, it didn't bother me, I dealt with it. But
542 I wouldn't really choose to go out with somebody who's bisexual now, really.
543 (Mmm) Cos it's 'ard really sometimes.
- 544 A Yeah. Do you know what, can you, sort of, say what it is that's hard about it?
- 545 B Cos one minute she'd be looking at women and one minute she'd be looking at
546 blokes. (B: Laughs) And she was, like, she was four years younger than me so I
547 think, (.) you know, (.) I mean, when I first met her she was, like, (.) nearly
548 seventeen an', like, at that age anyway, she was, she was the only, I think she'd
549 only just come out when she met me herself, so I think that was because of that
550 really.
- 551 A What was, sorry, what was because of that?

- 552 B Um, our, like, (.) she didn't know, I mean, (.) she's still going through it now
 553 when she thinks well, (.) um, (.) cos she didn't know, like, if she was gay or not
 554 and that.
- 555 A Mmm. So she, she, there was some sort of uncertainty for her //with that?
- 556 B Yeah, but like, // like, into the, like, that was, like, for the first six months, an' I
 557 said, 'well, it's up to you, you know', and she came back to me she said, 'no, no'.
 558 Cos we split up, like, (.) twice in the two years and she said, 'no, Sarah, this is,
 559 this is, I feel right'. Cos she'd just come out and knowing how she felt and that
 560 and she said, 'that's, (.) it's right how I'm feeling'. So I said, 'well, I've been
 561 feeling like that meself, don't worry about it'. (Mmm, yeah.) We're best friends
 562 now, anyway, so. I mean, I'm not friends with all my exes cos you can't, you
 563 know what I mean, there're different circumstances but (.) we've been through a
 564 lot, so...
- 565 A Yeah, yeah. That's nice when it, when it does work out like that.
- 566 B Yeah.
- 567 A Okay. Next lot of questions (.) some of them will link into sort of stuff you've
 568 already talked about cos they're about, um, different sorts of, er, different ways of
 569 coping and support. Um, so kind of interested in thinking about whether, um,
 570 whether you've had any support, um, from, from different, sort of, from outside
 571 in a way. And, if so, whether that met your needs, whether it was accessible,
 572 whether it was easy for you to, to, to get there, er, whether it was helpful, that sort
 573 of stuff. Um, (.) so I guess, and just sort of thinking back to what we were saying
 574 before about what it's like, particularly when you're younger when you're just
 575 sort of starting, you've got all sorts of questions and when you're sometimes
 576 feeling depressed or whatever when, when you may be feeling isolated or
 577 frightened or worried or whatever, or experiencing prejudice, whatever. Um, I
 578 guess some people find that easier, easier to deal with than others and sometimes
 579 people, um, need support and sometimes people cope on their own. So I guess,
 580 um, are there any times when you feel that you've needed support from, from
 581 outside?
- 582 B Yeah, a lot, a lot but there wasn't any there, but I, I mean I, just before I came up
 583 to [name of a city] there was, I met the group of people, er, I went in the pub for
 584 like an afternoon and it was a gay pub, which I can go in the pubs but not the
 585 clubs, and, er, I got friends with 'em and they set up a like they were going to
 586 well set up a group and that which they got a group now and like, you know, but I
 587 missed out on it now, but I've got more up 'ere now (B: Laughs), so...
- 588 A Yeah, so you come down here and there's that.
- 589 B I live here now, so...
- 590 A Yeah and you come to this, this group, (Yeah) sometimes. And is that helpful? or
 591 is...?
- 592 B Brilliant.

- 593 A That sort of social...?
- 594 B Well, bit of everything really. (Yeah) You know, cos a lot of my friends, like my
595 friends come 'ere so. Cathy comes sometimes. (Mmm) I like meeting new people
596 and that.
- 597 A Yeah. Okay. Have you ever, kind of, needed, have you ever had support from sort
598 of , I dunno, er, teachers or doctor or psychologist or anything like that? Ever
599 kind of sought support or been offered support by them?
- 600 B No.
- 601 A Okay. Do you think that, um, places like this, I guess, that are specifically for gay
602 men, lesbians, bisexuals are a good idea?
- 603 B Oh I do, yeah, yeah. I think there should be, should be like, um (.) I think they
604 should do a lot more, not 'ere, I mean a lot more around the country for, like for
605 other people like cos if I'd have still been down [name of a town] then, you know
606 what I mean, I mean they've got like the group now down there but the thing is
607 they 'aven't, it isn't like the same as this where they, you know what I mean,
608 where you can just go home when you want. (Mmm) there's a set time, //you
609 know what I mean?
- 610 A Kind of open, // open access and things here isn't there?
- 611 B Yeah.
- 612 A Okay. Um, (.) what about, um, (.) I suppose how do you do you think it's a good
613 idea for those for there to be groups specifically for younger people? Do you
614 think that's helpful, or? Do you think //it doesn't have to...?
- 615 B No, I think it// should be just for everyone whatever age because people learn off
616 the older people and think well when I'm their age that's, you know, they'll
617 understand from different ages, you know what I mean? Cos it's (.) they can see
618 then when they get to that, when they're older age, whatever age and then they'll
619 think, well, they know it's not so bad when, you know, so I don't think it should
620 be just for their age group. (Yeah.) It should be mixed really.
- 621 A Yeah. And I mean we were talking weren't we before the, (B: Laughs) before the
622 tape, we started the tape about, um, I guess, some of the difficulties of being both,
623 both disabled and gay and how that, kind of, how those two different things
624 //interact.
- 625 B Oh.// Terrible. (A: Laughs) Oh dear! No, I have, er, (.) the one thing that annoys
626 me most of all is when people come up to me and cos I'm disabled and I'm, er, I
627 use a wheelchair and, they, they find out I'm gay and that's it, they just think I've
628 got three 'eads, they think 'well, you're disabled and you're gay, that's not right'
629 you know sort of attitude to that and I get loads of 'assle all the time off like, I
630 used to get it all the time off certain people who I used to see around and
631 mimicking me, pulling faces, whatever, shouting and stuff, an' um, (.) just being
632 nasty an', and I think, and they say, 'oh', you know, (.) they think, well, people in
633 a, like, disabled people don't have a relationship or a sex life or anything, you

634 know, just because you're disabled. (Mmm) And I think that's wrong that they
 635 should (.) put the, you know what I mean, put your label on you. I 'ate that.
 636 (Mmm) You know, because there's a lot of disabled people, er, all over, well,
 637 there must be all over the world, you know what I mean, everywhere, um. I mean
 638 there's certain places that're, you know, are worse than others, do you know what
 639 I mean? (Yeah) An' I think they should 'ave help because (.) it's 'ard enough
 640 dealing with being gay as well as being disabled and then you've got the problem
 641 of access with wheelchairs, then you've got like people having a go at you
 642 because you're gay as well and you're discriminated against in everything and
 643 then they have a go at you and, oh it's just horrible. (Mmm) Yeah.

644 A It doesn't sound much fun. Do you think, um, I mean, its sou' sounds like there
 645 are, sort of, practical difficulties about access in some of the, sort of, gay
 646 community, um.

647 B Cos that was part of the problem as well down in [name of a town] because they
 648 had steps up into the club and that. (Mmm) And, (.) er...

649 A I guess that's a real difficulty if that's the only place in, in the area (Yeah) //and
 650 you can't actually get there.

651 B It was only// the pubs I could go in, and they weren't very big at that cos it's not
 652 very big, [name of a town].

653 A No. So in that way, I guess, that there's, um, there's a practical kind of way in
 654 which you, you as a wheelchair user are, sort of, discriminated against in a way
 655 by the gay community, in that access isn't great. Do you think there are, have you
 656 ever experienced...?

657 B I don't, I don't I mean some people, like okay some people don't realise some
 658 things, people don't think 'oh', cos sometimes you know if they're building these
 659 places they don't automatically, some, some people do, some people don't, but,
 660 you know, I think they should consider the access on every place where they
 661 build new places, (Mmm) and I know they can't do like listed buildings and stuff
 662 but they can alter 'em. But I think they should consider the access to a lot of
 663 places and, um, all the gay places cos there is a lot of disabled gay people out
 664 there an', an' I think a lot of them don't (.) speak up because er, you know, either
 665 because of the disability cos, whatever reason it is, cos some disabled people
 666 can't talk and maybe they, cos of that, if they can't talk they can't tell you how
 667 they're feeling and that and, (.) and then you've got like (.) people who look, you
 668 know, me myself I'm a, you know, I'll talk to, I'm very good at talking to people
 669 and if I can do that, that means a lot to me, (Mmm) to put the point across to
 670 people cos I think, you know, it annoys me cos you have to put up with so much
 671 rubbish with things, you know. (Mmm) Um, putting up with 'assles when you
 672 don't need it, you know?

673 A Yeah, (.) yeah. Okay. I think that's really, that's really interesting. Um, I guess
 674 the, sort of, idea of, (.) of having, having two, (=Yeah, yeah=) things to cope
 675 with.

676 B Yeah the disability's bad, like to, to deal with that, okay I deal with the disability,
 677 if it's separate it's not too bad cos, you know, I learnt, you know, from an early
 678 age it didn't bother me so much, but when the age of thirteen, seventeen disability
 679 an' I got to, cos I saw people running, running about when they were about
 680 seventeen and I thought 'oh I wish I could do that.' (Mmm) You know, I mean,
 681 you know, there are certain things I can't do but I tell you what, I can do a lot of
 682 things other people can't do (A & B Laugh) in other ways, you know what I
 683 mean, so I just weigh it up like that really. (Yeah, yeah) And, er, but, doesn't, you
 684 know, I suppose I 'ave to think like that, it keeps me going, you know, cos it does
 685 get me down sometimes. And then when you've got the like both of them
 686 together it just (.) I can't explain how 'orrible it is when people start on you an'
 687 say (.) er, you know, I 'ave been called before which I absolutely, I could've
 688 bloody gone round an' hit 'em, I'm not violent but, you know, called me a
 689 'spastic poof' one girl did and stuck 'er fingers up at me, I thought, you know,
 690 when I get that before now, and it's like 'pheww!' (Yeah) O:h, o:h. And you get
 691 that, it's like, you know wharra mean, and I just got that angry about it. (Yeah)
 692 But now I just turn, you know, okay it still hurts me, it gets me angry, but I deal
 693 with it the best way I can. (Mmm) But I think, (.) um, (.) there should be more (.)
 694 in the gay, in the gay community I think there should be more, (.) um, (.) articles
 695 or whatever or discussions or whatever on telly or anything like that, er, to
 696 include in everything, include disabled people in being, in being gay, you know
 697 what I mean, cos I felt that when, I mean nothing against this group what I've
 698 come to but, you know, they didn't know I mean, you know, (.) um, (.) like
 699 there's certain groups like this group didn't know til I said I was disabled and
 700 they've been really good, you know wharra mean, but I think they should not,
 701 like, everybody in the country or wherever should put more articles about gay
 702 disabled people cos they have a really rough time. (Mmm) You know wharra
 703 mean? (Yeah) So...

704 A What do you think would, kind of, help to make it, to make things easier? More
 705 discussion?

706 B Discussions and support centres for disabled people who can't really communi',
 707 communicate as good as me. (Yeah) Cos of different, you know. And, er, just
 708 articles and (.) like not, er, I mean there's articles out there now for disabled
 709 people, disabled people magazine, (Mmm) sort of, like not magazine, but like,
 710 you know, sheet thing what...

711 A Newsletter, (=Yeah=) or something like that.

712 B There's that, but I don't have I'm not one of these people who likes to be put in
 713 (.) a category. I'd rather have it all like all for everyone cos that's like another
 714 problem in itself if you start doing that, (Mmm) it'll just make the problem worse
 715 with society cos I think it should be open.

716 A Mmm. So not a, a, a specific newsletter for gay disabled people?

717 B No, they've got that already, but that's what I'm against anyway, they shouldn't
 718 really do that because then you've got, it's like (.) I think they should, they should
 719 put you in with like the the able-bodied gays cos I think it should be both, (So=) I
 720 mean they've got one that they've started up not long now I think it's called

- 721 GEMMA in London, but I think there should be like (.) put more about it, um and
722 in that DIVA [a magazine for lesbians] and that cos they don't do that much.
- 723 A Yeah, yeah. So, so kind of more, more stuff about disabled, disabled people in the
724 mainstream, //kind of thing, and in literature.
- 725 B Yeah, the mainstream, // yeah that's what, that's what, I mean I know they've got
726 like for, you know, their own magazines for disabled people but that (.) you need
727 to tell other, other people 'ow, we ought not to tell the disabled people about our
728 issues (B: Laughs) it should be said to other people cos I, you know, we already
729 know what, what we have go through (Mmm) so, why not tell it to everybody
730 else so they can understand what you have to do. (Yeah, yeah) You know wharra
731 mean? (Yeah.) It makes sense really that does. Cos like people'll say to me well
732 you've got one, I was thinking 'well, yeah, how're they supposed to understand
733 and know what we go through if we don't say it', it's no good just us having a
734 magazine dealing with it on a, you know what I mean, like that cos how, that's
735 where the prejudice is coming from cos we don't say it to like the mainstream gay
736 society. (Yeah, yeah) You know, and it's no wonder they don't (.) know very
737 much because we don't, there's nothing out there really.
- 738 A Yeah, yeah. Um, (.) yeah, (.) yeah, that's interesting. I guess, I mean, I guess
739 that, you could, you could say the same sort of thing about, kind of, gay...=
- 740 B =A lot of things, yeah.
- 741 A Yeah, I was going to say about gay culture in terms of, of, of needing to, to be
742 integrated with, (Yeah) mainstream...
- 743 B Yeah. I think it //should be...
- 744 A Newspapers//, and telly=
- 745 B =Yeah, I think it should, I mean, you know, I mean there's a lot of articles about
746 Black lesbians in, in a few things, why not disabled people (Mmm, yeah.) Same
747 sort of minority really. So...
- 748 A Yeah. Okay. Last lot of questions, I think. You can go and 'ave a drink. Um, I
749 think you may have already answered this but I'll ask it you again anyway. Did
750 you know anyone when, who was gay when you were growing up?
- 751 B No, only my mum's friend. (Right) But she was like in her forties, but it was like
752 I could understand from her but I needed somebody cos I was like only twelve,
753 thirteen and I just needed somebody go round with and have a laugh with who
754 was in, (.) you know, who had the same sort of things to deal with.
- 755 A So it would have been useful to know someone of, of your age?
- 756 B I mean that's good that, you know, older mix ages, but when you're that young...
- 757 A Yeah. Do you think that knowing, just to, sort of, having known your, I don't
758 know how well you knew her, but just knowing she that was gay had an affect on
759 you?

- 760 B Yeah. I looked up to 'er when I was younger cos I thought well she's done
761 alright, you know, she's got, er, adopted boys.
- 762 A Right. So she was kind of someone, someone that you could, er, I guess a sort of
763 role model who you could say was, (Yeah) was, you know, had done alright an'...
- 764 B Yeah, yeah.
- 765 A Yeah. Okay. Were you aware, again I think we've touched on this, about gay
766 people in the media, and music, films, T.V. and stuff?
- 767 B Yeah, yeah. I think one, I think, (.) the one person who inspired me most of all
768 when I was young, [] (B: Laughs), k. d. lang []. Yeah and she cos like she's got
769 a lot in common with me cos I like, you know, her interests an' stuff like that an'
770 I like her music an' I like her of course an', er, I'm a vegetarian as well, I just like
771 her. (Yeah) And that 'elped cos like I was a big fan of k.d. when I was younger
772 an', an' cos what, she came out in '92 and I thought well, if she can do it, I can.
- 773 A Right. I think, I think that's really interesting and, um, (.) that, you know, what
774 you say about, about, sort of, k.d. lang and the fact that she came out. (Yeah) Cos,
775 cos quite a few people have, kind of, big name people, have come out in...
- 776 B Yeah I think that, that 'elps young people as well and I'm glad like there's been a
777 lot of characters, gay characters on TV and, um, you know, documentaries and all
778 sorts have been on Channel 4 and everything, and I think that 'elps educates
779 people, people who're just flicking over at night and they just come across it,
780 people who would normally think 'oo no', and maybe if you just, like some
781 people just watch for five minutes and realise that it's not, you know, the more
782 it's shown on telly, (Mmm) the better really. (Yeah) I mean at the end of the day
783 you don't have watch it but it 'elps, you know, what I mean if people, I mean I
784 watch it and I think, well, they should put more on. (Yeah) Cos it, you know. An'
785 I think it's changed people's attitudes, society's attitudes cos, er, if famous people
786 can do it everybody, it must, you know, it must, people sometimes think well if
787 famous people, it's not so bad, you know what I mean? (Mmm) So I think it
788 changes people's attitudes a bit, so...
- 789 A Mmm. So who, can you, can you name some, you've already named...
- 790 B k.d. lang.
- 791 A k.d.
- 792 B Ellen. I watched the big Ellen, er, outing, when she came out. Er k.d., Ellen, err,
793 yeah k.d. and Ellen, Melissa Etheridge, cos I like 'er music. (Mmm) A::nd (.) just
794 like watching different programmes like, you know, I watch Playing the, Playing
795 the Field as well so that was good, you've got two, er, they've got, er, some gay
796 characters on that.
- 797 A Yeah. So that, that's kind, quite, quite important in terms of, kind of, how it, how
798 did that, how was that important for you, kind of, just thinking (.) talked, sort of,
799 more generally about how you, you, you feel that's important in terms of how it,
800 kind of, educates and exposes other people. But how, how, and you talked about,

- 801 kind of, k.d. coming out I guess and, (Yeah) 'if she can do it, I can do it'. Do you
 802 think that, (.) did they influence you in any other way when you were kind of
 803 younger particularly or, or now?
- 804 B Just to be strong and be yourself. (Yeah, yeah) You know like a lot, cos at the end
 805 of the day you've only got like, you know, you've got to make the most of
 806 everything really. (Yeah) So...
- 807 A Was, um, was being gay or homosexuality or, (Yeah) or anything like that talked
 808 about at home at all?
- 809 B (.) Can't remember me mum an' me sister talking about it when were like with
 810 dad, I mean, he, he's, no:, no. I don't think we really talked about it.
- 811 A What about at school? Either, kind of, in, in lessons or...?
- 812 B No it wasn't, I think that was wrong as well I think we should, er, cos we have
 813 had sex education and they never brought that up. (Mmm) Just like, (.) you know,
 814 girls going out with boys, boys going out with girls, you know, that's all it was.
 815 (B: Laughs) (Yeah) And I thought now I think well they should educate, it should
 816 be in the, in the education system. (Mmm) Cos the, er, you know, knowing from
 817 a young age about it, they won't get, (.) you know, they'll find it, so they won't
 818 grow up being dead, um, (.) prejudiced about it.
- 819 A Mmm. So again it's about, kind of, not just, not just having gay and lesbian, sex
 820 education for gay and lesbians, //it's about having it, having it, sort of...
- 821 B No you should talk all together, // yeah. That's what, that's what I'm all for, you
 822 know, all together no, not putin' labe', you know, in labels and boxes. (Mmm)
 823 You know?
- 824 A Yeah. So was it talked about at all outside of, of lessons, we'...?
- 825 B No
- 826 A Did, //did kids...?
- 827 B It was// only a small school so, (Right) they really didn't.
- 828 A What about sort of name-calling and things like that?
- 829 B Well they didn't know about me at school.
- 830 A No. I just meant generally were, were those, kind of...?
- 831 B Yeah, yeah you had a few times where, you know, like anybody does, you know,
 832 but once, some people'll have a go at some people but it's just like petty little
 833 things really.
- 834 A Mmm. But not particularly using homophobic kind //of stuff?
- 835 B No.// No.

- 836 A Okay. (.) Am I right in thinking you, sort of, you were saying you first made
837 contact with other gay and lesbian people at college?
- 838 B Well, yeah for, for the first time, yeah. (Mmm) like the students' union and the,
839 like cos they had like nights there and, (Mmm) and just outside of college really
840 when I met new friends and that, (Yeah) think that's when it really, (.) you know,
841 really realised that you know I could just be me-self more.
- 842 A Mmm. So that's quite important?
- 843 B Yeah.=
- 844 A =Mixing with other gay, gay people.
- 845 B Yeah.
- 846 A Cos you can be more yourself. Is there anything else about it?
- 847 B (.) Err. Just nice to meet people, isn't it?
- 848 A Yeah, yeah. Okay, okay. Thinking about, kind of, now, what sort of places do you
849 usually go out to to socialise? Do you tend to go out to gay places, or...?
- 850 B Er, //well I've got...
- 851 A Straight places// or both or...?
- 852 B Well, I've got, you know, I've got all my friends but, you know, gay, straight,
853 straight men and gay men as well so, er, I like me straight friends are really good
854 about it cos they, like one particular friend of mine she says it's like going, when
855 she goes in the gay clubs she loves it she says, cos she doesn't, you know warra
856 mean, there's no threat there and she says it's lovely she says cos you can just sit
857 down and the music's brilliant and she says it's like me second home (B: Laughs)
858 going in, like you know, cos she, she doesn't mind, I mean she's got a lot of gay
859 friends and, (Mmm) you know, and that, and I go in sort like straight, er, pubs
860 when, you know, cos I think, well it's not fair is it really, if you go in gay pubs all
861 the time well I'll just, if they go in I'll, I'll go with 'em, but majority of time I go
862 in gay clubs and pubs yeah, (Right) cos I feel better there, (Yeah=) just like I
863 know like if you go in a straight pub you find that blokes always come up to you
864 and they start, you know warra mean, (Yeah) and I don't need that. (B: Laughs)
- 865 A Yeah, yeah. (So) So in a way, um, gay, gay clubs are, kind of, (Yeah) less
866 threatening in a way because it's not...=
- 867 B =No, well it's, well I mean, (.) if, I mean if society was more accepting of gay
868 people, hundred percent like they are with straight people, then that would be
869 brilliant but I don't think there's gonna, it's gonna be like that for a very, very
870 long time, (B: Laughs) I don't think. Cos, but at the minute I think it's good that
871 they've got gay pubs, (Mmm) cos you know what I mean? (Yeah.) It's just
872 something about being in your own club though, it's just the atmosphere and you
873 haven't got worry about bloody blokes looking at you all night (B: Laughs), you
874 know what I mean? (Yeah, yeah) So. //I mean...

- 875 A Do you ever worry about women looking at you all night?
- 876 B Oh no! (B: Laughs). If I'm with somebody, yeah, but if I'm not, if, I do, if I don't
 877 fancy 'em, if I don't fancy them they keep on, and on, and on I say 'I'm sorry, but
 878 no'. Cos I 'ad this woman came up to me once and she kept on and I didn't fancy
 879 her at all she was a nice person to speak to but she kept on all night and I said 'no
 880 I'm not interested really', you know, being polite to her I said 'no' and, er, what I,
 881 um, I've got to say, er, as well what annoys me about, (.) you know, in the past
 882 what's happened, er, you know, er straight blokes'll go into gay clubs start
 883 trouble and then they wonder why, you know, and you think well, (.) you know,
 884 don't start trouble if you know what it's, you know, and you know it's a gay club
 885 don't start trouble, why, I mean, not up here just down [name of a town] you
 886 know. (Mmm) So, they just do it for just (.) be nasty, you know. (Yeah) So they
 887 chucked, the, the wotsit, er, they came an' chucked 'em out, (B: Laughs) so... (A
 888 & B: Laugh)
- 889 A What, what do you think about gay, gay clubs? Or, or pubs or, you know, gay
 890 community places for young people, do you think they're, do you think they're
 891 accepting and okay places for them, or do you think...?
- 892 B Yeah.
- 893 A I guess one of the problems for young people is about access as well cos, (Yeah)
 894 kind of, if they're...
- 895 B I can get in the [name of LGB pub] the lower part of [name of LGB pub] but I
 896 can't get upstairs cos there's no lift.
- 897 A Right, yeah. I was just thinking for some people who are under age they can't get
 898 into, (.) into those places for (Yeah=) different reasons can they?
- 899 B Yeah.
- 900 A But they, you, you think they're, sort of, alright, alright for yo', younger people,
 901 (Yeah) teenagers?
- 902 B Yeah.
- 903 A Okay. Have you got any ideas about other places that, that you would like to be
 904 around, sort of, er, that don't currently exist? So things that, that aren't around
 905 here that would be, that would be nice to have as a place to go, or whatever?
- 906 B Just more, like, social places, I mean there's like [the LGB youth group] but like,
 907 (.) like more of, more of 'em really for people who can't get up to one area cos its
 908 a big area in't it [name of a city] and not everyone can make it down, I think there
 909 should be another one at the other end of the city. (Mmm) Er, if it was like the
 910 same people running it, you know whatta mean the same, (Mmm) things but...
- 911 A Yeah. So more...?
- 912 B Yeah. (B: Laughs)

- 913 A Okay. Is there (.) anything we haven't covered that you would like to talk about,
914 that we haven't asked you about?
- 915 B (.) No I don't think, I think I've said everything. (A& B Laugh)
- 916 A Okay. How's it been, doing the interview? Has it felt okay, or...?
- 917 B Yeah
- 918 A Or quite difficult, or...?
- 919 B No I don't mind.
- 920 A Um. Just, I guess, one last thing then cos I was, I was just wondering, I've asked
921 everybody, sort of what, when you were asked to do the interview, kind of, what
922 was your motivation or what made you say yes?
- 923 B Just to, er, help people like just, you know, (.) to young people, especially young
924 people who're thinking of coming out and think well, you know, who're really
925 depressed about it, to say, cos, you know, (.) yo', you'll be alright, you know, just
926 hang on in there and just, you're alright and that, for disabled gay people as well,
927 you know? (Mmm) So I felt well if there's anything I can help, you know, I'll do
928 it.
- 929 A Great. Well thank you very much, //I really appreciate it.
- 930 B It's alright.//

Interview 8

Kate

Interview Date

25/5/99

- 1 A Okay. People describe their sexuality in lots of different ways, how do you
2 describe yours?
- 3 B Um. (.) I s'pose first off, I'd say I love women (B: Laughs) I fancy women an'
4 it's, it's always been that way. (Yeah) Um. I got quite annoyed when I knew that
5 there was labels an' things, an' names for it, an' it made you feel a bit like (.) an
6 alien next to everybody else. (B: Laughs) But, um, I would say gay or lesbian.
- 7 A Mmm. So, you, do you prefer one to the other?
- 8 B Um. (.) I s'pose 'gay' seems a smaller, nicer little packaged word than 'lesbian',
9 because it's, I don't know, people tend to shout 'lesbian' as though it's, it's a
10 crass word, an' (Mmm) but, um, I'd say I was a gay lady, or a gay woman.
- 11 A Yeah. Okay, good. Okay. Just thinking back to, kind of, when you first started to
12 realise that you might be gay. (Mmm) I guess people experience lots of different
13 thoughts and feelings and (Yeah) emotions when they, when they star', start to
14 realise. Can you, kind of, tell me a bit about, I guess, firstly how old you were,
15 but also...
- 16 B Pheow, um. (.) Well, I can, sort of, remember fancyin' my friends an' things like
17 that, an' not really puttin' it to the front of my mind, just always pushing it back
18 an' thinkin', 'ooh, what you thinkin' like that for? That's not right', you know,
19 an', an' just ignorin' it. So it went on like that for quite a few years an', um, (.)
20 an' then, um, (.) the feelings got stronger, yet I'd still go out with boys, I went out
21 with a lot of lads an' thought, 'one day it's gonna be right an'' (Mmm) an' 'I'm
22 gonna fit in with everybody else but, it didn't quite turn out that way. (B: Laughs)
- 23 A Right. (Er) So how old were you when you first started (.) to, sort of, (Um) notice
24 yourself fancying girls?
- 25 B (.) When I was a teenager it was most strong, I s'pose puberty an', um, (.) sort of,
26 (.) the obvious, the, the old, you know, fancying your school teacher thing, an'
27 that sort of thing, it was really strong, an' um, (.) I used to feel really worried
28 about it, you know, thinking, 'I bet all my friends know what I'm thinkin''. I used
29 (B: Laughs) to think silly things like that. (Mmm) um, get a bit paranoid, but um,
30 (.) I think that was when I, I s'pose about fourteen when it was (Mmm=) really
31 getting stronger.
- 32 A An', and, I guess, you said, sort of, one of the things you did was you, sort of,
33 pushed it out of your mind (Yeah) an', um, went out with lads and stuff. (Mmm)
34 Do you think that was a way of, of coping with it or whether (Yeah) it was sort
35 of...? =
- 36 B I just, um (.) well, you, sort of, you have friends who, um (.) they'll go out with
37 lads an' they'll be going out an' getting drunk an' things, and this is the way you
38 think it is. So, of course, you, if you, you're with those friends, you're gonna try
39 an' fit in, an' that's what I did really, I just (.) did it without really thinking about
40 it, I just (Mmm) went along with it an', um, it was like, 'ooh, do you fancy 'im?'
41 an' I'm like, 'yeah, yeah', you know, an' really I might have thought, 'actually,
42 (B: Laughs) she's nice,' but I didn't, sort of, (Yeah) (.) I wouldn't 'ave dreamt of

- 43 sayin' it, you know, (B; Laughs) probably got me 'ead kicked in, (B; Laughs) but,
44 (Yeah) um.
- 45 A So, it sounds like you had a sense that it was something that you shouldn't (.)
46 (Yeah=) be open about, (Yeah) an' that there would be something negative or,
47 you know, (Yeah=) negative consequences to be, for saying, 'I fancy her' or
48 something.
- 49 B Yeah. Um, even though (.) I've heard people say, 'oh, even if so and so is gay',
50 cos there've been people at school who, people thought were obviously gay, like
51 an effeminate lad, or (Mmm) a girl (.) who never wore skirts or ne', you know,
52 never wore make up an' the stereotypes that (Yeah) people think, an' um, they've
53 called them, an', an' I've secretly hated that because (.) I used to think deep down
54 that, 'that could be me, they're calling' an' so (.) um.
- 55 A Were you able, ever able, did you ever feel that you could challenge them, or, or
56 was that too difficult?
- 57 B I trie', I have done in, sort of, hints, but, it's always, 'Ooh, what you tryin' to tell
58 us, are you a lesbian?' An' all that, I'm like 'no:', (Mmm) you know. (B; Laughs)
59 Because if you say, 'yeah', I mean, I didn't know what the consequences were. I
60 didn't know, I never had a really, really close friend at school, um, or when I was
61 younger, (Mmm) um. I just wanted to leave, I thought, 'as soon as I leave school
62 I'll be fine', um, but it, you know, it doesn't work out that way, cos you've still
63 got your problems 'an't ya? You know. (Yeah) But, um, for most of my life I
64 'aven't really thought about my sexuality because I've 'ad problems at home and
65 things, but (.) I don't think (.) any of what's happened 'as, (.) it's like people say,
66 'oh, that's why you're gay', you know, because of (Mmm) your home life,
67 'because your mum and dad split up when you was a baby'. An' cos of this, that
68 an' the other, you know. (Yeah) I think personally that's a load of bull (B:
69 Laughs) (Yeah) You know, but, //um.
- 70 A What, // what do you think, why do you think, have you got any ideas about,
71 about, I suppose people have different ideas about how people (um) come to be
72 gay?
- 73 B Yeah, but (.) because I can remember feeling that way (.) before I was depressed
74 an' everything, I can remember when I was little ss', what I can remember,
75 because my memory's not brilliant about it, but when I was little, I can remember
76 feeling this way about my friends an' things. Um. (.) An' then, er, my mum
77 remarried and it was cos of my step-dad that I was depressed and everythin', um,
78 an' I went through a stage of hating men, because of him, but it wasn't, I mean, it
79 didn't stop me from going out with men, cos then I did (Mmm) and, um, you
80 know, people could say, 'oh, you've 'ad loads of crap relationships with men', or
81 'it's cos of your step-dad' an' that, but I know deep down that it was there long
82 before he came on the scene, you know, so, er. (Yeah) That's my personal
83 opinion, that's why I think it's a load of crap! (B: Laughs) Well, it is in my case
84 anyway. (Yeah) But I've found out, when people say they were abused an' things
85 in their childhood, an', and their parents have said, 'oh, we think that's why
86 you're gay, that's why you've turned out the way you have'. I think that's (.)

87 that's quite sad to think, I don't know, it's like, 'well, what's wrong with it?
88 What's wrong with being like this?', you know. (Mmm) Um.

89 A I guess it's, kind of, um (.) I don't know, something maybe taints it somehow
90 (Mmm) so that it's come, they're suggesting that it's come from an unpleasant
91 (Yeah) unnatural, whatever that (Yeah) means, kind of, (Mmm) event that's
92 caused something (Yeah) yeah.

93 B I think parents also feel that they've done something wrong, that there was
94 something wrong with their genes or something, (Mmm) an', um, (.) I feel sorry
95 for a lot of (.) young people who are telling their parents an' (.) they just kick 'em
96 out an' everything, cos (.) really, they're taking it out the wrong, you know,
97 they're like, making them feel bad, an' yet, really, they're angry with themselves,
98 aren't they? Because they think, they've been told it's wrong.

99 A Mmm, mmm. Okay, so it sounds like there was, um, I dunno know, a bit of, er,
100 you had quite a clear sense, I guess, that, um, there was something that you
101 probably didn't want to be public or open about at school (=Mmm, mmm) and
102 that there might be negative consequences if you were. (Yeah) An' so you, it
103 sounds like you did various things to, kind of, keep it, (Mmm) keep it quiet.
104 (Yeah) Um, and it sounds, also, like you're, sort of, saying you, sort of,
105 sometimes felt a bit paranoid (Yeah=) an' that was quite, that, that was quite a, a
106 difficult thing to deal with itself.

107 B Mmm, I was very paranoid, especially (.) if a friend would be talking about
108 somebody on television that was gay or somethin', I'd think they were talking
109 about me. (Mmm) An' yet nobody 'ad an inkling, you know, that this is the way I
110 was feelin'. But I was very paranoid (Mmm) at any suggestion about anybody
111 being gay or anything, I was, like, pick up on it. (Yeah, yeah) An' then I'd worry
112 meself, and it'd be like a never ending cycle, sort of thing.

113 A Mmm. So how (.) that was, kind of, then, (Mmm) how do you feel about being
114 gay now?

115 B Um, a lot more positive, (B: Laughs) um. (.) I feel it's, like, part of me is, like,
116 really proud to be honest with myself an' not to have to hide behind, sort of,
117 saying that I'm not, an' do things that, you know, to prove to other people that
118 I'm something else. (Mmm) An' just to be myself and, um, then I've got people
119 in my family that, um, I still haven't told. An' as much as I want to say, 'I'm gay:
120 an' I don't care', if anyone was to ask me, I'd just say, 'yea:h', you know, but,
121 there are still members of my family that I'm still (.) reserved about telling,
122 (Mmm) um, an' this is only because, um, (.) everybody I've told so far 'as been
123 brilliant an' I can't believe it, apart from my dad. Um, we've never bonded
124 properly, we're not like a normal, um, daughter and father, so, (.) um. He's a
125 policeman, an' he's always a policeman, even when 'e's not at work, if you know
126 what I mean, (B: Laughs) (Yeah) 'e's always been like that, 'e's always, (.) if I've
127 introduced 'im to a friend, 'e sticks his nose up in the air before 'e's even had a
128 chance to talk to her or him, you know, and, er, 'e's always expecting me to go
129 out with somebody (.) who'll be like a lawyer or doctor or somethin', an', an' to
130 live in a little 'ouse an' have about ten kids, dog, cat, white picket fence, you
131 know. An' so for me to come along an' say, 'Dad, actually I'm gay!' (B: Laughs)

132 Um, it was, like, it'll be a smack in the face, I s'pose. But I've always been, um,
 133 (.) I've always felt a bit of a black sheep in the family anyway because of, he
 134 wants to try and control everybody. It's, I think it's with his job, (Yeah) you
 135 know, he brings it home an' everything, an' that's why he's had two failed
 136 marriages (B: Laughs) an' a string of girlfriends, but hey-ho (A & B laugh) let's
 137 not talk about him! (B: Laughs) But, um (.) 'e like comes to me for advice an',
 138 but, when it's the other way round, you see, I, I can't feel that I can talk to 'im,
 139 because 'e just gives his opinion, an' he'll, he doesn't see things from my side of
 140 it as well, (Mmm) whereas I do, I see, I try an' see every side of it, (Mmm) um.
 141 Luckily, my mum's brought me up to be like that, (Mmm) so I knew my mum
 142 would be fine about me being gay, um, she says, 'I don't care if you grow two
 143 heads', you know, an' (B: Laughs) it's just, she was worried that I was on drugs
 144 or something, cos I was depressed before I came out to her. (Mmm) Um, she was
 145 like 'aah, is that all it is?' You know, (B: Laughs) 'thank goodness for that'. Told
 146 my dad an' he was like (.) I think he'd rather I'd said I was pregnant than, (B:
 147 Laughs) //you know.

148 A Really?//

149 B Yeah.

150 A So how did, how did, how did he react, what did he do, your dad?

151 B Um. (.) I think he was disgusted, I think he was, um, (.) he denies it, he was like,
 152 'no, you're too pretty, you're too this, you can 'ave any man', an' all this, that,
 153 an' the other. Um (.) I was like, 'well, if I wanted a man, I would, but I don't' (B:
 154 Laughs) (Mmm) I say, 'I love, I love women like you love women.' He's like,
 155 'no, that's (.) not natural, an' it's not normal', an' I'm saying, 'so you're saying
 156 I'm not normal', an' I, and, um, we had a lot of arguments on the 'phone, cos I
 157 don't live with 'im. (Mmm) I've never lived with 'im, you see, cos he, like, he,
 158 er, divorced my mum when I was a baby, (Right) an' so he's always been like a
 159 weekend dad, an' er. (.) Um, he had two other children, an' I came out to his son
 160 Mike, that's my half-brother, I'm the eldest, then it's Mike, an' then it's Poppy.
 161 (Right) I came out to Mike, because we're like (.) best mates when we're
 162 together, um, whenever I used to go and see my dad, I'd play with them (Mmm)
 163 the kids. I've bonded with them more than I ever would with my dad (Right) an'
 164 'e, I think 'e's quite jealous of that (.) but, you know, it's 'is own fault sort of
 165 thing. So, when I came out to Mike, Mike was on my side, and 'e was tellin' my
 166 dad things, an' you know, 'you've just got to respect her wishes, an' if this is
 167 what Kate wants at the moment, then it is', you know, (Mmm) 'be happy for 'er'.
 168 Because even Mike was saying, 'well, you don't know, it might be just a phase',
 169 an' I was like, 'well, I'm (.) pre:tty certain', an', (.) an' 'e says, 'well, alright
 170 then', you know, I says, 'well, time will tell you', an' he says, 'yeah, fair enough,
 171 it will', you know, an' (Mmm) cos he's quite an open-minded sort of lad (Mmm)
 172 An' I thought, 'my dad'll be like that', he's a policeman, he's used to seeing
 173 things, you know, 'e's seen some horrific things, (Mmm) 'e's seen lots of
 174 different situations, an' met different people. (Mmm) An' I couldn't believe 'is
 175 reaction, it was so (.) homophobic an' (.) it's like, I've always done things, (B:
 176 Laughs) if he's said one thing, I've done the opposite (Mmm) because it's like,
 177 'I'm not racist, but if you ever go out with a black man', that's what he used to
 178 say, so I did, obviously! (A & B laugh) You know, (A: Laughs) you know, 'if

- 179 you ever smoke', so I did, (B: Laughs) but I don't smoke now, an' I do, I do
 180 things myself now, but, (Mmm) at the time I used to think, 'well, you don't even
 181 know me really, my mum's brought me up an' you, how dare you say things like
 182 that', so. I think he thinks I'm just tryin' to rub him up the wrong way by saying
 183 I'm gay! (A & B laugh)
- 184 A So was it quite upsetting, your dad's reaction, or did it make you angry, or...?
- 185 B It did, yeah, because the amount of people I'd said, well, a few people I'd said,
 186 'well, I don't know how 'e's gonna react', an' they'd said, 'well, he's a
 187 policeman, I'm sure that he'll be used to things like that, an' I'll bet he'll be
 188 really down to earth'. An' it was a shock. He said, 'do you think I want a lesbian
 189 for a daughter?' (B: Laughs) An' I jus', (.) I tho:ught, (.) well, I don't know, I jus'
 190 thought, 'is there anything between 'is ears?' An' like, (Mmm) I couldn't believe
 191 he said that. (.) So. (.) I mean, I had little respect for 'im then anyway, I've got
 192 even less now. (B: Laughs)
- 193 A Right, and has his attitude changed at all?
- 194 B No. 'E thinks I should, ahh, I don't know why, but 'e thinks I should go on a
 195 cruise ship, doing somethin', I think he's just try'na get rid of me. He knows, um,
 196 he's met my girlfriend briefly, on my birthday, an' he hardly looked at her, an'
 197 hardly spoke to 'er, an' when 'e did, he was very sarcastic, an' I'm surprised my
 198 girlfriend didn't just walk out. (Mmm) Um, I didn't introduce her as my girlfriend
 199 or my partner, but, from what I said 'e knew, 'e got the idea, (Mmm) you know,
 200 because I'm not gonna to rub it in his face, if he doesn't like it, then (.) y', you
 201 know, I've tried, but if 'e's not gonna change 'is opinion or anythin' then I'm not
 202 gonna bother wasting my energy. (Mmm) It's not like I see 'im a lot, you know,
 203 (Mmm) an' I don't see him. So, it's like, my dad's side of the family, um, 'e's
 204 saying, 'well, if you're this an' that, why don't you tell your grandma?' an' wh',
 205 I'm like, 'well, because', for a start 'e's probably poisoning 'er mind against me
 206 anyway. (B: Laughs) Me an' my grandma get on really well now, and, er, (.) just,
 207 it, with 'er bein' an old lady, an' the shock of it, (Mmm) I don't, why spoil
 208 what..., you know, she just thinks I'm single, an' I'm goin' out, an' trying to, I'm
 209 gonna be going to college an' things, you know, she just thinks I'm (.) alright, an'
 210 fo', I mean, I think I am but, to say, 'well, actually, grandma, I'm gay', she, she'd
 211 'ave to (.) try an' get her head round it, you know, (Mmm) cos I can remember
 212 sitting down an' tellin' 'er what homosexual an' transsexual, an' (B: Laughs)
 213 bisexuality meant, (Yeah) an' she was like, 'ooh, I don't know', I says, 'well
 214 grandma, you're heterosexual', an' she went, 'I'm not!' (B: Laughs) An' I just
 215 laughed, an' I says, 'yeah, ya are', I says, 'that means, you know, you an'
 216 grandad, you...' (B: Laughs) (Yeah) 'you're together'. (B: Laughs) It was so
 217 funny! (A & B laugh) 'I'm not!' she went. (A & B laugh) (Excellent) Ahh, it was,
 218 it was funny.
- 219 A So it'd be quite a shock then?
- 220 B Yeah, so (.) in 'er time of life, I just don't wanna, (.) I don't know, she probably
 221 wouldn't be as (.) bad as my dad, but I think because he sees her such a lot, (.)
 222 'e'll probably, 'e, 'e thinks it's just a phase I'm going through and, um, (Mmm=)
 223 and, um, now I've told 'im I've moved in with my girlfriend, um, (B: Sighs) and

224 where I'm living as well, you know, which is also a problem for 'im, probably
 225 thinks I'm going to turn into a criminal now (Mmm) but, um, I'm living in a
 226 lovely flat, an' sh', Holly's got a lovely family an' everythin', an' (.), you know,
 227 I'm really happy there. I'd like to be able to invite 'im round, but I don't feel I, I
 228 can, cos I think Holly'd probably chuck him out, as soon as he stuck 'is nose in
 229 the air, you know what I mean, (Mmm) an' I wouldn't blame 'er, you know.

230 A So that's your dad, (Mmm) what about your mum, cos, you, you mentioned that
 231 your mum had, your mum had responded really positively. Was that...? =

232 B =Yeah, um. (.) She's always wanted the best for me, um, (.) she's seen me go out
 233 with lads, um, (.) never for very long, er, (.) she's always tried to say, 'ooh, you'll
 234 find the right one one day' an' things like that and, er, (.) um, (.) I don't know,
 235 she's like the closest person to me, an' yet, (.) she was the one person I was
 236 dreading telling, (Mmm) er, an' I don't know why that was - now, I don't know
 237 why that was, do you know what I mean? (Mmm) But, um, (.) because she'd got
 238 such high expectations, an' I wanted to make 'er proud an' everything, and I, I
 239 don't know, I s'pose I thought, 'if I say I'm gay an' this an' that, then she won't
 240 be proud of me', but, you know, cos of, I'd got this fear she might wanna kick me
 241 out or something, um. I knew really she wouldn't, but, cos of things you hear
 242 about other people, and on telly, on films, an' things (Yeah) (.) Um, (.) bu' I went
 243 to Liverpool to see my brother, who's at university there, um, I needed to get
 244 away, an' I used to do that, I used to save up a couple of weeks, get a bus an' er,
 245 be in Liverpool for the weekend, an' just, just kick back, an' have a laugh with
 246 my brother an' his student mates, an', er, then (.) one weekend I was just (.)
 247 thinking, 'I'm gonna have to s'', it was, like, burstin' out of me, an' it took me a
 248 long time to, to tell myself, 'yes, I am a lesbian, I know I am'. (Mmm) Because,
 249 at one point I thought, 'perhaps I'm bisexual'. (Yeah) But (.) the more, (.) the
 250 older I'm getting, an' the more I was with a bl', a, a bloke, I jus' didn't want 'em
 251 to touch me an' I just, it made my stomach turn, an' it, I just didn't feel right at
 252 all, an' I wanted to be their buddy, I didn't wanna be, I wanted to watch football
 253 with 'em, an', like, (Yeah) do matey things, not want to kiss 'em at the end of the
 254 night, an', you know. (B: Laughs) An' um, I lost a few (.) lads as friends that
 255 way, but, um, luckily, I've still got a couple that are alright about it and, um, they
 256 see that as, 'aah, well, that's why you don't fancy me then', you know. (A & B:
 257 Laugh)

258 A Convenient for them! (A & B: Laugh)

259 B Yeah, I know. And, er, (.) they're like, 'oh, it's a waste' but, and my mum, cos I
 260 think she thinks, I don't know, people say that - 'it's a waste'. Why is it waste? I
 261 say, 'well, it's not a waste to Holly', (B: Laughs) I don't think, not a waste to me.
 262 Um. (.) I told my brother, anyway, I came out to 'im. Very emotional weekend.
 263 Um. I met somebody, um, met a girl called Nita, er, had to come home, an' I was
 264 devastated, and, um, about a week I was not eatin' properly and not sleepin' right,
 265 an my mum was thinking, 'what the hell's goin' on with 'er?' An she went,
 266 'there's something really wrong with you, in't there?' An' I was like, 'yeah, I
 267 don't, I can't tell you though', an' she was like, 'is it a man?' I was like, 'no:', an'
 268 she went, 'is it a woman?' An' I went, 'yeah', an' I just burst out crying. An' my
 269 mum, she was crying, an' we were hugging, an' it was, like, she went, '.is that all
 270 it is?' She says, 'I really thought you was on drugs or somethin' an' you, didn't

271 know 'ow to tell me an', you know'. I was like, 'no', an' sh', she was just
 272 grateful that, (Mmm) you know, an' she says, 'oh, you'll get over 'er', an' things
 273 like that. She says well, sh', we, we've had lots of talks and we've, you know, she
 274 thought, 'p'raps it was a phase', an' (.) 'p'raps you still like men', an' this, that,
 275 and the other. An', er, I thought, 'no I don't, I really don't'. (A & B laugh) (Yeah)
 276 I thought, 'now I've, now after I've tried this, I can't go back! (B: Laughs) No,
 277 (Mmm) it just wouldn't be right.' So, um, I 'aven't looked back since.

278 A So, how, how old were you when you, when that happened, was that the first time
 279 //you?

280 B Yeah, // twenty.

281 A Twenty.

282 B Two years ago.

283 A So that was the first time you'd, sort of, met a woman? (Yeah)[tape inaudible]

284 B Yeah. Because nobody knew me, I could be myself. It was amazing. I just (.) I
 285 don't know. I jus', the night, that night I went out looking for somebody (B:
 286 Laughs), an' I didn't find anybody, the next night I didn't go out looking for
 287 someone, 'an I found someone! (A & B: laugh) It was unbelievable.

288 A It's sod's law!

289 B I know. She was right, um, barmaid in the club we was in, an' I was just sat down
 290 having a breather an' I just looked across, an' she looked at me, an' it was like,
 291 'ping!' (B: Laughs) An' I went across an' started talking to 'er, (B: Laughs) an'
 292 that was that.

293 A Mmm. Okay. So, is there anyone else in your family that, that isn't, that we
 294 haven't talked about. We've talked about your mum and your brother an'?

295 B Mmm. That what?

296 A Haif-brother. Who you told, I'm just thinking about maybe, people who you've,
 297 you've either told or not told, or...?

298 B Um. (.) my ss', half-sister, Poppy, that's my brother, Mike's, um, sister (.) is
 299 closer to my dad, that's her, you know, it's their dad as well, (Mmm) than I am,
 300 because they used to live with 'im you see, (Right) an' they bonded with 'im as
 301 normal kids do but, um, I've always been a bit jealous of that, cos I've wanted a
 302 dad to (.) do normal daddy things. (B: Laughs) An' um, they've always, it's
 303 always been 'blonde 'aired, blue eyed Poppy an' never can do any wrong', an',
 304 you know, she ran off to London with 'er fiancée to live, an' then, yet, she's still,
 305 you know, the 'star child', sort of thing. (B: Laughs) (Mmm) An', um, (.) I
 306 couldn't tell 'er for ages, because I thought 'she's like my dad', an' I don't know
 307 how (.) I don't know if he's told her already, I didn't, I didn't know what to do,
 308 because she moved down London, we sort of lost contact for a while, er, what
 309 with 'er working an' things, (Mmm) cos it's quite a fast pace down there, an' um,
 310 never 'as any time for socialising, excuse me, um, (.) but, New Year's Eve, um,

311 (.) yeah, this last New Year's Eve, I told 'er. (B: Laughs) Well, she invited me
 312 down to London, and, er, her fiancée was working at, um, a nightclub there, um,
 313 [] it's called (Right) where the Pepsi Chart things are held (B: Laughs) (Yeah) So,
 314 she says, 'oh, we can get in free an' get free cocktails', an' everything. So,
 315 because 'e was working that night, she said, 'do you wanna join me for New
 316 Year's Eve?' An' I was like, I really needed to get away, cos I was seein' a girl
 317 from where I lived an' she was messing me around, so I said, 'sod it, I'm gonna
 318 go away'. (Mmm) Never done it before, I normally stayed local an', (A: Laughs)
 319 you know. (B: Laughs)

320 A Do the same old thing //every year!

321 B Yeah, // exactly! An' so I just did it an', um, (.) I just thought, 'I'm gonna do it,
 322 I'm gonna', cos it was just gonna be me and her on our own, an' er (.) the first
 323 pub we went in, I got a Dutch courage down me! (B: Laughs) She says, 'I've got
 324 something to tell you', an' I says, 'well, I 'ave', an' I went, 'alright, you first'. (B:
 325 Laughs) An' she told me that she'd, um, 'ad affai:rs, an' I couldn't belie:ve it,
 326 behind her fiancée's back, an' I went, 'oh, you've made me feel a bit better (B:
 327 Laughs) about what I've got to tell you!' Cos I couldn't believe it, you know,
 328 they were so in love an' everythin'. An', um, I went, 'I'm gay!' (B: Laughs) I just
 329 shouted it out in her ear. An' she went 'aaah!', An' she went, 'I'm dead pleased
 330 for you', an' she gave me a massive hug an' everythin'. She went, 'I'm dead
 331 proud of you'. I says, 'what do you mean you're dead proud of me?' She says, 'I
 332 don't know', she says, 'but you just seem really different an' happy, an''. I was
 333 like, 'I can't believe your reaction, I thought you was gonna be like dad', an' she
 334 went, 'Oh my god!' She said, 'I bet I'm the last one to know, aren't I?' Cos I told
 335 'er that it was like two years ago when I told Mike, an' (Mmm) she was like,
 336 'oah', an' I says, 'I'm sorry' I said, 'don't, it's not that you're the last one to
 337 know, cos you're not', you know, but, (.) well, it wasn't like I was doin' it in any
 338 particular order, (A & B laugh) you know, an' that I didn't want to offend 'er, but
 339 I says, 'at least you know now, an'. I says, 'but do you know 'ow many times I've
 340 wanted to tell you about my relationship troubles', when she's being goin' on
 341 about hers an' (Mmm) an' I don't want to make up a fantasy man just for them,
 342 you know, (Mmm) so I've always been 'Kate, the single person who's never
 343 gonna find a man!' (A & B: laugh) But, er, um, actually, I've 'ad girlfriends, you
 344 know. (Yeah) An' it's nice to be able to relax an' tell them now (Yeah) an' say 'I
 345 understand 'ow you're feeling an' (.)'

346 A Share that bit of you?

347 B Definitely, yeah, that's the m', most positive part about me coming out, (Mmm)
 348 so...

349 A So quite a lot's changed then?

350 B Very much.

351 A What do think, um, (.) just thinking back, back to what, what were saying right at
 352 the beginning about how you felt when you first started to realise. (Mmm) An'
 353 then thinking about, kind of, how you're feeling now. What, what do you think
 354 has changed, what do you think has helped (.) bring those changes about? (Er=)

355 Sounds like, I s'pose it sounds like you've moved from, from feeling quite
 356 frightened an', um (Yeah) being, being quite private about it, to being, to being
 357 more out.

358 B Yeah

359 A //and happier.

360 B Well,// I was a very private person, I never told anybody how I was feeling
 361 anyway. Um. I had a step-dad who told me I was thick every day of my li', you
 362 know, that he was there, an', I was never gonna amount to anything, an' so I was
 363 very depressed through my childhood an' my teenage years, an' when you get
 364 told (.) the same thing every day, you believe it after a while (Mmm) and (.) so, I
 365 didn't wanna share anything with anybody, cos I didn't think they'd believe me, I
 366 didn't, you know, 'oh, it's just Kate having a moan', sort of thing. (Mmm) Um,
 367 (.) but as I've got older an' (.) it was recognised that I was depressed and
 368 gradually I've done things about it, um, you know, seek a counsellor's advice an'
 369 things like that, um, an' I think with life experience itself it's just helped me to
 370 get my own mind an' (Mmm) not be ruled by that man who was, you know, just,
 371 (.) just in my way but, um, (Mmm) 'im an' my mum split up an' it helped me to
 372 s', be with my mum again, you know. (Yeah) Um, so, er, (.) a lot of things 'ave
 373 made me a better person I think now. (Yeah) I mean, I was very, very bitter for a
 374 lot of ti', a long time (Mmm) I mean, I could be, I keep saying to people, um,
 375 'I'm on the up now', you know, 'I could've been an alcoholic, drug addict, I
 376 could 'ave been on the streets', you know, but I knew deep down that I was better
 377 than that, better than what 'e was saying. (Mmm) An' I've always 'ad that really.
 378 (.) I keep saying, 'one day I'll make me mum proud', an' things like that kept me
 379 going, but, I mean, there was a time when I could have killed myself easily
 380 (Mmm) you know, I was very low when I was a child especially, um.

381 A That was, was that, (So) it, was that more to do with your step-dad?

382 B Yeah. It wasn't to do with my sexuality, I mean, (.) I feel like I never had a
 383 sexuality when I was, th', at that period in time, I was, um, I was in a car crash
 384 when I was eight, an' I lost my baby brother, um. I survived, an' my mum an'
 385 step-dad. But I think 'e took it out on me, because it was his baby, (Right) you
 386 see, an' um, an' I blamed myself as well, obviously for survivin' (Mmm) For, for
 387 an' eight year old, I just turned about twenty one (B: Laughs) overnight. Um,
 388 (Mmm) not had no help, none of us did, no counselling, (Really?=-) nothing.
 389 Yeah. An' so for years I'd got that on my shoulders, an' I'd got him tellin' me I
 390 was nothing. But I think it was probably him hurtin' as well (Mmm) but, I just
 391 just thought 'e was a nasty piece of work an'. (Mmm) I was never allowed to do
 392 any work, an' you know, stayed in my room most of the time. But, um, (.) that's
 393 why I'm quite (.) adamant that (.) about the:, (.) (B: Laughs) you know, it's not
 394 that I hate men, (Yeah=) because some of my best friends are men (Yeah) but, I
 395 just don't wanna sleep with them, and I don't, you know, I don't feel romantically
 396 towards them.

397 A Yeah, yeah. Do you think that, um, (.) I'm just thinking aloud here (Mmm) so tell
 398 me if I'm, tell me if, if, if this doesn't sound right. I'm just wondering whether,
 399 um, having had those, it sounds like very painful and difficult experiences when

400 you were younger, (Mmm) you know, having to live with, with a difficult, um,
 401 man, (Mmm) an', and experiencing grief and, and everything that goes with it.
 402 (Mmm) Were you ever, when you s', you s', I s', I'm just thinking about what
 403 you said about going to from eight to twenty one in, sort of, overnight. (Yeah) I
 404 won' I, I was just wondering whether you think that you, um, (.) I don't know,
 405 developed ways of coping (Mmm) through those experiences, that you've then
 406 been able to, to use to deal with some of the things that have been difficult about
 407 (.) being gay and tellin' others and //what have you?

408 B Yeah.// That's probably, (.) probably true. Um. It's like your subconscious has a
 409 way of dealing with things that you, you're not aware of it and um (.) until a few
 410 years down the line, an you think, 'wow, I was really, I, I can't believe I made it
 411 through that'. (Mmm) For instance, when I got to about fifteen an' like, your
 412 exams, I can't believe I got through them. I mean, if I was, you know, if I wasn't
 413 depressed, if I wasn't, um, (.) just so, f', um, what's the word. It's my
 414 concentration level was terrible, (Mmm) I mean, it still isn't very good, but it was
 415 really bad, (.) (Mmm) um, just because, I mean, my mind was everywhe:re, an' I
 416 can't believe I actually sat down in the exam an' did it. (B: Laughs) But, an' I
 417 came out with results that weren't brilliant and, um, (.) that really frustrates me,
 418 an' I think that (.) things have been taken away from me, but it's like (.) I thought
 419 no, I'm never going back to school, and I hated it an' things an', but I'm going
 420 back to college now an', I never thought I'd do that, (Yeah) you know. So (.) I
 421 think you do have a way of coping with things. I think your brain, sort of, cuts out
 422 with something and er. (Mmm) But I'm a very deep person, an' I take things to
 423 heart an' I, I can't help it, but (.) now that I know that I can be happy, cos I never
 424 thought I would be, never, ever, I didn't think I deserved to be happy. (.) Um, I
 425 didn't think I'd ever be in love, I didn't know how to. Because I, I couldn't love a
 426 man. So, an' I never even thought about lovin' a woman, d'you know? (Mmm)
 427 So, so, to be in love, an' have someone to say they love me as well, it's like
 428 'wooah! (B: Laughs) This shouldn't be 'appening to me, is this right?' You know,
 429 'someo', this bubble's gonna burst in a minute, (A: Laughs) cos someone's gonna
 430 pinch me, an' I'm gonna wake up, an' I'm gonna slap 'em', you know. (B:
 431 Laughs) Um, an' that's what I tell my girlfriend now, I says I (.) it's, um, it's like
 432 it shouldn't be happening to me (.)

433 A It's difficult to...?

434 B Yeah, it is, but, I think, I mean, I've been told by, um, a therapist I was seein' a
 435 while ago that, you, your subconscious 'as ways of dealing with things, you
 436 know, (Mmm) an', helping you, I s'pose. (B: Laughs) (Yeah) I don't know if you
 437 agree?

438 A Yeah, definitely. I think there, I think, (.) I don't know, I'm sure that, I think there
 439 are lots of different ways that, that, that either your subconscious or your
 440 conscious can, (Mmm) can cope with things. (Yeah) Sometimes it's about maybe
 441 blocking things out that are just too painful, (Mmm) um...

442 B When I was, when I had my accident, the accident, um, we 'ad a car crash, and
 443 um, (.) it, ahh, I don't wanna go into it too much, because (B: Laughs) it's not
 444 even about being gay or anything, but, um, (.) you see, once I get started I never
 445 stop. (A & B laugh) Um. I mean, I was eight, an' we 'ad this crash, we were

446 going on holiday, an' the car flipped upside down, an' it was pitch black, um, we
 447 'ad to climb out of the car window, me an' my step-dad, my mum wasn't talking,
 448 she was in the backseat, she was obviously knocked out and we couldn't hear the
 449 baby crying or anything either. (.) Now, me thinking about that now, I think 'god,
 450 that was horrific', and everything. (Mmm) An' me being eight, (.) I climbed out
 451 of that car, I didn't cry, I didn't panic, I didn't do anythin'. I ran across the roof of
 452 the car an' it was red 'ot, and the underneath (Yeah=) should I say, cos it was
 453 upside down. Um, I flagged the car down that stopped, they thought I was sleep
 454 walking, cos I'd got a tracksuit on an' socks, cos I took, you know 'ow you take
 455 (Yeah=) your shoes off in the car cos you're going on a long journey. An' they
 456 were like, 'ooh, are you sleep walking?' I was like 'no, no, the, my mu:m's hurt'.
 457 An' I was, like, (.) it, that's why then, (.) I turned twenty one overnight, because I
 458 just went straight into autopilot, an' did things that you wouldn't assume an eight
 459 year old to do. (Mmm) Now, I look at eight year olds now, you know, (Yeah) an'
 460 as my sister's growing up, my little sister, you know, she's twelve now, but,
 461 (Mmm) um. I was, I didn't cry until, (B: Exhales loudly) ambulance an'
 462 everything came an' we got took to the hospital an'. (.) I mean I was looking for
 463 my baby, my baby brother in the bushes an' everything. An' now, I think of that,
 464 that sounds really disturbin', but, (Yeah) an' I think, no wonder I felt like I did.
 465 But, but, um, (.) you know, through everything that's gone on, I think it's, (.) I
 466 wouldn't change the way I am (Mmm) for nothin', you know. An' it's hard, but,
 467 you know, I think things happen for a reason an'. (Yeah) I find it 'ard when
 468 people say, 'ooh, is there a heaven?' Or this, an' that, an' religion, um, cos I was
 469 like 'well there can't be a god, if there was a god, why did it happen?' An', you
 470 know, but then my mum's like, 'well, he wanted 'im because he was special' and
 471 things like that, you know, I got told that. (Mmm) But, I was like, 'yeah, right!'
 472 (B: Laughs) 'What a crap, don't feed me that crap' but, (B: Laughs) (Yeah) um. I
 473 think there is something there, cos I think somebody's been watching over me,
 474 but, I don't think, (.) I dunno, I always used to say whenever there was, um, I
 475 used to go to Brownies when I was little, an' instead of saying 'Amen' when you
 476 were in church, you know, on a Sunday or whatever, I'd say 'A-women!' (A & B
 477 Laugh) I think that was some indication then! (A & B: Laugh) You know. But,
 478 um, (A: Laughs) I always used to make all the rest of the girls laugh.

479 A (A: Laughs) That's a good one, I've not heard that one before.

480 B Haven't you? I still say it now (A: Laughs) I still laugh.

481 A Okay. I'll just go through, we've covered loads of stuff, (.) um. What, in what,
 482 think', I s'pose, thinking, thinking about now and the past, (Mmm) what positive
 483 ways do you think that being gay has affected you?

484 B Um. (.) Well, (.) I think there's a lot more, I dunno, it's like everyone says, 'oh,
 485 it's the nineties now', um, (.) I find that funny, how they're saying, cos it's the
 486 nineties, that everyone should be okay about it, I think they should've been okay
 487 about it from years ago, you know. (B: Laughs) (Yeah) But, um. (.) I'm, I don't
 488 quite know if you mean, do you mean like what positive things there are around
 489 now, like, or?

- 490 A Well, I mean more, I s'pose I mean more for you personally, are there th', are
 491 there things about being gay that have been positive, or are positive (Yeah)
 492 thinking in terms of for you?
- 493 B I s'pose my friends an' that, bein' the way they 'ave been, that's the main thing.
 494 Um, I'm finding out who my friends are. (Yeah) An' I, (.) um, at one point in my
 495 life, like a few years ago, (.) I had hardly any friends and, because I never used to
 496 go out or anythin', and I wouldn't have dreamt of telling 'em. (Mmm) Um,
 497 whereas nowadays I'm getting a stronger person an' (.) I'm not afraid to say it
 498 any more, you know, um, I've told certain people, and they've been the right
 499 people to tell, I mean, (.) there i', now there's obviously, there's a rumour going
 500 round my circle of friends, or their friends or whatever, that I'm gay, but, the, the
 501 ones I've told, they've said, 'well, it's up to you to tell them' (Mmm) and I've
 502 said, 'well, thanks, I'm glad you respect, (.) you know, my privacy' an' everythin',
 503 so. (.) But they're findin' that they're gonna have arguments with their friends,
 504 because, (Mmm) she's like, 'ooh, well, she's not is she?' An' they, they've gone
 505 'well, no', even though they know that I am, they've said no. An' this certain girl
 506 has said, 'ooh, that's all right then, in't it? There's nothing to worry about', an'
 507 sh', an' my friends say, 'well, what if she was?' You know, an' she flared up a bit
 508 an', um, it was nice to know that (.) my friend was sticking up for me an'.
 509 (Mmm) Cos I used to think, 'ooh, nobody cares about me', you know. (B:
 510 Laughs) (Yeah) But there's people like that, that I wouldn't care if I never saw
 511 'em again, you know?
- 512 A Mmm. So in some way it's, kind of, been a, it's had a, a, an affect on your
 513 friendships. (Mmm) //And...
- 514 B A big one//
- 515 A It's helped you find out who, who's, who are good friends (Yeah=) and who are
 516 not. (Mmm) But also, perhaps, is there something about, sort of, having to,
 517 having to tell them, having to decide (=Yeah) who to tell that's...?=
- 518 B =Mmm. That's been very difficult, um, (.) but it's sort of been a snowball effect,
 519 since I've started to tell people, it's just gone, everybody's like, gettin' told, an'
 520 some people are saying, 'aah', they thought so', and some people are like 'No
 521 way! Kate!' (B: Laughs) You know, an' there's, like, some are like, 'well, we
 522 thought when she had her haircut' an', like, you know, (Yeah) an' trying to make
 523 out that they knew an' things.
- 524 A Yeah. So, does it get easier (.) telling people, or...?
- 525 B (.) I s'pose it does, but only because of the way I feel about myself. If I wasn't
 526 happy with it myself, I wouldn't probably be able to tell people the way I am.
 527 (Mmm) But, um, an' especially now I've moved away from (.) where I've grown
 528 up, um, everybody's new, an' most of the people that know Holly, my girlfriend,
 529 they know she's gay, an' they're always fine about it. So, for me to come in as 'er
 530 girlfriend, they're all accepting me, an' it's great, (Mmm) an' I can't believe how
 531 easy it's been, so, er.

- 532 A Okay. What about negative things? Are there negative things about (Um) about
533 being gay?
- 534 B (.) Negative things? There are, th', there are a lot of things I s'pose that, (.)
535 feeling like you have to talk quietly about your relationships in public (Mmm) an'
536 things wi:nds me up something rotten! (A: Laughs) Cos I'm, once I get talkin', I
537 don't care, I'm like, 'whoops!' (A & B Laugh) An' if I'm with another lesbian or
538 a gay person, you know, they'll, they'll go 'Kate!' [spoken quietly] An' I'm like,
539 'what?' An' they'll go, 'oh, flippin' 'eck', you know. An' I hate being made to
540 feel that, that (.) I can't talk openly, like the two idiots that were sat over, you
541 know, or shouting about football, or whatever it was. (Yeah) An' why should we
542 be made to feel that it's a taboo subject an' (Yeah=) yet, if it's supposed to be the
543 nineties an', you know, it's a bit hypocritical, (Mmm) um. But, um, I don't know,
544 it's like, cos that's just reminded me of today, went for a drink in a pub, met my
545 friend, an', you know, we were sat there whispering like two little idiots, (B:
546 Laughs) you know. (Yeah) An', um, (.) an' I really want to show affection to my
547 girlfriend in public, just like holding hands an' things, (Yeah) um, an' I'm always
548 joking, I'm always slapping her, an' going, 'A:ll right buddy, old pal', an'
549 punchin' her on the shoulder, an' she laughs her head off, you know. Cos, I look
550 at 'er sometimes, an' we'll be walking along, an' I went, 'ooh, flippin' 'eck, I
551 nearly gave you a kiss then', an' that, it's like, then I'm, I get so angry, I think,
552 'why should I have to go 'oops'?', you know. (Mmm) 'Why should I have to hold
553 back?' I, (.) it hurts when you see a cou', a straight couple walking in front of
554 you, an' they're holdin' hands, an' they like stop an' kiss, an' cuddle in the street,
555 or whatever, (Yeah, yeah) it does hurt. An' I never really thought about things
556 like that until (.) now I'm with somebody, (Mmm) um, you know. (Mmm) An' it,
557 an' it, I find it strange going into a gay bar as well, it takes me a while to actually
558 (.) get to relax, enough to be, like, (B: Laughs) you know, like a normal couple
559 (Yeah, re-acclimatise) Yeah, that's right, yeah.
- 560 A Yeah. Okay. Um, if you could choose to be, [tape changes over] oh, sorry.
- 561 B It's all right. Um. If I could choose. (.) It's very difficult. Um. (.) There's lots of
562 ups an' downs an' (Mmm=) positives and negatives on, on both sides really. I
563 mean, a' a part of me would like to say, 'yeah, being gay's the best thing since
564 sliced bread', (B: Laughs) an' like, um, it's good to be, feel different an'
565 individual an', um, (.) cos I'm that sort of person anyway, I don't like bein' the
566 same as everybody else. (Mmm) (.) So, an' I think that's what my dad thought, he
567 thought I was doin' it just for a trend or something. (B: Laughs) (Yeah) Um. (.)
568 It's like Ellen says, 'well, it was either that or a nose ring!' (B: Laughs) You
569 know, (B: Laughs) I think that's so funny, (Mmm) so true, an' like, what people
570 think. (A: Laughs) Um. Anyway, but, ('anyhoo') 'anyhoo', yeah. (B: Laughs) So
571 (.) I think probably being straight would be just easier, but it would be most
572 boring. (.) (B: Laughs)
- 573 A Good answer! Kind of, thorough. (B: Laughs) Um, um, do you think that being
574 gay has affected who you are as a person?
- 575 B (.) No, not really. (No) I don't think so, (.) I'm still me, (Mmm) um, that's what
576 I've found, I've told a few friends an' they've said, 'yeah, but it's you. It's not
577 like you're a gay person, it's like, 'here's Kate, she goes out with a woman, so

578 what?' (Mmm) 'You're still Kate, you've still got the same points of view as you
 579 did 'ave before', so I don't think it's changed me as a person, no. It's probably
 580 made me (.) more relaxed, um, (.) but (.) like I say, there's still parts that, you
 581 know, (Mmm) you're still a bit held back aren't you, jus' (=Yeah) by the way
 582 society makes you really?

583 A Yeah. Now, the next lot of questions are all about (.) relationships, so with, say,
 584 family an' friends, and we've actually really talked quite a lot about that in, in, in
 585 part of (Mmm) the other ones. Is there anybody else in either family or friends
 586 that, um, I dunno, that you feel is important, um, that we haven't talked about?

587 B Well, my little sister, Emily, um, she's twelve, and I've only just got my mum to
 588 tell 'er. She knew that I moved out, an' I'm living with a, a young lady, and, she
 589 knows there's only one bedroom, an' she's like, 'in't it a bit cramped for you,
 590 wouldn't you like your own room?' Blah-de-blah. And, I've only not, I've not
 591 told 'er because my mum hasn't wanted 'er to, cos she's, 'well, you know what
 592 your sister's like, her mouth's too big, an' it'll be round school'. (B: Laughs) You
 593 know, an' she didn't want 'er to be picked on or anything. (Mmm) So I've, I've
 594 gone along with it, I've not liked it, I've wanted to tell 'er from the start, but, um,
 595 now she's told 'er, and she's, Emily's been fine about it, she's says, 'oh, can I be
 596 a bridesmaid!' (A & B Laugh) 'When you get married?' An' I was like, totally
 597 shocked, an' (.) that's how cool she is with it an', I think my mum was worried
 598 that she's, she's like gonna turn against me or something, but she's, er, she didn't
 599 give 'er as much credit as what she deserved, so. (Mmm) Um, but I am worried,
 600 though for 'er safety an' that, if, if it got out, an' she got picked on, (.) you know,
 601 cos I'd just kill 'em. (B: Laughs) But, (Yeah) cos I'm not there to stick up for 'er
 602 (Yeah) but I've felt, because I'm not there, perhaps it's all right to tell 'er,
 603 because I'm not a constant reminder, sort of thing (Mmm) for everybody else, if,
 604 if, like [name of a villiage on the outskirts of a city] where sh', she lives. It's a
 605 small village, well, it's getting bigger, but everybody knows everybody else,
 606 (Mmm) an' that's why it's very difficult for me, um, (.) an' I can't believe I
 607 actually went out with a girl from [name of a villiage on the outskirts of a city].
 608 You know, found somebody else that was gay, it was, like, (Mmm) total shock
 609 and, er, there was a lot of whispering going round [name of a villiage on the
 610 outskirts of a city], and, er, I'm just glad to be out of there rea:lly for that, just for
 611 the (Mmm) gossip an' that but, er, I wouldn't want Emily or my mum to be the
 612 butt of the jokes (Mmm) or any gossip. I mean, I don't care about myself as, as
 613 such, you know (.) (Yeah) 'Come and say it to my face', sort of thing an' don't,
 614 you know, but if they pick on them, that's what I'm worried about. (Yeah) I'd
 615 hate to think of 'em getting graffitti on the house, or a brick through a window, or
 616 all these 'orrible things that you hear happen to people just because they're gay,
 617 or, a racial difference, or whatever, you know.

618 A Mmm. I s'pose that makes it quite interesting really, because if you chink about
 619 coming out (Mmm) you tend to think about people's react', immediate reactions
 620 to you (Yeah) but the, it's not just about that really (=No=) is it? It's about,
 621 there's a, sort of, knock-on effect, that, that (=I know=) families and family, and
 622 friends can also (Mmm) be the butt of homophobia an'...

623 B That's right, yeah. (Yeah) I think that's what's up with my dad as well. I think he
 624 thinks that he's done something wrong and that, um, cos 'e says to me, 'well,

625 what am I supposed to tell my workmates?' I was like, 'well, you tell 'em to mind
 626 their own business', like, when they say, 'oh, is she courting?' I said 'well, you
 627 tell them what you want'. (Mmm) You know, 'e says, 'what, shall I tell them that
 628 you're gay?' An' I'm like, 'if you want, yeah', (A: Laughs) 'I don't really care,
 629 I'm not gonna see 'em'. (B; Laughs) (Yeah) I mean, that's his own, it's like,
 630 'ooh, I can't tell 'em, I can't tell them that' (.) I don't know, I don't know what is,
 631 what 'e feels he should say to them (Mmm) but, um. (Mmm) Huh! He's always
 632 got to tell everybody that his son an' daughters are perfect, an' this, an' that, an'
 633 'is life's rosy an', so. Anyway, (Mmm) don't go back onto 'im again. (B: Laughs)

634 A Er. The other, I mean, we talked a bit about, your, your friends as well (Mmm)
 635 The other kind of areas were, um, school, in school, or at your work, kind of,
 636 settings. Whether you've, sort of, had any, um, I don't know, whether being gay's
 637 affected your relationships with people, who, I guess, aren't your immediate
 638 friends, but are your peers, (Right) either at school or work (Um) I mean, you've
 639 already talked about the fact that you, sort of, felt the need to keep it quiet in
 640 school.

641 B Yeah. Well, I mean, there was a games teacher, a woman who everyone thought
 642 was lesbian an', I don't know if she was or not. But, um, (.) she used to get some
 643 flack. (B: Laughs) You know, it's things like that that make you think it's not a
 644 good idea to, er, (Yeah) mention it. (B: Laughs)

645 A Yeah, so it doesn't have to be something that people are saying to you, but (Yeah)
 646 it can be what people say to others.

647 B Sorry, I think I've nudged the tape.

648 A That's fine.

649 B Um, er (.) I can remember when I used to be quite good at sport when I was at
 650 school, and cos I wasn't very good academically, because my mind was
 651 everywhere else. When it came to sport, I could put all my energy into it and let
 652 out a lot of anger and frustration and things (Mmm) An' um, they always used to
 653 want me for the hockey team, and for the netball team, an' everything, but I
 654 couldn't really go, because my step-dad was, just wouldn't let me go to after
 655 school things. So I did everything during school time, um, an' like inter-school
 656 sports, you know, where you go to different schools an' things, (Yeah) er, I did
 657 that an' I won the high jump, and, er, this certain lady teacher gave me a massive
 658 hug an' everyone was like, 'hurgh!' (A & B: Laugh) It was like, reinforced this
 659 idea that she was gay, but I think she was just 'appy for me, you know. But at the
 660 time I was 'aving feelings as well, thinking, 'Oh my god!' You know. (Yeah) It
 661 was a bit weird, a bit scary, (Mmm) I mean, I didn't even fancy 'er, that's the
 662 thing, she was like, 'ooarch' (A & B: Laugh) this big beast of a woman! (A & B
 663 laugh) I was not really, er, (No) taken with 'er, no.

664 A Okay. The next questions are about relationships and dating and stuff. An', again,
 665 you've talked a bit about (Yeah) the fact that you dated men an' stuff, an' Holly.
 666 (Mmm) Were those, were those ever sexual relationships with blokes?

667 B Yeah.

- 668 A Yeah. So, you, sort of, you deliberately [tape inaudible] off?
- 669 B Yeah, and then some.
- 670 A An' how did they, I mean, you, I guess you've already said, they didn't feel quite
671 right, they didn't, they didn't feel (No) very comfortable. How did they make you
672 feel (.) in...?
- 673 B Um. (.) I didn't really get turned on, (B: Laughs) to put it bluntly. (Mmm) They
674 did, but I didn't, I didn't get any pleasure out of it, an' yet I thought, if, if, it
675 sounds really sad, an' really sick, I s'pose, but it's like, 'if at once I don't
676 succeed, try, try again', an' that's what I did. All my friends, we were going to
677 [name of a club] every week, or [name of a club], or somewhere like that,
678 somewhere really corny, meatmarket type of place. An' basically, just to see if
679 you could get off with somebody, (Mmm) an' get laid or whatever, (B: Laughs)
680 and, um, I, sort of, was in with those, and it was expected, sort of thing, (Yeah)
681 so, (.) that's why it's been a shock to some of 'em. (B: Laughs) (Yeah) You
682 know, um. It wouldn't be a shock to the men that I've been with, probably, but,
683 um (.)
- 684 A So did you, um, I'm just wondering what you thought about, kind of, about, why
685 you weren't gettin' turned on. Was it, was it in the back of your head that it was
686 to do with your sexuality, or did, did you sort of attribute it to you, or attribute it
687 to them, or (Um) bein' drunk or, (A: Laughs) you know?
- 688 B Well, being drunk's the main thing! (A & B: Laugh) Um. (.) I, (.) I'm try' na
689 think if I 'ave been sober when I've slept with a man actually. (A & B Laugh) Er,
690 I can't really think, but, (.) it's always when I've been drinking an' then, (.) um,
691 (.) I've always thought (.) a bit cringey, an' like, (.) uptight an', um, (Mmm)
692 never been able to relax, an' I'd shake, an', um, (.) I think, I didn't really (.) know
693 how strong the feelings I was 'avin' for women, until I was with a bloke, (Mmm)
694 and (.) like, for instance, er, I went out with a gym instructor and went back to his
695 house an' I'd met his sister, an' she was in the bedroom next door, an' I was
696 thinking about her. (B: Laughs) An' that sounds really sick, dun't it. But I was
697 like, she was gorgeous an', (.) (Mmm) an' 'e just thought I was frigid basically
698 because I couldn't, like, (Mmm) fulfil 'im, like, I couldn't give him everything he
699 wanted, and (Mmm) I wanted to be in her room, not in his, you know, (Yeah) so.
- 700 A S', so did it, in a way did it, s', it sounds like in a way it, sort of, confirmed for
701 you (Yeah) that it wasn't right (Yeah) an' that you were interested in women
702 (=Mmm=) an' not men.
- 703 B Whenever I went out with a man, I always knew it wasn't going to last, I'd
704 already got it in my mind on the first date, um, that isn't right is it? (B: Laughs)
705 You know, I mean, you're s'posed to go on a date because you want things to
706 progress, I s'pose, (Mmm) um.
- 707 A Did you have any longer, longer term relationships with men?
- 708 B Only, say, two months, but it was only like once a week I'd see them an' (Yeah)
709 that sort of thing. (Yeah=) Never like, everybody said, 'ooh n', you can, you

710 never 'ave a proper relationship, do you?' An', an' I always used to think, 'ooh,
 711 there's something wrong with me, (.) everybody else can do it, why can't I?'
 712 (Mmm) You know, even my little sister, Poppy, was going out with lads longer
 713 than I was, (A & B laugh) she was only about thirteen at the time, you know!
 714 'I've been with 'im a year', you know.

715 A Yeah. Okay, what about relationships with women? We've talked about, the, the
 716 first relationship (Yeah) you had.

717 B Um. Yeah, that was quite confusing again, because (.) I was like, 'yeah, that's
 718 who I want, and that's it', (B: Laughs) sort of thing. (Mmm) But because it was,
 719 like, the first person, I know that now, but at the time it hurt like mad, you know.
 720 (Yeah) Er, and for her to ring, we'd known each other a lot an', er, (.) for her to
 721 (.) say, 'well, I'm a bit confused, I don't know if I still like men', I was like, 'O:h
 722 my god!' You know, I was like, 'well, I can't ever see myself going back with
 723 men, no way.' (Mmm) I mean, by that time, I hadn't (.) been with a man for, like,
 724 I don't know, over a year at least, or two years. Um, (.) but she was still thinkin'
 725 about men, an', an' I was a bit (.) freaked out by that, I thought, 'no, no, you've,
 726 me an' you 'ave got that thing together', an' (Mmm) it was her first time as well,
 727 but for her to say this, I don't know, I expected her to have the same feelings as
 728 me, an' I was a bit (Mmm) annoyed by that. But, um, we swapped rings an'
 729 everythin', an' she wanted her ring back. .So I went back up to Liverpool an' my
 730 dad took me up an' it was because of that, that I 'ad to tell my dad, an' it went a
 731 bit wrong. We was, travelled to Liverpool in silence in the car, an' um, went to
 732 meet 'er and she never turned up, so, and, because my brother, where we were
 733 staying, you know, because, um, he was living in halls of residence I couldn't get
 734 back in because you need a pass to get back in. (Mmm) Um, so I 'ad to spend the
 735 whole afternoon walking round Liverpool an' it started to snow on me an'
 736 everythin', it was just the worst afternoon of my life. (B: Laughs) I'd got this ring
 737 I was like, 'you bitch!' (A & B laugh) I was ringing 'er every half an hour. I
 738 knew 'er address an' I could have found it if I'd wanted to, but I thought, 'I just
 739 don't think she's there, I think she's just (.) done it on purpose'. An' I sent her a
 740 card on something like Christmas or Valentine's day or something, an' I put,
 741 'thanks a lot for standing me up', (B: Laughs) you know. (Yeah) Um an' then a
 742 year later (.) she gave me a ring out of the blue, called me up, an' I was, like,
 743 gobsmacked, an' (.) she apologised. It was like she 'ad to get it (.) out of 'er
 744 system, that she'd been thinking about it an'. (Mmm) She told me she'd had, (.)
 745 um, a relationship with this Chinese lad, an' had his baby, an' ev', er, an' 'ad to
 746 have an abortion cos there was summat wrong with it an' all this, an' I was like,
 747 'flippin' 'eck', I couldn't believe all this she was telling me. (.) An' she'd been
 748 'av', 'aving drug problems an' all this. I was thinking, 'god'. I wanted to say,
 749 'see. if you'd have stuck with me!' (A & B: Laugh) You know. (Yeah) But, (.)
 750 mmm.

751 A And what about (Yeah) other relationships with women?

752 B Well, I haven't really had many. Um, the next one was like months after that. I
 753 was, I was like, very wary (B: Laughs) (Mmm) to jump straight into anything,
 754 um. But it was in Liverpool again, I, I got off with a girl, um, (.) who, she was
 755 there with her boyfriend at the time, (B: Laughs) an' I went an' took 'er off 'im,
 756 (B: Laughs) basically! (A: Laughs) I'm not, er, I don't know if i'm proud of that

757 or not! (B: Laughs) Er, her, er. An' then (.) a long time after that, um, (.) um,
 758 Well, I'd been seein' my, the therapist about once a week, um. It was costing me
 759 a fortune, twenty five pound it was a session, an hour, out of my money, you
 760 know, income support, it's (B: Laughs) (Mmm) it don't leave me much after
 761 board and that to go out. (Mmm) So, I didn't really go out anywhere, I didn't
 762 know (.) who to go down gay pubs with, I didn't even know of any gay pubs, I
 763 only knew of one, [LGB pub], an' I knew that it's a bit of a dive (Yeah) that's all
 764 I knew. An' I wasn't gonna go down there on my own, (.) cos I've, you know,
 765 I've, I'd heard horror stories of (B: Laughs) bein' raped or something, probably
 766 got in the toilet by some big butch WOMAN. (B: Laughs) (Right) So I was a bit
 767 wary of going down on me own, but, um, (.) then, through the therapist I was, I
 768 was, um, talking to, I was approaching the subject of sexuality an' I felt that I
 769 couldn't talk to 'im about it really, I just clamped up an' I couldn't really get it
 770 out, an' he says, 'p'raps you'd be better talking to a, a woman in that field, in that
 771 area, or perhaps a lesbian herself' an', cos I did say about relationships I'd had,
 772 an', (.) but, yet, when it came down to actual, physical things I couldn't talk to
 773 'im about it. (Mmm) An' um, then 'e put me in touch with [a support service for
 774 young (14 – 25) people where the LGB youth group takes place] an', I got to
 775 meet Jess, Jess Simpson an' then, um, I've seen 'er ever since, um, (.) just, I don't
 776 know, when was it, January I started? (Mmm) Um, (.) an' I've, it's been totally
 777 different, she's like a counsellor, rather than, sh', he used to like give me advice
 778 an' things like that, whereas she doesn't, she sort of listens to me yak on an' on,
 779 (B: Laughs) an' then (=Mmm) just says, 'oh, how does it make you feel' or, 'do
 780 you feel this' or whatever, an' it's a lot more, I feel a lot more relaxed, actually
 781 (Mmm) an' it's free as well! (B: Laughs) I can't believe it, you know. (A:
 782 Laughs) So...

783 A Much more relaxed then!

784 B Much more relaxed! An' it's in town as well, you can window shop! (A & B:
 785 Laugh) No, but, um, (.) an' with 'er being a lesbian as well, the first thing she
 786 said to me, though, when I walked in, she went, 'are you lesbian?' An' I went,
 787 'um'. Nobody had actually ask', asked me that before, an' I was like, 'um, (.)
 788 yeah', an' I went, 'yea:h', an' she went, 'ooh, I'm sorry', she says, 'I didn't mean
 789 to be so (.) abrupt', an' that, but, I says, 'oh it's alright', she says, 'ooh, I
 790 shouldn't have said it like that, should I?' But, obviously from what Sam, the guy
 791 I was, I used to go an' see, obviously 'e'd said something (Yeah) and, um, she'd
 792 just come out with it, obviously. (B: Laughs) I was like, 'ooarch!' (A: Laughs)
 793 As soon as she said it said it. (=initiation!) Yeah, but I was glad she did it, cos it, I
 794 don't know, shock. (B: Laughs) (Mmm) //But, um...

795 A Sort of, gets it// out, out in the open.

796 B Yeah, it did. I was like that, looking over my shoulder, (B: Laughs) no, but, it
 797 was, it was good that she was as well. An' I didn't dare s', ask her for ages if she
 798 was, I didn't even know. Um, (.) and, found out she'd got a little boy an' every',
 799 an' (.) it's, it was really good. An' I was like, 'well, I, I don't really know
 800 anybody else. (.) I don't know any gay people really', um. A:nd (.) I met (.) well,
 801 she, she mentioned the, um, [day of the week] night LGB group an' things, and I
 802 was like 'yeah, ri:ght, you really think I'm gonna go to that!' (A & B: laugh)
 803 Because, I was like, 'number one, I'm not goin' on my own, (.) an' number two,'

804 I thought 'they're all gonna be losers like me!' (B: Laughs) Or, I dunno, just,
 805 (Yeah) (.) I didn't wanna be, (.) well, I don't, it sounds really big-'eaded an'
 806 'orrible, du'n't it? I don't, (.) I'll have a think about that, (B: Laughs) (Yeah) how
 807 to put that. But, basically, I mean, I met this girl, Lucy, well, woman, um, who
 808 lives in [name of a village on the outskirts of a city], and she was messing me
 809 around an', um, I'd decided, 'right I'm gonna go see what this group's like', an'
 810 turned up, an' you was there, weren't you, (I was) on me first day?

811 A I was. And through there, you've met...?

812 B I've met a few people, an', um, got to see what the scene's like an' made some
 813 good friends, and, um, I'm glad I did it, you know, (Mmm) mmm.

814 A Okay. And you're happily (.) ensconced in a relationship at the moment?

815 B I am, very much, an' this is the way it's gonna stay, hopefully.

816 A Good. An' have those relationships, I mean, we've talked about the relationships
 817 with men not, not feeling right (Mmm) have they felt, felt more right?

818 B =Oh, yeah.=

819 A =Basically, even though (Um) they haven't all worked out, I guess.

820 B Yeah, um, (.) the physical side of things has been totally alright, um. (.) I feel I'm
 821 trying to make up for lost time (B: Laughs) but, um, (Mmm) cos, whoever I'm
 822 with seems to say, (B: Laughing) they're like, 'woah!' (A & B laugh) I dunno,
 823 I'm a very passionate person, an' I (.) I think because I've been (.) so held back,
 824 just, not because of being gay as well, but bein' (.) I've always been quiet and
 825 reserved an' (Mmm) kept everything to myself. Now I'm like, findin' my feet an'
 826 I'm, everything's out in the open, an' I'm like, wanna try everythin' an', (B:
 827 Laughs) you know. (Yeah) If there's ten pies on the table, I wanna try a bit of
 828 every one, you know, that sort of thing, (Yeah) but, um. (.) I did sort of say, 'I
 829 love you' a little too earlier to people, um, a little too early, that, you know, an' it
 830 sacred, it scared Lucy, I know it did, (Mmm) um. (.) An' when I look back I
 831 think, 'yeah, I was a little, (.) I shouldn't 'ave said that then', cos it wasn't totally
 832 true, I didn't, there were still parts of me that didn't trust 'er an' things like that,
 833 (Mmm) so. But I think I was sayin' it just to make 'er (.) stay, or to make, you
 834 know what I mean? (Mmm, yeah) Um, I met somebody else after we, sort of,
 835 broke up, um, but that was just for a week, I th', I think I told you about that,
 836 (Mmm) but, um, that was just a bit mad, (.) a mad sexual fling an' then it was
 837 over and done with before (B: Laughs) I could blink, um. I got a bit hurt, but,
 838 (Mmm) again, you know, (.) let me feelings run away with me, but, um, (.) so, (.)
 839 I ended up in the arms of Lucy again, unfortunately. Um, (.) it was a bit silly, but
 840 (.) you do=

841 A =We all do silly things.

842 B Yeah. (B: Laughs) Er, but I thought, 'No. You've got to (.) take a stand' an', (.)
 843 you know, um, 'you've got to treat yourself better, Kate', I was saying, you
 844 know, 'don't let people walk all over you, an' don't (.) do this to yourself.' So, I

845 thought, 'right, I'll go out with friends a bit more' an' er, an' that's how I came to
 846 go out with Luc', er, Holly. God, I nearly said 'Lucy' then! (A: Laughs) (Okay)
 847 But, um. Yeah.

848 A The next, (.) we're getting to the end. There's some questions here about, um (.)
 849 about coping (Mmm) and support, an', an' again, you've talked about some of
 850 this, I think, already. Um. I'm just thinking about, if we go back to thinking about
 851 the fact that, that there are things that are difficult about being gay an' coming to
 852 terms with it yourself, but also (.) a', about coming to terms with how other
 853 people (.) react to it, um, an', an', an' all the, sort of, feelings and thoughts that go
 854 with it, so p'raps feeling isolated, or frightened, or worried, or (Mmm) things like
 855 that. Or experiencing, sort of, direct abuse or prejudices, or, sort of, things like
 856 that. (Mmm) Um. I guess, have you experienced those things, and d', how do you
 857 think you've, you've, kind of, coped, what's helped you to cope with any of those
 858 difficulties?

859 B To be honest, I haven't really come across it. Um, (.) I've had people say things
 860 in a jokey way (Mmm) but, um, (.) like, um, there's a girl who lives (.) near us,
 861 um, it's, we', we're like, 'ey up slapper!' An' she's like, 'ey up dyke!' You
 862 know, (B: Laughs) an' it's, (Yeah) but it's in a funny way, it's not, 'oh, I'll take
 863 offence' an' (Yeah) whatever, you know, um, cos she knows she's a slapper, an' I
 864 know I'm a dyke! (A & B laugh)

865 A Yeah, so it's not meant...?

866 B No, I've not really had it, an' yet, I'm quite worried actually because, um, just up
 867 the road from us there's, um, a, a family of, er, black people, an' they've had
 868 some graffiti sprayed on their door, 'NF', National Front (Mmm) an' I'm just
 869 thinking (.) I hope that they don't (.) do anything to us, um. Because we do try an'
 870 keep ourselves to ourselves but, (.) me and Holly aren't really like that, we're
 871 just, we're sort of (.) a bit mad, an' a bit crazy, an' we're young, an' we wanna do
 872 (.) things, we wanna (.) 'ave a laugh in the street, an' it's hard for me to, (.)
 873 sometimes, I 'ave to strap my 'ands to my sides, cos I want to put my arm round
 874 her an', (Mmm) I want to do things an', (Yeah) um. But I am worried that people
 875 are gonna shout things, or. I have had in the past, a long time ago, I can remember
 876 turning a man down an' he was like, 'ooh, you lesbian' (Mmm) An' it was, it
 877 like, hit me. An' I was like, (.) ne:ver actually thought of it myself, but, always
 878 liked women, but never, ever called it anything. (Mmm) You know, so, for 'im to
 879 say it, I was quite offended, but, um. (.) I thought, 'oh, stupid man' an' I can
 880 remember sayin' to my friend, 'oh, just because I don't like him, he thinks I'm a
 881 lesbian', (Mmm) you know, (Yeah) cos all men think all women should fancy
 882 them, don't they? (B: Laughs) (Yeah) Well, a lot of them.

883 A Yeah. So, you've not experienced a lot of those things.=

884 B =No, not really.

885 A But, I mean, it sounds like at times you've felt quite isolated, although that's
 886 partly been to do with just being quite a private (=Yeah) person. (Mmm) Are
 887 there, I me', I mean, I, just thinking about what we've talked about already,
 888 (Mmm) you've, sort of, talked about, kind of, getting in contact with people down

- 889 here, an' and (Yeah) meeting other (.) lesbians (Mmm) and gay men, and
890 bisexuals, an' that, I mean, was that a source of support in a way, or...?
- 891 B Yeah. Um. (.) Not as supportive as I thought it was going to be, it's very different
892 to what I expected. I've found me-self really working hard at trying to talk to
893 people an' to get people to talk to me an' (.) cos I've thought, 'god, I'm glad this
894 wasn't a couple of years ago', else I'd 'ave just walked in and walked back out
895 again. (Mmm) To be honest with ya, I was quite surprised an', (=Mmm) kind of,
896 what we do do an', I think people think, some, they take the piss a bit, an' they
897 like, (.) I don', I don't really know what there should be but, (The group) yeah.
898 (Mmm) I think it's a bit disorganised an'. (.) It, the people come in an' they sit
899 there, an' they sit on their own an' nobody speaks to them or anything. (Mmm)
900 Luckily I'm, now, my personality's better, where I, I'll just, if someone's not
901 talking to me, or looking at me funny, I'll probably smile at 'em or make 'em
902 smile at me, (Mmm) and go, 'my name's Kate, what's yours?' (B: Laughs)
903 (Yeah=) An' they get me shoved down their throat, you know, but, um, but it's
904 only to make me feel better (B: Laughs) (Yeah) in the long run, d'you know what
905 I mean? (Yeah) but, um.
- 906 A So what, I mean, I think that's interesting, cos I think, (.) I don't know, I, having
907 never been to the group myself (Mmm) I would imagine that, that some people
908 might find it quite difficult and threatening. (Mmm, I, I do) Um, jus', jus', I
909 mean, just in the way that meeting a, a group of people is, an' stuff. (Yeah) Have
910 you got any ideas about what would make it better?
- 911 B Ooher (exhales loudly) //um...
- 912 A Or easier?//
- 913 B (.) I don't know, um. (.) Cos it's difficult, like, when I came along, um, I started
914 to make friends. (.) I almost felt like I didn't want anybody else to come in an',
915 d'you know what I...? (Mmm=) I know it's very strange, that is. It's a bit selfish
916 really, but, an' I could see the way everybody else was as well, that like, someone
917 'ud come in an' they'd look at 'em and they'd go, 'hmn, she thinks she's it' o:r
918 whatever, (Mmm) an' that it's a bit, (.) you know, we're all supposed to not have
919 prejudices or anythin', an' yet we do, an' we don't know we're doin' it, an' we,
920 (B: Laughs) you know, um. (.) I could see Sarah and Claire were trying to say,
921 'okay, we're gonna introduce our names' an' everything, but, I know that if you
922 go to somewhere an' about ten people tell you their names, you don't remember
923 one of 'em. (A: Laughs) (No. That's true) You only remember your own name,
924 you don't even remember, I didn't even know what Sarah's name was for about
925 five, well, 'bout three weeks, (Yeah, yeah) you know. (.) I'd be like, 'the lad with
926 the blond hair, an' the girl with the glasses', an' the, you know.
- 927 A Yeah. (Er) Do you think it would help, I mean, do you think it would help if they,
928 cos you, one of the things you said was it was quite, sort of, disorganised, (Mmm)
929 do you think it would help if it was more structured in some way?
- 930 B I think so, yeah. Um. (.) I don't quite know what, because there's not many
931 people that go, it's, you can't really split them up, cos there'd be, I don', I don't

- 932 know, but (Mmm) p'raps if they'd, somebody'd introduced me: gradually, or (.)
933 talked to me first (.)
- 934 A Mmm. (.) What, a, a, a group li', le', leader or a...?
- 935 B Yeah. I think a group leader. (Mmm) Um, (.) I don't know. It's like people think
936 I'm a really confident person, an' everything, but deep down I'm crapping
937 myself, you know, (B: Laughs) (Yeah) just like everybody else, an'...
- 938 A So, some, some way, perhaps, of making it easier to, to, kind of, (Mmm) en',
939 enter the group in a way?
- 940 B I thought about it a lot, of how you can make it better, I don't know, I don't have
941 the answers, //you know, I mean...
- 942 A No, I think it's really diffic'...//
- 943 B I, I went there for some guidance or somethin', but I didn't really find it, but, I
944 mean, I did, but I didn't. I, I, like, the questions that I'd thought of when I was at
945 home, when I'd got there, had completely gone, an' I couldn't, (.) (Mmm) um,
946 it's like they have, they had a week where we 'ad to write down on a big sheet of
947 paper what we wanted and what we'd dis', should discuss an' things (Mmm) an'
948 my mind just went blank, (Mmm) I couldn't think. (Yeah) An' there, there was
949 like giggling an' they were, it felt like I was at school again, an' I was like, 'I
950 don't want this'. (No) 'I just wanna go down the pub', an', (B: Laughs) you
951 know? (Yeah) Um.
- 952 A So I s'pose one, one thing it's, it's helpful is, kind of, just meeting other people
953 (Yeah) although it, it wasn't that easy (No) to do it, (Mmm) an', you have, partly
954 because you are, kind of, quite, you know, a sociable person, being able to meet
955 people.
- 956 B Thank you! (B: Laughs)
- 957 A Yeah?
- 958 B Yeah.
- 959 A But it, it doesn't sound like it's...
- 960 B It can be very hard for some people, I know some people come in and they just sit
961 there and don't say a word (Mmm) an' then they go again (Yeah) an' then they
962 come back the next week an' I think, (.) 'they've come back again?' (B: Laughs)
963 'I'm so surprised', because=
- 964 A =Yeah, it must //take...
- 965 B I'm// surprised that Sarah or somebody hasn't gone up to 'em an' sat an' 'ad a
966 chat an' been=
- 967 A =Mmm. It takes a lot of courage, I think, (Yeah) in a way.

- 968 B Mmm, it does.
- 969 A If you're, particularly if you're shy, (Yeah) to do it. So maybe some way of
970 making that process easier would be...?
- 971 B Yeah, definitely.
- 972 A Okay. Jus', I'm just quickly going to, sort of, go through, cos I think we've talked
973 about quite a lot of this. (Mmm) I mean, in terms of, it sounds like some of your
974 family have been (.) supportive (Yeah) an' it sounds like=
- 975 B =I haven't really got that much family, anyway, I mean, on my mum's side
976 there's only my mum an' her sister, um, (.) a:nd he:r daughter an' that, but, my
977 mum's sister lives in Manchester way, an', (Mmm) you know, um. (.)
- 978 A Were there, were there, I'm just thinking about the, the people that you talked
979 about earlier, (Mmm) um, I think it's your mum and your, your brothers, an' your
980 sister, your half-sister and half-brother.
- 981 B What?, I've got, ha! I've been confusing you, an't I! I've got a half-brother, an' a
982 half-sister, my real brother died when he was a baby (Right) that's who I've been,
983 (.) but, when I say my brother, I mean my half-brother.
- 984 A Yeah, so is he the, //your older brother?
- 985 B That's Mike.//
- 986 A //Is he the one that lives in Liverpool?
- 987 B There's only one. Yep//
- 988 A Right, so I, I was confused, I thought there was three.=
- 989 B =Sorry, no.
- 990 A No. But, okay, so, but, I'm just thinking about those people (Yeah=) who were,
991 who were basically very positive (Yeah) when you told them, when you came out
992 to them. (Mmm) Do, do you think that helped you to, (.) to cope, in, in a way,
993 with, //with anxieties?
- 994 B Yeah, it has.// It has. Um. It's because I do a lot of worrying for other people as
995 well as meself you see (Mmm) I've always been the same, an', um, (.) if I knew
996 that they were to worry about me, um, you know, I'd be worried for that, so I'm
997 glad that I don't have to, an' I don't have to think about it, I know that when I
998 speak to them, they'll be like, 'ooh, who are you going out with now', an', (B:
999 Laughs) (Mmm) you know. They're happy for me now.
- 1000 A So that's...?
- 1001 B You know.
- 1002 A An' that's been important?

1003 B Very important, yeah.

1004 A In terms of you (Mmm) an, an'...?

1005 B An' a', at the moment it's, I s'pose I want my dad's approval because, it's like
 1006 he'll, he'll invite me round to his girlfriend's an' that, like in the summer we'll
 1007 have barbecues and things like that (.) I'm in, as far as I can see it, I'm in a
 1008 normal relationship, loving relationship, an' then this is the way it's gonna be for
 1009 as long as I live. (Mmm) I'm hoping, fingers, toes crossed, (B: Laughs) you
 1010 know. (Yeah) An' if I get invited somewhere, I'm going to want to bring Holly,
 1011 (Mmm) an' if she's not welcome, then I'm not goin', an' I don't want there to be
 1012 this massive rift and, 'ooh', you know, I just can't be doin' with it (Mmm) an'
 1013 that's why I want 'im to, it's, I say, 'I want you to accept it dad', an' 'e says,
 1014 'well, I do', but I'm like, 'you don't, because I can tell in your voice', and the
 1015 sarcastic things 'e says. (Mmm) Like, 'oh, your lover', (spoken sarcastically) 'are
 1016 you still with your lover?' An' I go, 'you mean Holly?', you know, 'she's got a
 1017 name'. (B: Laughs) (Mmm) It's frustratin'.

1018 A So that's quite important in //a way?

1019 B Yeah, // ve:ry. (.) I've still not told, he's got a sister who, she's my godmother, an'
 1020 we get on really well when we see each other, we don't see each other for ages,
 1021 you know, they live [name of a suburb] way. An' um, but when we do see each
 1022 other, we, we've got the same, (.) sort of, er, personality, an' we, we get on really
 1023 well. We normally sit down an' call me dad, (A & B laugh) that's how we get on.
 1024 A', an' so, I just, (.) I want to be able to tell 'er that (.) I'm, again, I'm worried
 1025 that my dad's going to poison 'er against me.

1026 A Have you, it sounds like you've had experience of, kind of, counselling (Mmm)
 1027 that, I guess, has not been particularly, or, or from what you've said it's not, not,
 1028 sort of, specifically to do with (Right) sexuality stuff, is that (No) is that right?

1029 B That's right, yeah.

1030 A Um, have you ever been, kind of, has it ever been suggested to you, or, that you
 1031 should seek support because of your sexuality, or for things to do with your
 1032 sexuality?

1033 B Um. (.)

1034 A You're looking confused. (A: Laughs) I guess, I guess, some people, (Yeah) um,
 1035 who, who I've spoken to have, have, kind of, people they've told that they're gay,
 1036 they've said, suggested that they went to, to see someone about it.

1037 B Right. Well, it's, that's kind of how it was when, um, Sam, who I was seein',
 1038 that's how it, we came to an, an end sort of thing, where we couldn't go any
 1039 further an', (.) um, he put me in touch with [a support service for young (14 – 25)
 1040 people where the LGB youth group takes place] (Mmm) to talk, to have
 1041 specifically more a lesbian side of things an', (.) but, also, be there (.) to
 1042 understand the whole picture, not just because I was a lesbian, you know what I
 1043 mean? //Um...

- 1044 A Yeah, // (Um) sort of, w', wider...
- 1045 B Yeah, yeah.
- 1046 A Was that helpful, though for you? Did, did it (Yeah) feel like it, cos I mean I, (.)
 1047 it, it sounded the way you, you told, told it, it (Mmm) sounded to me like that
 1048 was, kind of, something that, that was a point that you'd had, kind of, jointly
 1049 reached, and that you felt that that would be useful.
- 1050 B Yeah.
- 1051 A Did it, is that, is that what it felt like for you, or...?
- 1052 B It felt like a natural progression, um. I had thought about it before he even
 1053 suggested it. (Right) Um, but I didn't wanna hurt 'is feelings by saying I actually
 1054 wanna go an' see somebody else, (Yeah) um. He hadn't been very well, as well,
 1055 (Right) a lot of things gone wrong, but, um, he was being accused by somebody
 1056 of doing things, by a patient an', um, (Right) he was going through a lot of stress
 1057 an' having police, um, take care of things. So, I didn't wanna say, 'well, actually I
 1058 want to go an' see somebody else' because that mi', I might've looked as though
 1059 I wasn't being loyal, an' you know what I mean?
- 1060 A Mmm. Yeah, (Um) but, so it sounds like that was, kind of, something that, it
 1061 wasn't, sort of, somebody saying, 'off you go to, sort of,...' =
- 1062 B =No, no, not at all=
- 1063 A = 'see a shrink'. It was, it was a, sort of, broadly agreed.
- 1064 B Mmm. Oh, yeah.
- 1065 A An' it felt useful?
- 1066 B Yeah, um.
- 1067 A And has that, that, the, the, the sort of stuff you've had with Jess been supportive
 1068 and helpful?
- 1069 B Yeah, at first I, I didn't really know what to talk about or anything, it was like
 1070 starting all over again, (Mmm) but, um, (.) I had, I dunno, she just, (.) she let me
 1071 take everything at my own pace, just tell 'er what I wanted to tell 'er, an' it
 1072 wasn't like how it was with Sam, when I went there, it was like I was supposed to
 1073 tell 'im things that 'e specifically said, like. An' I found that dauntin' at first, I
 1074 don't know why, I used to go with my mum at first an', um, gradually mum
 1075 would wait in the other room, an' then gradually, mum wouldn't even come at all,
 1076 and I'd go on me own, you know (Mmm=) um. (.) So, it was like I was starting
 1077 again. (Yeah) An' the first thing she says, 'well, are you a lesbian?' I was like,
 1078 'aargh!' (A & B: Laugh) 'I'm going back out again!' You know.
- 1079 A I'm impressed you stayed! (B: Laughs) (Yeah, so) Okay. Just the last set of
 1080 questions, an' I know we've (Mmm) got to be fairly quick, (Okay) um. I guess,
 1081 these are a number of questions that are about, kind of, how much contact you've

1082 had with other lesbians and gay men, and bisexuals, an' also (Mmm) how much it
 1083 was talked about and stuff. (Mmm) So (.) how, um, did you know anyone who
 1084 was gay when you were growin' up?

1085 B Um.

1086 A //I mean...

1087 B Y', I// knew, not really knew as such, but I used to:, when I was little I used to
 1088 play with, um, two children who used to live next door. An' it's only since I've
 1089 been older that I've known that they were two women living together, an' they
 1090 were a couple. (Right) An' I can remember at the time there was some gossip
 1091 going on. (Yeah) But I used to play with these kids an' I, I can't even remember,
 1092 like, thinkin' about it, (Mmm) it being anythin'. You know what I mean? I knew
 1093 that they lived together an' I knew, but I, I didn't even think of it as (.) well, I
 1094 didn't think of it as being anything wrong or, um. That was the earliest memory
 1095 really of anyone gay, um. An' then (.)

1096 A It sounds like, was a, your PE teacher at school, who was (=Yeah=) rumoured at
 1097 least to be (Yeah) gay.

1098 B An' there's the obvious, kd lang, that came out, an' that was, like, (.) big
 1099 influence to, (.) not influence, (B: Laughs) but, um, (Mmm) a help, um (Mmm=) I
 1100 can remember going buying that single 'Constant Cravin'' and, um, (.) you see, I,
 1101 it's, it's things, I remember now, an' I think, 'god, I can remember actually
 1102 gettin' it', an' I can remember, like, being nervous about buyin' it, because like
 1103 'everyone's gonna think I'm gay', you know (Yeah) because I'm buyin' it. An'
 1104 it's like, deep down I, I liked 'er, (B: Laughs) you know, but I wouldn't 'ave
 1105 dreamt of saying anythin'. (Mmm, yeah=) But now, I'm not afraid to say, 'well,
 1106 actually, when I was little, I used to fancy 'er' you know, or (Yeah) whatever.

1107 A What about other people in the media?

1108 B We:ll, there's not been ma:ny really.

1109 A It sounds like you watch 'Ellen'.

1110 B Well, yeah. I mean, it's, it's like anything gay you, sort of, (.) ah, pick up on, an' I
 1111 picked up on things from watching soaps, an' things, an' innuendo, an' that, that
 1112 I'd laugh at and nobody else would, an', or wouldn't find funny, or wouldn't
 1113 (Mmm) quite get and, or I'd be offended an' they wouldn't know why, um, I
 1114 can't quite think specifically what it was, but I do remember being like that, um,
 1115 over certain things.

1116 A Do you think it's important, I mean how do you think about, um, (.) do you, do
 1117 you think it had an impact on you, the fact that there were perhaps some openly
 1118 gay people in (Mmm) soap operas, or, sort of, kd lang or...?

1119 B Yeah.

1120 A Do you think that's, that's important, or helpful, or...?

- 1121 B Definitely. I think it, um, (.) it made me think to myself, (.) 'well, if they can do
1122 it, then so can I', um. I'd like to go into media, I mean, I want to do performin'
1123 arts at college (Mmm) in September, and (.) I want to go all the way, I don't, if
1124 I'm gonna do it, I want to do it properly. I've done a lot of wasting my time an',
1125 an'. (.) It's gonna be difficult for me, (Mmm) but (.) I've always enjoyed, like, I
1126 used to enjoy acting at school and, like, drama and dancin' an', (.) you know, I
1127 like to sing, I don't know if I'm any good at it, but I like to do it an' I want, I'd
1128 love to learn properly an', (Mmm) an' things like that, and to see people on
1129 television an' things, an' there's like Julian Clary, an' (Mmm) an' people that
1130 'ave made it, an' they fit it, it's, (.) it's, um, it's good to know, it can only be good
1131 if there's more people out there, but, I mean, I've 'eard people comment, 'oh,
1132 there's more gay people on telly nowadays' it, you know, but I s'pose they say
1133 that about black people, or anyone that's the minority, they always, (Mmm) (.)
1134 it's, I s'pose you start off small, an' it, the more it gets, the more used to it you
1135 are, aren't you? (Mmm) The more, er, familiar you are with them, an' the less big
1136 deal it is an'. That's what I'm hoping, anyway. By the time I'm famous, an'. (B:
1137 Laughs)
- 1138 A Promise me you'll remember me when your rich and famous!
- 1139 B Oh, I will, (B: Laughs) yeah! No, I just want to be happy and comfortable, I
1140 don't, I don't want to be stalked or anythin'! (A & B laugh) Not really.
- 1141 A No. That's the down side. (Yeah) What, what about, um, just thinking about, was,
1142 homosexuality, or being gay, or lesbian, (Mmm) or bisexual, talked about at
1143 home at all?
- 1144 B We:ll, not really, no. Um. (.)
- 1145 A What about at school?
- 1146 B (.) I can remember thinking it should have been, er, in the obvious, biology. [tape
1147 change]
- 1148 A Oh yeah, we were talking about, um, talking about homosexuality in school
1149 (Yeah, oh right) you were saying you think that it should have been.
- 1150 B Mmm, yeah. Um. (.) Well, you know, when it comes to reproduction an'
1151 everything, um. There's no mention of what two women would do, or two men
1152 would do. (Mmm) But I think, (.) nowadays, I would've thought they'd bring
1153 somethin' into schools that, because I bet there's a lot of kids out there, I mean, I
1154 know people have told me they knew they were gay when they were younger an'
1155 never, like, say, a boy never dated a girl in 'is life, an' just dated men. I think, (.)
1156 I, sort of, look up to people that 'ave known straight away, an' 'ave (Mmm) been
1157 alright about it an' relaxed an' everythin', but I th', I can imagine it'd be hard at
1158 school, you know, when it comes to lessons like that and, they're thinking, 'well,
1159 (.) aren't I normal?' You know, 'aren't I (Mmm) alright, can't I still 'ave
1160 children?' Or whatever, (Yeah) um, (Yeah) so. An' what with, um, sexually
1161 transmitted diseases as well (Mmm=) which should be, um (.) well, I think they
1162 should be stamped out, but. (B: Laughs) (Mmm) I mean, I was quite worried
1163 about things like that, er, (.) and, (.) I mean, I used to more worried about gettin'

1164 pregnant, (B: Laughs) but as I've got older, I'm much more worried about getting
 1165 some disease or other, and, um (.) there isn't much out there about lesbian, um,
 1166 how to contract things, (Yeah) um, but, they normally talk about sharin' needles
 1167 an' all that, an', you know, for someone who doesn't, would never dream of
 1168 touching drugs like that, you know, so.

1169 A Mmm, yeah. So it feels like it would be useful if they, they, (Yeah) they taught, a,
 1170 just a', about, um, gay an' lesbian sex, (Mmm) but also about safe sex (Yeah) for,
 1171 for straight people an' (Yeah) gay people. Okay, (.) um, (.) The last, the last few
 1172 questions are just really about, kind of, um, I s'pose about the scene. (Mmm=)
 1173 cos we've talked about the group, and, and about how that is, kind of thing, an'
 1174 how that's, sort of, run. How do you think, I'm particularly thinking about, sort
 1175 of, for younger people (Mmm) or for people who are first going out on the scene.
 1176 What do you think, what do you think the sce:ne is like (Um) really?

1177 B (.) Er-her. Some young people are more, um, full of life and, um, (.) some young
 1178 people scare me, (B: Laughs) you know, with all that 'in-your-face' an', um,
 1179 (Mmm) don't give a shit about anythin', 'scuse my French, but, (.) I mean, when
 1180 I first (.) started to go in the pubs, I felt ve:ry conscious of people staring and, (.) I
 1181 mean, I'm a bit, I'm a bit like that anyway if I go somewhere new, (Mmm) but (.)
 1182 I don't know, I think, I wanted to be 'bout five foot two, an' (B: Laughs) (Yeah)
 1183 because I'm tall an' noticeable, sort of thing, I, (Mmm) I don't know, I can't
 1184 really hide that well, (B: Laughs) (Yeah) um. I felt a bit like just hiding into a
 1185 corner an' just watchin' everybody else for a while, an' see what goes on an', you
 1186 know, just take things one step at a time (Yeah) but, um.

1187 A Did it feel...?

1188 B It was alright.

1189 A Did it feel (.) a, kind of, a safe place to be, um, as a young person, or did it feel
 1190 threatening, or did it feel, um, friendly, (Um) or did it feel, you know (.) I guess,
 1191 you, you mentioned earlier about going to [name of a LGB pub] and having heard
 1192 rumours about it (Yeah) or being worried that you might be jumped on by a...

1193 B Yeah. I haven't been at night, I went once during the day, and there was nobody
 1194 there really, so.

1195 A Mmm. No, I, I mean, more generally (But) as well.

1196 B Yeah, that was the impression I got, because, um, I hadn't been down the scene, I
 1197 was with Lucy at the time. (.) She obviously wouldn't 'ave want me to go down
 1198 because she thinks I'd be looking for somebody else, but I wasn't, I was just
 1199 wanting to meet other people, other gay, that I could make friends with, (Mmm)
 1200 e:rm. She was like, 'ooh, whenever I go to the toilet, I never go on me own'. I'm
 1201 like, 'what d'you mean, you never go on your own?' An' she's like, 'well, I
 1202 always take somebody with me, cos, ooh, I always get big butch lesbians after
 1203 me, an' they nearly try an' rape me in the toilets', an all this, an', it's like, part of
 1204 me was, like, 'yeah, she's just trying to scare me off so I don't go down' an', you
 1205 know, (Mmm) er, but I used to say, 'why don't we both go down?' An' things
 1206 like that, but she never used to want to go down with me, an', um, I don't know

- 1207 what 'er reasons were, but, so (.) when I did go down, an' (B: Laughs) I used to
1208 go to the toilet on me own, you know! (B: Laughs) let's put it that way, I, I...
- 1209 A Was it your experience then, that it was, sort of, I don't know, sexually, (.) you
1210 know, it sounds like she was making out that, that, that, kind of, (Mmm) you
1211 were likely to be approached, (Yeah) sort of, sexually (Yeah) approached by
1212 someone. Did it feel like that to you, when you were there? I mean, (Yeah) I
1213 know places vary.
- 1214 B I, Yeah, I did get approached, um, (.) but (.) it was nicer than I expected actually,
1215 I, I thought, 'it's gonna be scary' because of what she said, (Mmm) but it wasn't.
1216 Um (.)
- 1217 A An' were you able to say 'no' if you weren't interested, or 'yes' if you were'?
- 1218 B Um. I was just, 'well, actually, 'I'm seeing somebody, but thanks, I'm very
1219 flattered anyway', you know, an' then normally, it's, 'oh', I'll stand an' 'ave a
1220 chat with them, (Yeah) cos that's me, (B: Laughs) you know, but, um. I'm just
1221 trying to think, er. (.) I mean, I, I used to go down after being at [the LGB youth
1222 group], (Mmm) um, you know, we used to just sit an' have a chat, don't we? It's
1223 not really, I mean, I used to be with people who were already couples mainly
1224 anyway, so. (.) I wouldn't really be on the lookout for anybody or (No) even
1225 when me and Lucy split up I wa'n't really, you know, um.
- 1226 A And it feels okay to do that, just to go out and have a drink?
- 1227 B Yeah=
- 1228 A =And comfortable?
- 1229 B I don't know, it's like, (.) I think when you're in a couple, I think it could be quite
1230 difficult, it depends what sort of people you are, I think, I think there's a lot of
1231 people out there that would like to split you up, um, because you're happy or
1232 because you're this, or that, I don't know. (Mmm) There is a ce:rtain group of
1233 people, you get, as, as you get to know the pubs, you go to them regularly, an'
1234 then people that you say hello to an' things, you think, 'who's with who?' An'
1235 there are certain people that I can think of now that I know (.) would probably get
1236 a kick out of splitting me and my girlfriend up, just because (.) who they are, an'
1237 what they do, it's like who's doing who, (B: Laughs) you know, um, (Mmm) an'
1238 I'm not really into that.
- 1239 A No, I guess...=
- 1240 B =I've thought about being that way, I've thought about being a bit of a wild child
1241 an' just getting in with the in-crowd an' all that, (Mmm) um, but deep down it's
1242 not what I want, (Mmm) cos it doesn't make me happy, in the end it just makes
1243 you get a name for yourself an', you know.
- 1244 A Do you think, I, I, I just wondered whether, um, maybe, er, the sort of thing that
1245 you were talking about, it's about, the scene being qui', I don't know, qui:te
1246 sma:ll really. (Mmm) So you, kind of, you, you tend to meet up with the same
1247 people, (Mmm) and people tend to get to know one another (Yeah) an' who's

- 1248 seeing who, an', (Mmm) um, I mean, I s'pose it varies from city to city how big
1249 a, (Yeah) or from town to town, how big the scene is. But is there an element of
1250 that in, in...?
- 1251 B Yeah, um=
- 1252 A =The scene here?
- 1253 B There's, it's very cliquey, (Yeah) er. I've felt, I knew that, um. For instance, the
1254 first time I went to a gay night at [name of a club that has a LGB night], number
1255 one I was embarrassed because I was going back to [name of a club that has a
1256 LGB night] an' I haven't been there since I was about seventeen! (A & B laugh) I
1257 was like, 'no: wa:y!' Er, an' then, an' secondly I felt eyes boring into the back of
1258 my head, I felt like, 'I've got a big neon sign across my head 'I'm a new girl!''
1259 (B: Laughs) You know, (Mmm) er, an' that was very scary, actually. (Mmm)
1260 Um, I don't know if you've been to [name of a club that has a LGB night]? (No)
1261 But it's got quite a large ladies' toilets, an' people just go in an' out, they just go
1262 in to talk, an' that. Um, there was loads of women in there, an' there was lads
1263 there as well, um. You go in there an' you, ff", you know, (B: Laughs) people do
1264 tend to sort of stare at ya.
- 1265 A So there's something maybe about, um, that, that, they are places where, where
1266 gay men and women go to meet (Yeah) potential either, either relationship
1267 partners (Yeah) or sexual partners, (Mmm) but...
- 1268 B It must be hard for teenagers that can't go drinking an', (Mmm) cos it seems like,
1269 it's, I mean, it's sit', it's situated around alcohol.
- 1270 A Yeah, yeah, I guess, if you're under (Yeah) kind of eighteen or whatever, [tape
1271 inaudible] (Mmm) Okay. Is there anything we haven't talked about that...?
- 1272 B Um. I don't know. Er, I just don't know if it's been helpful. I don't know.
- 1273 A No, it's been, been useful, definitely. Um, I s'pose the last question is, is what (.)
1274 what, how do, er, what made you, sort of, agree to do the interview? (Um) an'
1275 how do you feel about it having done it?
- 1276 B Not bad actually, but, you see, at the sta:rt, I was thinkin', 'oo:h, I don't want to
1277 dre:dge everythi:ng u:p' an', because I always feel, with counsellin' an' things, I
1278 feel, 'oh not agai:n', (B: Laughs) you know, I, (Mmm) I just didn't want to bring
1279 it all up again, but, I thought, 'well, I know what I'm like, I'll get talkin' an' it 'll
1280 all come out anyway whether I like it or not' sort of thing, it just sort of ss', sp',
1281 speels out an' um. (.) I thought, well, I know you, you're an easy person to talk
1282 to, so I wasn't worried about that, (Mmm) but, I was just worried about what I
1283 was gonna say, and if I got upset, or, (Mmm) you know, I, I haven't an', um, I'm
1284 glad about that, (B: Laughs), you know, but. Because sometimes I can talk, about,
1285 I mean, especially about the death of my brother an' that, it can be quite upsetting
1286 for me (Mmm) an' (Sure) it depends what sort of mood I'm in that day, or,
1287 (Yeah) you know, whatever, I'm only human (B: Laughs) (Yeah) So, (.) but, I,
1288 also, because I'm happy wi', in the relationship that I am, (Mmm) I feel better

1289 about talking to you, if I wasn't, (.) if, if, I, (.) before, I wasn't, (Yeah) an' I was,
1290 sort of, runnin' away from you a bit, //cos...

1291 A Well, // you said, didn't you? (Yeah) You said you didn't want to at //that time.

1292 B I know, // um. (.) I didn't wanna give you bad news about it, 'ooeer', (B: Laughs)
1293 you know, er, now I feel more secure in myself, I s'pose, but, um, it's nice to be
1294 able to say, 'yeah, I'm happy' an' doing this an' that, an' going forward, an', you
1295 know.

1296 A Yeah. Good. That's a positive note to end on. Well, thank you.

1297 B That's alright.