

LSFS33 8.2.1990**Debbie**

Q: ... your most important relationship at the moment?

A: ... boyfriend... been seeing him for about three and a half years.

Q: So how old were you when you met him?

A: Sixteen. And he was seventeen. 'Cos I met him - 'cos I was going out with his friend, like with his friend. I wanted to get back with this guy ELLIOT. And he... friend of mine... get back together... got back the other way.

Q: So you never got back with ELLIOT?

A: No, no. I'm not friends with him now, needless to say... ESSEX...from ESSEX.

Q: What, both of you?

A: Yeah. He came back to college and I came up a year later. He left college and...

Q: So you get a good view from the sixteenth floor.

A: Mm, lovely, yeah.

Q: What does he do?

A: [WORKS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY]. I'm not quite sure what that means actually, but (laugh)... data bases... lists of names of direct marketing companies. That's about all - I'm not really into computers.

Q: So had he been at college up here -

A: Mm. He was up here a year before I came up... [NAME OF UNIVERSITY], which was not really like being at college, it was like...

Q: And you're doing a history degree. What's that like, is that alright?

A: Yeah, it has its moments. No, it's okay, it's - it gets rather tedious at times but - there's been a hell of a lot of work recently, I've not really tried to - last week we had an exam boycott, which - supposed to be exams on last week and we're going to picket the exams because we're not happy with the way the course is being run at the moment. So it's all... because the lecturers were on strike as well... support the lecturers, the management just put on exams to make a point that they can put exams on without lecturers... stupid point to put on, you know. Lecturers have to mark them and they're not gonna mark them, so we picketed them... future... There was deadlines like for instance last time we had an essay deadline, to give in four really long essays a week before we had exams, which was absolutely ludicrous. Had to revise for exams, four exams in a week, which count for 70 per cent of our course work, which doesn't make sense.

Q: No, it doesn't. And where did you live before here?

A: ... to college. 'Cos I actually went through clearing. 'Cos I didn't get my grades, I wanted to go to university, I wanted to go to [NAME OF UNIVERSITY] for some reason. I didn't get there. So I came through clearing. I got to college... about a week before term started. So I came here, I just thought, well, these college flats - I can't be bothered going around London getting a flat... take this... be here very long... get used to it so -

Q: So is this a college flat that you got from being a college student or -

A: Yeah.

Q: - it's not that your boyfriend had it already?

A: Oh, no, he didn't have it, he moved in with me. Once he left college he moved up here, a flat just round the corner. He moved in about six months ago. We're

supposed to share with other people actually, this is quite unofficial stuff. I used to share with another college student - well, did - we did share with this girl, her boyfriend moved in as well, there was four of us. Then they've got a squat... another block over there, they moved out. I pretend that a friend of mine at college lives here, he signs the tenancy agreement, we give him the rent. But everyone does it. I mean, they can't get more people to stay here anyway so they don't worry.

Q: No. I should think it must be quite an effort to stay here in a sense -

A: Yeah.

Q: I mean, to get people to move here - if you want a bottle of milk or something, it's a real effort to get it actually.

A: My sister - she'll be here in about half an hour actually, she stays here half the week as well, 'cos - well, [DETAILS REDACTED].

Q: Good. So you had a period when you and your boyfriend were apart in a sense, when you were in ESSEX and he was up here.

A: Yeah. I can't actually remember it that well. I must have been awful, 'cos thinking back now I don't know how I did it. ... actually... in our relationship, I did before then... just went out with each other, it wasn't that serious, because I think once you start staying... staying with... at the weekends...

Q: And was he your first sexual relationship?

A: I lost my virginity with him, yeah, but not sexual... sexual relationships, there was quite a few actually. I lost my virginity with him... (laugh). Good girl.

Q: So, going back to your earlier relationship - I mean, from the questionnaire it just looked like you'd had sort of various short term, one-off -

A: Yeah.

Q: - whatever -

A: Well, that guy ELLIOT was the first really serious relationship...

Q: How old were you then - that was sixteen?

A: About fifteen, sixteen, yeah. About seven months.

Q: And when you say they were sexual but not -

A: - not penetration.

Q: Not penetration.

A: No.

Q: I mean what - what sorts of things did you do?

A: Oral sex -

Q: Oral sex?

A: Oral sex...

Q: What, both -

A: Yeah.

Q: ... as it were. I mean, was it just you as - enjoying himself -

A: No, no, I have to get what I want.

Q: Good.

A: But... not save yourself 'til you're married or anything, but...

Q: And was that 'cos you felt it as a sort of moral or personal thing or was it because of being afraid of getting pregnant or anything like that?

A: ... I think pregnancy's the main one. I don't know really. I suppose... wouldn't want to just, you know, go to bed with anyone. I don't trust.. know what I'm doing... You know what men are like.

Q: So how did you know that - what's he called, your boyfriend?

A: LEWIS.

Q: LEWIS. How did you know he was the right one?

A: ... (?) instinctive... I just felt I was ready. And I suppose the legal thing, that once I was over sixteen, I wanted to wait 'til then as well. And... and that night, one thing led to another... he was ever so sweet about it... "Are you sure you want to?"... Well I wasn't sure really one way or the other...

Q: Had you thought it might happen that night?

A: No. I knew it was coming. There was also the thing that, you know, I'm not influenced by friends, but everyone was kind of at the same time, you know -

Q: What, all starting to do it or doing it?

A: Mm, doing it (laugh). Taking the piss out of me...

Q: What, did they actually take the piss out of you?

A: Mm. Mainly (?)black boys, I suppose at that age, more.

Q: What, more than -

A: More than girls, yeah... But...

Q: And was it -

A: ... last of all my friends, I think.

Q: What, they'd all done it before?

A: ...

Q: And how old were you then?

A: What, when I lost it?

Q: Mm.

A: Sixteen.

Q: How long had you known LEWIS?

A: Four, five months, I suppose. Okay? (laugh)

Q: I'm not judging anything. And it was - was it his first time?

A: Oh, no. He won't tell me actually - well, like he said he'd slept with three girls, but he won't tell me who, 'cos in ESSEX everyone knows everybody else; he won't tell me who they are but I've got a sneaking suspicion... girlfriends, but... talk about it... (laugh)... doesn't matter, he says, so...

Q: And when you were actually having relationships with the ones before, did - didn't any of them actually want to go further?

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: So how did you deal with that?

A: Just kept saying no. I remember there was one guy who nearly did, and I said, you know, if you don't accept it then that's your problem... I think... more respect. Guys I went out with... respect. It was only blokes, you know, in the group we went round with used to take the piss out of me. Actual boyfriends... nice guys (laugh). That particular one that I went out with for - just before LEWIS, ELLIOT, ... wanted to... himself. He wasn't a virgin but he said.. wait until I was over sixteen then once I got past sixteen we split up so -

Q: So you never got -

A: Never knew (laugh).

Q: So do you remember it being an actual hassle or was it something that was taken for granted?

A: I don't - I don't think it was a hassle - what, actually being a virgin...?

Q: Well, I suppose - well, being a virgin and going out with blokes that you might like but you weren't prepared to actually sleep with them or have sex with them; and they may have thought that you should.

A: I don't think it was really, no. I don't think actually having sex was a hassle, although one guy who wasn't - well, how shall I put it? - a bit... He wanted to have oral sex and I wouldn't have oral sex with him, and he would go on and on about that. And I suppose that was a bit of a hassle, but I said, if you don't like it, you know what you can do with it, simply. It's my body.

Q: Quite. But did you have oral sex with others or -

A: No. Only a couple that...

Q: And was that alright?

A: Yeah. Great. (laugh). Well, I mean, other guys..., you know, short term relationships or few months relationships, it's not proper sex ... have proper sex... (laugh)

Q: So what do you mean by proper sex?

A: Well, two people that care for one another properly, know what each other likes in bed and it's not just... what he wants... goes out - well, not goes out... It's good... Just a quick (laugh) -

Q: In and out.

A: Yes. (laugh). Muck around a bit, touch... that's it.

Q: What, that's what some people -

A: Well, I suppose, you know, when you're living at your parents' house... down in the lounge... hear you upstairs...

Q: Did you do that as well?

A: Mm. Many times (laugh).

Q: Everyone did.

A: Yeah, many times... as well most of the time which is...

Q: What, she didn't come in?

A: (laugh)...

Q: Are your parents still in ESSEX?

A: Mum is. They're divorced. Dad lives... She's got a boyfriend who lives in [SOUTHERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY]. She's been going out with him for about ten years, and desperately wants to get married but he won't have it... parents...

Q: A bit late to change.

A: ...die...

Q: Bit morbid. So you get on well with your mum?

A: Yeah, great. I do now anyway, once I left home. We're friends but before then - whilst I lived at home, not too good, no. 'Cos I had my own life. ... cares...

Q: What, she wanted you to be demure and feminine or -

A: ... sort of people I used to see she didn't like, but now it's great, ... sister's at home so -

Q: Have you got brothers? I know your sister's...-

A: ... we're friends as well,... best friend.

Q: And when you were at school did you have - kind of what sort of sex education did they give you?

A: My school was totally useless. It was a single sex girls' school so... main sex education was about... tampons and sanitary towels. You know, that kind of thing they don't mind 'cos it's a girls' school but once it gets onto the sex really they're

not good. That only happened in the lower sixth, it was unbelievable, they got someone from the family planning clinic to come and talk to us, which by then we knew about anyway, you know.

Q: Well, yes -

A: Having used it... seen it... intercourse, you know?

Q: Yes, 'cos it looked - from your - what you put on the questionnaire that there hadn't been an awful lot that you'd learnt from it.

A: No, as I said from that, I learnt from my sister, talking and things. It was just general experience. I mean I don't think I learnt anything like that from school at all... experiences... sister and I had to grow up very quickly, had to cope with my mum... depression.

Q: How old were you then, when that happened?

A: Ten.

Q: It's quite a lot to cope with.

A: It was a lot to cope with. I know I go on about it a lot really, 'cos I do think I had to grow up very quickly... and did things that... probably do now at an early age, you know? I didn't, you know, come out of it...

Q: Yeah. I suppose there's good things come out of it -

A: ... is, is as well...

Q: And do you still see your father as well?

A: Yeah, about once a week... sees me on Saturday. Money. Partly for money.

Q: What, you're asking for money or he's asking for money?

A: ... really. He still lives with the woman, you know,...

Q: What, that he went off with -

A: Yeah. So he lives with her I suppose. I've accepted it now but ASHLEIGH, my sister, hasn't. 'Cos she was older, I suppose, at the time; she understood what was going on, which I didn't. And she's still got quite - still resents dad...

Q: Yes. In the end...

A: ...(?)sad. If we ever happened to get married I think dad would want CLAIRE to come to the wedding. And mum wouldn't have that, understandably; so I don't know what would happen there...

Q: But you think you might?

A: ... I've got my own wedding dress printed in... already, yes. I tend to... few years... finished college. I mean I'm not going to start married life in this flat.

Q: No, I should get somewhere else. And is that LEWIS's idea as well? So he'd like to get married?

A: He doesn't say it... at times he does... when he says...joke, ha ha ha...

Q: 'Cos - you say that you'll probably be a fashion buyer long term? Does that mean another course then, 'cos this won't actually qualify you -

A: No, it won't... go in as a trainee and be trained on the job.

Q: Yeah, I know some of the big stores and places do lots of schemes.

A: Mind you, if it is another course I think it'll only be about six months. I mean I say now... leave college now; I think when it gets to it... do nine to five kind of thing, I'd hate it, I've been studying for so long.

Q: Yes, you get used to that sort of lifestyle.

A: I know. Sitting here during the day doing nothing but reading...

Q: Yeah, yeah, wonderful.

A: Mm. Apart from when all the work piles up at one time, that's what's really annoying about the course: months of doing absolutely nothing, then all of a sudden you have all these essays to do...

Q: And did you say - my memory's going - you're on the pill?

A: Yeah.

Q: Is that what you've been on all the time?

A: ...

Q: Sorry?

A: Since I lost my virginity, it's about three years. You know, I wanna come off it really... constantly worried if I came off it but -

Q: What would you use if you -

A: Condom, definitely. I'd still be worried though.

Q: Were you - yeah -

A: I just - you know I have... just not...

Q: So were you using something when you lost your virginity?

A: Yeah, a condom. I'm not that silly. No, if a person doesn't want to use a contraceptive then that's the end of that.

Q: Right. But presumably you hadn't needed to before.

A: Yeah. I would always use - if I had with anyone else it would have been a condom. And LEWIS didn't - you know, he wasn't the one who told me to go on the pill, it was my own decision... doctor and he suggested it.

Q: So have you not used condoms since?

A: Only at times like a couple of months ago I forgot to take the pill for the first time ever... always got them in the drawer. If we have sex during my period, we use a condom. Very sensible (laugh).

Q: So you don't really take any risks.

A: No, never. I'd be wrecked if I did, you know, until the end of the month I'd be an absolute wreck.

Q: And did - like in terms of thinking about, not just condoms and pregnancy, but condoms and AIDS - I mean has that ever worried you as well?

A: It would if we split up and I met someone else. I'd want to use a condom if it was anyone else. I've asked LEWIS, you know, the other girls, if there's any chance. He says don't be ridiculous. I have actually asked him to have an AIDS test, but he says there's absolutely no possibility. Perhaps the other girls were virgins, I don't know. But I don't think he'd lie, he's very sensible.

Q: So it isn't something that you think -

A: Not at the moment, not with LEWIS. Someone else, definitely, yes.

Q: And then what would you do?

A: Protect myself with condoms... And I'd have to - the way I see it anyway, you know, you've got to know someone well enough to have sex with, you know, you know him well enough to ask him if there's any chance he could have AIDS. That's how I am, I'm a bit old-fashioned with that actually. I wouldn't - I don't think I'd ever have sex, you know, proper sex, intercourse, on a one night stand. I just couldn't do it.

Q: 'Cos you didn't know them?

A: Mm, I'd have to know them. I'd do everything else I suppose but not that, it's something... special.

Q: And what aspect of sex do you enjoy most?

A: Oral sex I think.

Q: Oral sex?

A: To me, done to me (laugh). And the... definitely. But I like - I enjoy sex... intercourse if LEWIS's done oral sex to me first.

Q: What, so you've had a lot of pleasure -

A: Yeah... stimulated. Otherwise...

Q: Yes, 'cos a lot of women get kind of a lot of pleasure or more orgasms or whatever, out of oral sex than they do out of ... Yeah.

A: ... LEWIS tries so hard to make me orgasm, ... you know, you have to. It doesn't matter.

Q: But will he believe you if you said it didn't?

A: Yeah. I mean he's asked me if I ever faked orgasm, which I don't think is - I would never do. Might as well just tell him the truth really. He'd know...

Q: And are there occasions when you don't have penetration?

A: Oh, yeah. We're sometimes both too tired ... tired, you know,... intercourse... touching and cuddling's great, it's wonderful.

Q: Yeah.

A: That's why it's so nice to - you know, you have to wait 'til you know someone that well before you can do that kind of thing, share things like that and not ... actually have to have intercourse. You don't have to.

Q: Yeah. 'Cos when you don't know somebody there's all those sort of expectations that you don't - well, neither people know really what they should expect or how they should perform in order to be seen as whatever they want to be seen as. Which usually can work out disastrously. So - what do - did you learn anything - I would guess probably not - about AIDS at school?

A: No.

Q: Was that because it was pre-AIDS or because they didn't -

A: I suppose it was at the time, yeah.

Q: - do anything -

A: Maybe it was just, you know, (?)breaking... No, not at all. Ludicrous. It was a terrible school, you know, so old-fashioned.

Q: What, so everything that you know about it has come from other things?

A: ... and ...

Q: And do you actually know what it is and how it's transmitted?

A: ... comes out through other diseases so you get flu or something - is that right? You know like...

Q: Yes, if you've already got the -

A: Yeah.

Q: - the HIV virus. Then it can develop into something more.

Q: And have you ever felt that you or - would ever be at risk?

A: ... I know I am... a virgin, was a virgin before. I don't... done something about it.

Q: And are your friends kind of concerned about it, or are they all in relationships like yours?

A: No... downstairs... she's ... met this EASTERN EUROPEAN guy... couple of nights... couple of weeks. She's so stupid; she said - well, he stayed the first night and she produced a condom, he said he wouldn't wear one. I mean, you see that on television - I really couldn't believe, maybe it's 'cos I've had a long-

term relationship or I've just known nice guys, but I didn't actually think it would happen in real life, a guy who said no, you know. ...or something, 'cos it was in a EASTERN EUROPEAN accent, ... bloody well not, you know. So she said oh, please, kind of thing... and I think they ended up - did they have sex? I don't think they did... totally stupid if she did, but she said - oh, I know what it was: I was making jokes 'cos my boyfriend and I have just come back from [COUNTRY] in the summer, and I just made a joke about ... all EASTERN EUROPEAN guys are bisexual, that's what someone told us over there and it - it's just the fact they're really - I was trying to explain it to her, they're really affectionate to one another, the you know, males, which is great. And she said oh, no, I might have AIDS, I might have AIDS. I said oh, don't be stupid, but anyway - if she'd gone to bed with a guy, she'd known him, she'd be able to ask him first, she - if you think he's bisexual you should ask him first before you go to bed with him... otherwise you're a bit stupid aren't you? Well you get what you deserve really.

Q: But she wouldn't ask him or...?

A: No, no. Spent the first night together... shocks me 'cos...

Q: So, what, they'd known each other only that night?

A: Yeah, mm.

Q: And do you think that your kind of attitude is unusual or do you think that -

A: Yeah, I think it definitely is.

Q: Really? So most people would leap into bed...

A: In general, yeah, maybe out of my friends there's only a few that would leap into bed, but in general... I know a lot of... my sister for instance,...

Q: What, she's more so?

A: ...

Q: No, 'cos there was some suggestion that - I mean, as of almost a sidetrack from all the AIDS thing, but there was a sort of morality (?)glossary as it were.

A: It'd be nice if there was but I don't think so.

Q: No. So I didn't know whether it was - whether it's happened, rather than the sort of idea that sex is everywhere and everyone leaps in and out of bed, I thought...

A: It'd be nice if that was so but I don't think so. Especially, you know, when you actually hear, 'cos KATIE told me, that this guy wouldn't wear a condom, I was so surprised. I've had a sheltered upbringing (laugh).

Q: No, there are some who refuse, presumably thinking it ruins their pleasure or ...

A: I mean I know - LEWIS said, you know, do we have to use one, it's not so enjoyable. So (laugh) - I don't get pregnant; it'd be a lot less enjoyable if I was pregnant, wouldn't it, you know.

Q: Yeah.

A: Or have AIDS or whatever.

Q: What, so he doesn't like using it much?

A: No. If I wasn't on the pill he'd just have to get used to it.

Q: Did you find it less enjoyable?

A: No. I found it cleaner - you know, that disgusting stuff inside - no, not really (laugh)...

Q: And in terms of sort of cleaner and bodily fluids and things like that, does that mean that you - I mean say if you were having oral sex or something -

A: Yeah.

Q: - that you wouldn't kind of -

A: I do.

Q: You don't.

A: I do.

Q: What -

A: Swallow it.

Q: Swallow it.

A: Yes, I do. I... you know, I used to think it was dangerous...

Q: Why did you think it was dangerous?

A: I just did. I don't know really, it's stupid isn't it? I suppose it's stuff that comes out of somebody's penis which is the same place that urine comes from...

Q: So you tend to think it's dirty in some way.

A: Yeah... males... females, don't they I suppose at times... bathed or whatever... oral sex, it might be a bit sort of...

Q: What, and that puts him off?

A: Yeah. I can understand that.

Q: Yeah, that's... sort of intimate... to it. I remember somebody telling me it was - that sperm was full of zinc and that was very good for you.

A: I've heard all the things, that it makes your hair grow (laugh) -

Q: No, I haven't heard that.

A: I haven't noticed actually. Yeah. I don't know.

Q: Make you...

A: ... makes your nails grow as well (laugh).

Q: Sounds like they should incorporate it into health food.

A: ... (laugh).

Q: And what do you normally do, like social life... going out?

A: We eat out a lot. Go to concerts, ...(?)plays, things at college a lot; there's discos at college which aren't proper discos, just like go in the bar... I don't drink very much either. That's another thing that surprises people about me.

Q: What, that you don't drink?

A: Mm, occasionally, but I don't think I need it... drugs... I don't take drugs. I know a lot of people that do... But apart from the hard drugs... people smoking dope, it angers me... they don't need... end up being stupid. Same girl downstairs, KATIE, on her twenty-first birthday she had a party and spent the whole time being sick, smoking dope...

Q: So do people sort of smoke it of your friends, or use any other drugs?

A: I don't know anyone now who uses hard drugs. I did... and it upset me. But there was a few people actually came round my house, my mum was downstairs,...just grass or dope or something...

Q: So they didn't?

A: Oh, they did, yeah...

Q: And does LEWIS think the same?

A: Well, he's very anti-drugs but he's smoked dope. It's something we argue about occasionally, you know, he says dope is the same as alcohol... harm, well

there is harm but, you know, the same amount of harm. Well, fair enough but then I don't like alcohol much either, so it's not a very good point to make really.

Q: So are there any areas where you think you do take risks?

A: This makes me sound like a very clean-cut person, clean living -

Q: What? There's no reason why you should, I just wondered if there was -

A: No.

Q: Well, I suppose being on the pill is a risk in some ways but an anti-risk in others.

A: I don't think I do really... quite dangerous, isn't it?

Q: Go on a what?

A: Go on a sunbed.

Q: That's true. What, have you got one?

A: Yeah.

Q: Yeah, I suppose some people would say that was a risk, wouldn't they? They're always warning about it -

A: I don't eat that much... I don't like vegetables that much so I'm not particularly healthy. I don't do anything... 'cos I did it all when I was younger.

Q: When?

A: Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. I used to drink a lot then. ...sort of going round with a drug-taking... never took it myself... that kind of thing, it's boring more than anything else.

Q: What, it's as though you've been through it and done it -

A: Yeah.

Q: - and come out the other end.

A: Yeah.

Q: ... sister... Does she know you're...? So when you were doing that, were you sort of more wild, I mean wilder, than you are now?

A: Yeah... Hello (to sister), do you want to come and be on the tape? She'll tell you about me being wilder.

Q: Is that when you had spiky hair or whatever and your mum ...

A: Yeah.

Q: But did you go round with lots of boyfriends then?

A: Mm. That's when I used to have one night stands and a couple... at a time...

Q: Do you want to stop now?

A: I don't know...

Q: So when - I mean on the one night stands, would they be one night stands where you just go out for a night or you actually sort of stay over at their house or at a party, whatever -

A: No, no. Yeah, ... parties, go into a room... people I'd been going round with for a while or at somebody's house. Then we might not even speak to each other again.

Q: Wasn't that a bit weird -

A: Yeah... especially in ESSEX, everyone knows everyone else...

Q: And does everyone know -

A: Yes.

Q: - that you've had a one night stand and yet, you know, you're ignoring them and -

A: Yeah.

Q: It's loony really.

A: Mm, stupid...

Q: It's loony to ignore each other really. Although I kind of... things like that.

A: ...stay friends with these guys but I - there's one thing I think actually, which is a shame, I don't think - it's very difficult to be friends with males... sexual... There's always gonna be one of you who fancies the other... friends with them.

Q: There's always been a sexual element?

A: One way or the other or both ways. A couple of exceptions but... sad.

Q: Yes. No, it is, 'cos there's - yeah. No, I've met people who say that you could -

A: Yeah.

Q: - have kind of male and female friends without sexuality being involved. I suppose I've got a few old friends like that.

A: I mean the more people are (?)closed, but in those days it was very difficult. Especially a guy at college, GEORGE... I suppose it's different now because I'm in a long-term relationship so even if there was any...

Q: So when you meet a guy, do you sort of sum them up sexually at all, or do you - whether you fancy them or not?

A: Oh, yeah. I don't think ... terrible.

Q: No -

A: Hardly ever.

Q: There seem to be a lot of good-looking women around but not many -

A: Yeah, that's right. ... fancies... Nothing would ever happen in that respect.

Q: Does LEWIS realise this?

A: I've made comments... He's not that bad, is he, really,... good looking but I just... guys... good looking not actually around...

Q: Yeah.

A: On telly perhaps but -

Q: Yes, but in real life -

A: ...

Q: In terms of, just going back to the AIDS thing, can you remember in the AIDS campaigns in the media and stuff, what you thought of that, whether you thought that had any impression or -

A: It had an impression, yeah, that's where I got my knowledge from.

Q: Did you think it was good or sort of too scary or -

A: I think those adverts - are you talking about the adverts?

Q: Yes, adverts and those things they had on - they had weeks of programmes.

A: Yeah, the adverts were totally ineffective, stupid really, 'cos it just doesn't - well, I don't think... sitting there, "do you want a cup of coffee?" or "shall we go to bed?". No. I mean it happens but - ... chat shows or whatever, were quite effective... didn't get any from school. ... effect on everybody...

Q: And do you think it's got less or more in terms of people being aware of it?

A: Yeah, that's the thing, isn't it - I mean about - all of a sudden when it dies down everyone thinks it's gone away... dies down again... you know, AIDS exists, but do they care.

Q: Talking about things like safe sex and -

A: I suppose... certain amount of...

Q: No. As far as I can gather, no. I mean it has an effect when it's happening, like if there are a whole load of programmes people's consciousness goes up.

A: Still people think it's just a homosexual thing, which is a shame, and it makes people think homosexuals - well, worse than they already do...

Q: Yeah. Well, I think they could do a lot more programmes, like reasonable programmes.

A: ... things like Blue Peter when the kids are watching. You shouldn't have to be shy, you know...

Q: And they do ask. I mean, you heard about it. In fact, somebody was suggesting, or saying, that one of the - you know, like one of the insults in the playground now is like something like, "your mum's got AIDS".

A: Oh, no! Oh, no.

Q: So they do find out, you can't sort of pretend that - that they're too young to know.

Tape change.

Q: So do you know about safe sex in that context? What do you think of safe sex being?

A: ... (laugh)... programmes it's wearing a condom, it's like that's not the be all and end all of it is it, really, it's - as I understand it, basically you should know someone before you have sex with them. I think it's difficult to ask someone about all their previous sex experiences, but that's what it entails, isn't it, in a way... but if you're about to have sex with them, then you should know.

Q: Yes. Although when it comes to it it's not always the ideal moment to be asking.

A: No. ...you know, if you're close enough to have sex with someone, perhaps at a previous moment you could have had this kind of conversation.

Q: Yes, 'cos - well, safe sex too is what you've been talking about earlier in terms of sort of -

A: ...

Q: - but also having it without penetration.

A: Yeah, true, yeah. I forgot about that, yeah. Which is great, isn't it?

Q: Yes, 'cos some people say they'd be happy to skip penetration altogether -

A: Women would anyway.

Q: What?

A: Women would anyway

Q: Yeah, more... it is more women that I'm talking to.

A: Yeah.

Q: Yes, I can't actually quote a bloke who's actually said it.

A: No (laugh).

Q: That would be quite acceptable... Do you think in terms of - I mean, I know this is rather speculative, but suppose you did have to kind of go off, meet new people, how do you think you would sort of negotiate something like that?

A: As I said, I wouldn't have sex with someone that I didn't know beforehand anyway. It would come to a point where I'd have to ask them how many partners they've had, what kind of relationships they've had. I suppose...

Q: And would you actually, like you've suggested, kind of say well, you know, I'm not gonna do it unless - if you don't use a condom sort of thing?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: - and that's it.

A: Mm, definitely.

Q: Even if you were sort of passionately in love with him.

A: No. No,... Apart from the AIDS thing I think, you know, still...women... pregnancy, so I'd be worried about that anyway. I think I'd probably - if I split up with LEWIS I'd come off the pill anyway, so I'd have to use something, and a condom's what I'd use. Definitely. For a start, I wouldn't want to use a diaphragm, I'm not sticking things inside my body...

Q: Yeah. Which then includes the IUD, doesn't it, things like that.

A: I think nobody should have to take that much responsibility. Let them have the responsibility for a change.

Q: And do you think at some point you will have children?

A: I did up 'til last weekend (laugh). I was talking to, actually, LEWIS's brother's girlfriend who used to work in a pharmaceutical company; she was talking - she's been on a course. We were just having a conversation about the pain. That's the only thing that I'd be worried about, you know... I'd love to have kids, I adore kids, but I'm terrified of pain.

Q: Mm, yeah, that's...

A: ...

Q: ... thinking...

A: And she was telling me about where they cut... your first child -

Q: Yes, episiotomy, yeah.

A: The pain... I think her company's brought out this kind of thing that relaxes the pain of that operation, well that surgery. But saying that the pain of having a baby is so intense anyway the woman wouldn't even notice that she's having... such pain you don't even notice what's going on down.

Q: No, it does appear to be painful.

A: I would like to have kids though.

Q: I suppose the best thing is to go and do it almost with your eyes closed so by the time you're in there -

A: - "give me anything, knock me out".

Q: So you might in the end.

A: I think I probably will. If I can, that is; you know,...

Q: And would you have got sort of along with whatever work you're doing first -

A: Mm.

Q: I mean, is that important to you?

A: Oh, definitely,... manager...

Q: Who knows?

A: Who knows.

Q: All you need is one split condom -

A: That's right.

Q: ...

A: That would be an abortion, I think. I mean I say now, if I, you know, I forgot to take the pill, whatever, and I did become pregnant, I'd go for an abortion. You can't tell what would actually happen...

Q: No, when you're actually - She's Catholic?

A: Mm, LEWIS's Catholic.

Q: LEWIS (i)s Catholic.

A: So he'd go mad, he'd disagree with that, definitely; 'cos it's not the time to have a baby... course and ... money...

Q: It wouldn't do your relationship any good.

A: ... Well, you never know, do you I suppose...

Q: ...

A: ...

Q: What sort of a person would you say that you were, if you had to describe yourself to someone who didn't know you - I don't mean what you look like, I mean sort of ...

A: I'd say I'm very old-fashioned... old-fashioned... Victorians.

Q: 'Cos what do you actually mean by old-fashioned when you say it -

A: ... can't really explain it. Yeah, moralistic.

Q: What, moralistic in a sexual sense or in a wider sense?

A: Well, both, anything sort of to do with alcohol and drugs, I just go away from these kind of things. I like to help people... Very temperamental. Vain. Insecure in the sense that I am much happier when I'm in a long-term relationship. I know it sounds terrible but...

Q: What, you wouldn't like to be on your own having short-term -

A: No, I can't bear - I can't bear being on my own anyway, so... on my own I'm terrible, I hate it. Shy at times, if I meet somebody I go into myself. With a lot of people. When I first went out with LEWIS, for months and months he said I never spoke (laugh).

Q: He knows you were shy?

A: Yeah, very shy. Well, that's all to do with insecurity; I say something that - it comes out as being stupid. Ten minutes later I think, oh what did I say that for?

Q: So has your confidence grown with like being in a long term relationship?

A: Oh, definitely. It's also grown with living away from home... college...

Q: And so have you always been confident, sort of since your parents split up, in terms of having to grow up?

A: ...

Q: But presumably not, as you just said, before you left home - you were saying -

A: Confident in a different way. I suppose, you know, it's some amount of confidence to say no to the drugs and, well, say no to sex, but in other respects if I'm meeting someone... normal... quiet...

Q: And do you think you're ambitious?

A: To a certain extent I suppose. I do want to have a lot of money... Yeah, I mean once I set my mind on being a fashion buyer...

Q: Is that what you've always wanted to be or has that developed since you've been doing your course?

A: ... First, like at the beginning of the course, I didn't know what I wanted to do. History was just - you know, people say why do you do history, is there something you want to do after... not understand that you enjoy history... Might change... I definitely want to have a lot of money. I think it's partly 'cos of my mum, she's about fifty-five, she's never - well, she's really extravagant; I take after her, she's... everything, she just cannot afford anything. I don't wanna be like that. And she's had to take a job [IN PUBLIC SECTOR] she hates. I don't wanna be in that position, to be in a job that I hate; I want to get up at nine o'clock in the morning - seven o'clock in the morning, go to a job I don't mind doing, come home and start... that's... I just could not do that. That's why I ... and also that... everyone's so scared of... you know, getting up at seven o'clock in the

morning to do something they don't wanna do, just so they can earn a bit of money to get by, it's horrible.

Q: No, it's that whole sort of contradiction too, about like having a job that's flexible enough that you don't have to get up at seven o'clock in the morning for something you don't wanna do, and having enough money to - if you want to earn money sort of thing.

A: I do. In some respects I think - I sometimes think you just have to work to live and do a job, but get a good one so you can enjoy yourself the rest of your time... But I'm very extravagant, I have to have all this money so I can go on holiday and buy clothes.

Q: Does LEWIS earn quite a bit?

A: It's not bad. He's still overdrawn at the moment because he's still suffering from the college. Once we're on our feet, it should take a few months - the money's actually quite good, it's just taking a while to clear up his overdraft 'cos the bank don't seem to understand - if you leave college it's the same as being a graduate, you know. A graduate gets automatic loans... left, it's the same situation - 'cos you didn't graduate, you just left, you know, they...

Q: They don't want to give you them?

A: No, they don't want to give them - just cut off his bank account... regular income...

Q: Yeah.

A: That's banks for you, isn't it?

Q: Yeah, that's awful.

A: ... NORTHWEST ENGLAND at the weekend to see his brother, and... came back...

Q: It'll come.

A: ... quite young now...

Q: And where do you think you'd see yourself in ten years' time?

A: How old will I be - twenty-nine... probably with children, hopefully ... married... I'd like him to have a job which is well paid enough so I could do volunteer work for a couple of days a week when he's out. I don't know if I'll be in London for much longer, definitely not in this part of London anyway, the outskirts.

Q: Have you lived anywhere else in London?

A: ... came straight from... I know quite a few areas around like dad lives in (?)NORTH LONDON, which is... I know people that live in Ealing, and... Polytechnic.

Q: No, it's nice round there. That's fairly near where I am, Tufnell Park's a bit further up.

A: ...

Q: And do you and LEWIS talk easily together about anything?

A: Oh, yeah, we do now; I mean it's so strange... first year of our relationship we couldn't talk. I mean he's...

Q: Was that with you and him together as well, it wasn't just you and -

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: - other people outside -

A: No, it was just me and him... you know, I've changed; I haven't changed, it's the fact that when I've sort of known someone for longer then I come out of myself. I ... big rows, I've always been ... whatever, and - yeah, say we'd had an

argument at the beginning of the relationship, I'd just go into a sulk and not say a word. And now I'll talk very easily together. We know each other inside out really.

Q: And you can talk about things, sort of intimate things like sex and feelings and -

A: Oh, definitely... Yeah, definitely. And the future.

Q: No, that's good 'cos some people find that it's...

A: ...

Q: Yes, 'cos sometimes there's sort of paranoia around - they can't talk about things 'cos they would take it as a criticism.

A: Definitely -

Q: People can't talk about sex because people think "oh, I'm doing it wrong," or something.

A: - definitely - ... made a joke about JAMES's penis, that is one thing, that's - you know, mad about. And I did want - I found out what it was, I just made a joke, ...(?)didn't come sort of thing, I don't know when it was. And now I know I always say it to my friends, say never ever - say, that's one thing, not say... you know, you can't (?)come on about... penises. Not when you wanna stay in that relationship. You just have to understand these guys and there are things you shouldn't say really.

Q: What, is that sort of - was that between you and him or was it somebody else?

A: No, there were other people and he was sitting there. Not good. If I said it to him just on my own, you know, he'd go mad. He'd get so upset. But he knows it's only a joke anyway, but even so - that's one thing you mustn't... They can say anything they want to us, of course.

Q: Yes. What do they say to you?

A: About my big breasts, for instance.

Q: What, sort of teasing or taking the piss rather than kind of -

A: Depends. Like something that I can't - like men in general, you know, can't walk down the street; okay, it may be because I wear a dress as well but it's definitely because of the size of my breasts, you know... At the same time I think, no, I'm not gonna wear longer skirts or flared trousers or whatever you want me to wear, you know, I happen to like wearing mini skirts and...

Q: Mm, yeah.

A: ...cars and lorries...

Q: Yeah, it's awful assumptions that they make on the basis of things like that. No, I think it's incredible...

A: Oh, it's horrible. I don't actually think it is because of the mini skirt, I do actually think that men... incredible... a pair of big boobs. They've never touched a pair. It's ludicrous, because a few girls that I know - jeans, you know, go round in jeans, and they still get whistled at, you know, just because... you know...

Q: Yes, it's as though men have never got over some obsession with the breast or something.

A: I know.

Q: No, 'cos you can see walking down the street sometimes, like in summer when kind of women are wearing t-shirts and no bras or whatever, like men's eyes, immediately sort of riveting; and it's very sort of annoying 'cos there's some putting down about it -

A: Oh, it's horrible, yeah.

Q: - although it might be sort of their form of flattery, but it's not - doesn't -

A: No, it's horrible, it's just insulting. ...in a relationship with someone I do love, why would I want to even look at you, and they're making these horrible remarks and...

Q: No, it's really intrusive, when you're minding your own business.

A: Yeah, just walking along, you know. That's something I wouldn't mind being changed.

Q: Exactly. And have you had any sort of double - like experience of kind of reputation type things, where people assume that, maybe because of the way you dress or - or are, that you are, you know, a certain sort of girl or something?

A: No, not really... friends, as I said, in the past or whatever, not people I know. They'd get what for if they did.

Q: Right. Well especially when -

A: No, it was quite amusing when I was quite - you know, when I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, people that didn't know that I was a virgin, used to call me "nympho".

Q: Really?

A: Yeah. Because I liked, you know, sex, but, you know, little did they know that I didn't actually have penetration ... talking about sex... went along with it, I thought fine, ... know something that you don't know.

Q: And did that make it so that people wanted to go out with you because they'd nicknamed you -

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: - "nympho".

A: Yeah...

Q: And then what happened, I mean did your reputation sort of carry on or kind of penetration...

A: I suppose... there was one guy that just - when I wouldn't do anything, I forgot to say this, that he spread it around that I wanted him just for his body.

Q: He spread it around?

A: Mm. I had no intention of doing anything with him, I just went to his house once, kissing whatever, and he wanted to go further and... so I went home. Next thing I know he spread it around, you know,... I just thought he was a jerk, you know, I know differently, everyone else knows differently.

Q: And was it - do you think with some of them like they didn't say that it hadn't been penetration 'cos they'd want to boast that it had been? Or wasn't it - didn't it

-

A: No, actually ELLIOT -... like him, you know, but he used to boast about what he did.

Q: Which was what he didn't do.

A: Which was what he didn't do. And which wasn't my - he didn't want to do it himself so - I thought fair enough, if that's what he wanted to say, "it's your loss".

Q: So does that mean that LEWIS thought you actually weren't a virgin?

A: Oh he didn't - he thought I wasn't a virgin, yeah. He was very surprised.

Q: But it was worth keeping.

A: Definitely, yeah. ...anyway... I was, you know... split up with guys, it's okay at the time, maybe you think this is gonna last forever or for quite a long time, but it doesn't, so it's a good job that I didn't.

Q: And did your parents influence you at all, kind of how you feel about relationships or sex or anything like that?

A: Oh, yeah. What, them splitting up, you mean?

Q: Well, yes, or just -

A: Well, just for a start... boyfriend because I want a father figure. ... my dad wasn't there. And at the same time I'd been told by mum not to trust men.

Q: What, that's what your mum said?

A: Mm. Well, I knew that anyway - well, yeah, she taught us that, told us, but at the same time you know that anyway. You can't trust your dad, he's gone off with another woman, can't stay with your mother then, you know, if your dad's betrayed - I've still got that in the back of my mind, it's a terrible thing.

Q: What, your dad's betrayed -

A: Yeah. And rejected me, so other men will reject me as well.

Q: So do you see it as your dad rejecting you as well as rejecting your mother?

A: In the back of my mind. As I said.

Q: So did your mum talk to you about sex and boyfriends at all?

A: I can never actually remember having a - you know, relation - not relationship, conversation, sitting down, about the birds and the bees, ever. I think the most important personal experiences from ASHLEIGH as well, sort of - I know when I had my first period ASHLEIGH told me what it was.

Q: Yeah, 'cos a lot of young women I have talked to, can't talk to their parents.

A: Oh, I could talk to my mother... She worries. Everything - anything I say - I can talk to her easily, but she'll throw it all up...

Q: What, so you don't tell her things 'cos -

A: No, not really.

Q: And did she say anything about "don't have sex without a condom" or -

A: She doesn't need to say things like that to me because I know.

Q: And does she sort of presume that you do know? Do you know what I mean, so there's...

A: Now we talk about things like that. She knew that I saved myself for LEWIS, and actually she was - did say her boyfriend... condoms... She's very modern in some respects.

Q: And does she worry about things like that, has she got a boyfriend? Does she worry about things like AIDS or getting pregnant or anything like that?

A: Oh, getting pregnant, yeah... but actually I put that into her mind, you know, ... baby, she didn't even think about things like that... too old but she's not. Forty-four or whatever.

Q: Yes, that's not too old.

A: Didn't really care. Actually my doctor's pretty good, in fact he's a bit obsessed with sex; he's a strange doctor, you go to him for, you know, anything, a broken arm or something, and you come out with contraceptives. ... "what contraceptives are you using at the moment?"

Q: So which doctor's that, not the college doctor?

A: No, we haven't got a college doctor, that's in ESSEX. He's a bit obsessed; I think he used to be a gynaecologist actually.

Q: What, and really wants to carry on?

A: Yeah.

Q: I wonder if he does it to the men as well.

A: My mother went to him the other day, she had a mouth infection, a tooth or something, walked out with - I can't remember what contraceptive it was. He said "what are you using?"... Nothing to do with what she'd been there for whatsoever. He was the one that put it into my mind to take the pill.

Q: I suppose it's good to be safe.

A: Mm.

Q: And - I think we've more or less (?)covered everything. Unless you can think of anything else in terms of actually the whole process of - of women negotiating with men, men with women, about kind of sexual experiences.

A: I think the best phrase ... heard... women have sex to get love, men have love to get sex; that's quite true.

Q: You think that's right?

A: Oh, absolutely...

Q: And do you think that's a kind of conflict in a way? I mean do you think women end up being disappointed? Do you know what I mean, 'cos they both -

A: In relationships I think women all along the line get hurt more than men. I don't know many men who've got hurt, or if they have they get over it so quickly. I always say to LEWIS, you know - he knows that if I split up - well, if we split up - I'd be in a total mess; I said, "would you?"; and he said, "well it's totally hypothetical", you know. I just don't think he would.

Q: What, he'd just sort of -

A: - carry on as -

Q: - carry on ...

A: ... Yeah, that's right. He'd get violent - well, he's got a punch bag in there, he's not violent to other people, but he'd start punching the punch bag or whatever. Whereas I'd just, you know, get upset - suicide I think. Yeah, it's definitely women who get hurt a lot more.

Q: Do you think that's because women get more emotionally involved?

A: Definitely. Women make men their entire life, and it's - for men they're just a part of it, aren't they?

Q: Do you think they shouldn't?

A: What, think women shouldn't make the men - ?

Q: Yeah.

A: Can't help it. 'Course you shouldn't but you can't help it.

Q: No.

A: ... happens. They've no control over their emotions whatsoever whereas men seem to have control over their emotions.

Q: Mm. Why do you think that might be?

A: Ask a man, who knows what a man thinks. It's partly the lads thing, especially with the younger guys; you know... I think - you get into a relationship, the man always used to have his mates all the time, you know, "gotta see my mates" (laugh). It's a really stupid thing. ASHLEIGH just split up with her boyfriend .. see his mates all the time... had to. Just to make sure that they know that he's one of the lads; you know, he's not putting himself into this relationship whole-heartedly.

Q: What, she hasn't got him under her thumb?

A: That's right. I had that at first...

Q: Has it changed?

A: Yeah, since we've been in London, 'cos most of LEWIS's friends are in ESSEX. And also... he's matured. When they're with their mates it's amazing.

Q: Yeah. No, it - 'cos women have women mates as well -

A: Yeah, but they don't seem to understand that. They don't seem to understand that you can have friends and at the same time, you know, a relationship. It's two things but they - their mates take number one position and if they've got a woman, second best or third best or whatever. ...second best (laugh). I don't know, it's all or nothing.

Q: Is it all?

A: Mm, most of the time.

Q: Is it a compromise?

A: Oh, no... No... I think I control the relationship. Everyone says I do actually.

Q: Control it?

A: Mm. Although ... outsiders I myself I should think, you know it's... so much. But he admits that at the beginning of the relationship, when he was out with his mates and whatever, he says that he - he used to say that he loved me but he says now "I never did"; 'cos we actually split up after about ten months or so, ... loved me... without me; so now ... you know, he does see his mates occasionally but they're not so important, ... so..

Q: No, that's good. Does he actually tell you he loves you, says things -

A: Mm, everyday .. can't... without... "I love you".

Q: ...

A: Both ways... say it.

Q: Does that mean it would be of some momentous significance if -

A: If he didn't? Oh, yeah. We'd (?)punch it out, I'm sure.

Q: And do you think, from what you were saying, that thing about people saying that like men can have sex with a woman and not be particularly involved, but say if a woman has sex with a man then somehow it changes the whole relationship for her, and there's something more goes on, it's not just kind of "yeah, yeah, do this tonight" and then go back to work and get on with life sort of thing -

A: ...

Q: So do you think sex is different for women than men?

A: Not for us. Because we both... we make each other both enjoy it much. I think generally, yeah...

Q: On a higher -?

A: Well, on a higher plane, you know, it's much more important. ... men, you know, it's just sex - one night - well, ten minutes; a little bit of enjoyment there.

Q: But it used to be - didn't it used to be thought of as the other way round a lot, that - that women were less keen on sex than men?

A: I think - I don't think men are more keen on sex, they just put it in a different light... live without it.

Q: You could live without it?

A: No, I couldn't -

Q: - you couldn't -

A: No, I don't think I... I think that some women could though.

Q: Yeah, some people say that they could live fairly happily, or with - not without physical contact -

A: Yeah.

Q: - kissing and cuddling, things like that, but without the actual sort of - well, I suppose penetration or anything...

A: ... couldn't live without... I don't think I could. I've forgotten what I was gonna say now...

Q: So is there anything else you can think of ...?

A: I'll probably think of loads once you've gone (laugh)... about me... or whatever. No. Women definitely fall in love a lot (?)easier...

Q: What?

A: Men...

Q: Yeah.

A: Horrible things.

Q: Don't really understand. You know you were saying that you didn't trust men -

A: Mm.

Q: - is that sort of - is that a general thing?

A: Yeah. I don't - you know, I don't trust LEWIS... really, as in that I think he could go off tomorrow with someone else, or just leave me. Okay, that's - it depends how you define trust I suppose, but that's how I see it, with a boyfriend anyway.

Q: What, that he could -

A: He could just hurt me tomorrow, say he wouldn't but he could. I don't trust him - particularly happy...

Q: So you feel that say at any moment, it could all change?

A: Mm. Oh, that's fine, you have to say "I love you" and, you know, you put so much into a relationship, but it's really hard work (laugh). ... if I've had an argument one night the next night I have to have wine and -

Q: - put on the makeup and -

A: Yeah... lovely meal or whatever. It's hard work.

Q: Mm. But do you think it should be like that or that it will sort of settle down or -

A: Oh, no, it would be awful to get into a boring relationship; you know, you see these couples in pubs where they don't speak to each other, just sitting there holding hands and drinking...

Q: - like with a half pint -

A: You know, and I mean I hate arguing but I suppose you have to argue to keep it alive. It's very important to keep it...

Q: Yeah. Even if it means being on a knife-edge?

A: Mm.

Q: Well, I think that's it then -